

# 10 Priorities to transform EU Waste Policy

Almost 90% of material resources used in the EU are lost after their first use<sup>1</sup>. A lot more effort is needed to accelerate a systemic transition to a circular economy, to drastically reduce the EU's absolute natural resource use and greenhouse gas emissions, respecting the planetary boundaries and striving towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

To achieve this, the **Prevent Waste coalition of European civil society organisations advocate for the improvement and enforcement of EU policies on waste prevention and product design**. Any new legislative proposals and strategies, and

the implementation of the existing ones, need to adhere to the EU waste hierarchy i.e. put prevention first. Reducing resource extraction, designing circular products<sup>2</sup> and stimulating waste prevention all reduce GHG emissions – contributing to the EU's decarbonisation objective<sup>3</sup>.

The European Commission's next Circular Economy Action Plan alongside the overarching European Green Deal should consist of ambitious measures enabling waste prevention all along the value chain in all sectors, including food, construction and demolition, packaging, transport, electronics<sup>4</sup>, batteries<sup>5</sup> and textiles<sup>6</sup>.

We call on the European institutions to follow the ten priorities described below:

## ESTABLISH AMBITIOUS AND BINDING WASTE PREVENTION AND REUSE TARGETS

**1** A progressive 2030 roadmap<sup>7</sup> following the principles of the EU waste hierarchy should be adopted, including a binding overall waste reduction target and a maximum cap expressed in kg/capita/year of residual waste. This should be complemented by binding targets and measures on the reuse of waste and products<sup>8</sup>.

## SET MANDATORY FOOD WASTE PREVENTION TARGET OF 50% BY 2030

**2** All Member States should reach this target through effective measures covering all stages of the food supply chain, from harvesting to processing, from retail to consumer<sup>9</sup>.

## DEFINE COMPREHENSIVE CIRCULAR DESIGN REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL PRODUCTS

**3** These requirements should ensure durability, usability, repairability and recyclability of products made of non-toxic materials from sustainable sources. Repair should become the norm, giving consumers a right to repair their products<sup>10</sup>.

## ENSURE CLEAN, SAFE AND NON-TOXIC MATERIAL CYCLES

**4** Zero-pollution<sup>11</sup> and a non-toxic environment<sup>12</sup> can only be achieved when substances of concern are prevented and phased out through stringent legislation, which is currently missing. These substances can only be avoided in both new and recycled products by ensuring that a public information system about substances present in materials, articles, products and waste is in place<sup>13</sup>.

## **ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR RESOURCE-SAVING STRATEGIES**

**5** National tax systems and financial incentives should promote reuse activities, e.g. by reduced VAT on repair activities and second-hand products and levies on single-use packaging, while ‘Pay-As-You-Throw’ stimulates households to produce less waste. At a higher level, the EU should stimulate public and private investments in circular activities high in the waste hierarchy and stop encouraging waste-to-energy.

## **PRIORITISE WASTE PREVENTION WITHIN EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR) SCHEMES**

All EPR schemes should support waste prevention by financing and promoting reuse of waste and products and using eco-modulation of fees to discourage non-circular products.

**6** Additionally, we encourage the extension of EPR systems as policy tools for other product groups (beyond packaging and WEEE), provided that all stakeholders – social economy actors, recyclers, civil society, consumer organisations, local authorities – are involved in designing those systems.

## **STIMULATE REUSABLE PACKAGING**

The revision of the essential requirements for packaging under the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive should lead to ambitious legislation with a strong focus on design for reuse, toxic-free materials and, after a long useful lifetime, recyclability. EU policies should support the implementation of reuse systems<sup>14</sup>, including refill systems and deposit return schemes<sup>15</sup> and this should be facilitated by quantitative targets for reuse of packaging by the end of 2022.

## **CONTROL & LIMIT GLOBAL SHIPMENT OF WASTE<sup>16</sup>**

**8** Waste should not be shipped to non-EU countries with less stringent regulations and inadequate recycling infrastructure. Instead, Europe should reuse and recycle its own waste as close to the source as possible, creating local employment. Strict enforcement of the new amendments to the Basel Convention is crucial.

## **SET RIGHT LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHEMICAL RECYCLING**

**9** Clear definitions and requirements are needed to ensure that chemical recycling does not undermine more circular approaches higher in the waste hierarchy or lead to adverse environmental impacts. The input should be limited to degraded and contaminated plastics, never plastics coming from separate collection, and the output limited to new plastics, not fuel<sup>17</sup>.

## **PHASE-OUT OF WASTE INCINERATION**

**10** Europe must unlock the potential of waste prevention and circular economy activities by phasing out the existing capacity of waste incinerators<sup>18</sup> and putting a stop to the development of any new facilities across the EU. This is of utmost importance for improving separate collection efforts and ensuring the decarbonisation of the EU energy grid.

For more information visit [bit.ly/10prioritiesEUwastepolicy](https://bit.ly/10prioritiesEUwastepolicy)



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