

## EPR Congress

# One-size-fits-all won't work: EPR Organisations call on the European Commission to recognise and respect their local role in achieving packaging circularity

One of the key priorities of the European Union is to prevent and manage waste efficiently through enhanced recycling, with the goal of having all packaging places on the EU market to be reusable or recyclable by 2030. In order to do so, the European Commission is currently assessing options to revise the key legislations dealing with packaging, namely the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) and the Waste Framework Directive (WFD), in accordance with the commitments of the European Green Deal and the new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP).

The revision of EU's waste acquis has a significant impact on organizations that concretely deal with the implementation of EU legislation at the national level. **Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs)** are key actors in ensuring the most efficient separate collection and management systems for packaging waste according to national and local conditions.

EU Countries have built different models of packaging waste management, each with its own specificities, and each effectively carrying out its mandate. The Italian one, represented by CONAI, and the Belgian one, represented by Fost Plus, have **both achieved high collection and recycling rates despite having very diverse systems in place**. Both systems have been appropriately tailored according to regional specificities, consumer needs and number of inhabitants, which means that, when applied to different contexts than the one they were created for, they would not deliver the same results.

For this reason, **EXPRA**, the European Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance, which represents 30 PROs from 28 countries, in collaboration with **CONAI**, the Italian PRO, organised the first EPR Congress on 26 and 27 September 2022 titled "**Efficiency through diversity: EPR best practices across the EU**".

The Congress focused on the principle of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**, one of the key principles implemented across the EU via the WFD and PPWD to fund a collection and recycling system which provides a practical solution to achieving a circular economy.

During the Congress, PROs, companies and NGOs from all across Europe shared their expertise and **local best practices in waste management**, as well as lessons learnt in the collective journey towards achieving more packaging circularity. The **adaptability of each regional EPR system to the**



**Local context** has been critical in ensuring the most efficient transposition of EU legislation and guidelines in all circumstances, leading in most cases to (over) achieving EU goals in packaging waste collection and recyclability.

The **successful role and activities of EPR organisations** has been highlighted also by international actors represented during the Congress, namely OECD and UNEP, which underlined the potential of the EPR concept to be transposed in non-EU countries thanks to its flexibility and proven efficiency, **when adapted to the local context**.

Speakers and participants ultimately called on the EU to not jeopardise the current and future achievements of national separate collection and recycling targets of different packaging streams by creating uncertainty about EPR organisations' role. A fundamental aspect of the European ecosystem is in fact the concept of **shaping EPR systems according to national specificities and regional needs**, which ensures their success at national level.

A 'one-size-fits-all' recipe would inevitably delay or even impede the achievement of collection and recycling targets, which are indispensable to ultimately reach EU climate neutrality and are currently being successfully met. Therefore, when evaluating potential policy options, **the EU should recognise and respect the work that EPR organizations have efficiently carried out** to achieve the EU-mandated targets, by complying with complex national socio-economic specificities and taking into account the available resources and infrastructure at local level.

Considering the above, it becomes clear that **the EU should avoid wasting human and financial resources to redesign a system that has proven to work efficiently so far**.



EXPRA is the alliance of 30 packaging and packaging waste recovery and recycling systems - Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) - active in 18 EU countries as well as 11 non-EU countries including Chile, Turkey and Canada, which are owned by obliged industry and work on a not-for-profit basis.



CONAI is the Italian, private non-profit consortium within which packaging producers and users ensure that they achieve recycling and recovery targets of packaging waste provided for by law. For more than 20 years, CONAI has served as an effective system for the recovery, recycling and valorisation of steel, aluminium, paper, wood, plastic, bioplastic and glass packaging materials.