

EFFICIENCY THROUGH DIVERSITY: EPR BEST PRACTICES ACROSS THE EU



Executive summary

EPR systems across Europe have been successful in achieving the targets for recycling set at European Union level, proving their reliability in adapting EU legislation to the local context and in liaising with different actors. Some countries, namely Italy and Belgium, have even achieved the targets before they were due, despite the very different systems they set up at national level.

A central point that characterised the dialogues throughout all the sessions was the importance of keeping **a regulatory framework for packaging circularity that reflects regional socio-economic differences and specifics** as they proved their efficiency over the years. Indeed, European EPR organisations are deeply integrated in the respective territories and succeeded in creating and continuously update the system that best deals with the needs of

the local ecosystem, in coordination with the national authorities. Dialogue between different EPR organisations and the companies they represent is an asset, both at the EU and national level, which should be further facilitated in order to share EPR best practices and lessons learnt. What is critical is to maintain national approaches while encouraging and building such dialogue between organisations.

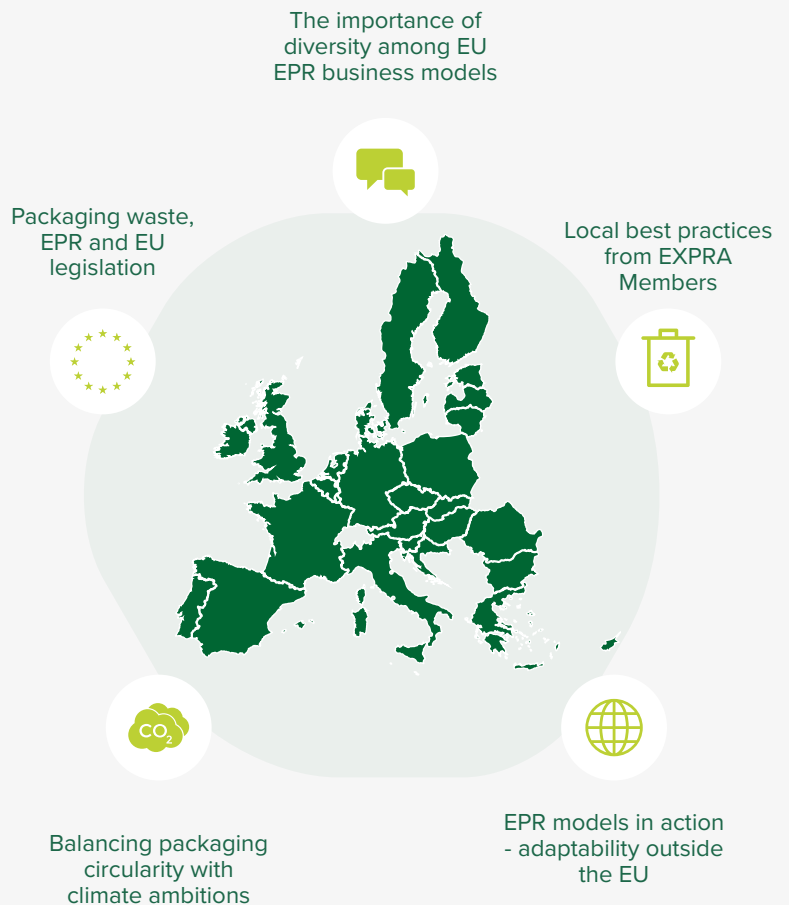
Description of the event and participants

On 26 and 27 September 2022, the event “Efficiency through diversity: EPR best practices across the EU” was held in Brussels, representing the first Congress focused on the Extended Producers Responsibility principle, one of the key systems implemented across the EU via the WFD and PPWD to fund a collection and recycling network which provides a practical solution to achieving a circular economy.

The event was organised by EXPRA, the European Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance, which represents 30 PROs from 28 countries, all owned by industry and non-profit organisations, in collaboration with CONAI, the Italian PRO.

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 two-day event involved all participants in three panels and two roundtables, fostering the dialogue around the following topics:



Recommendations for policymakers

Extended Producer Responsibility schemes' diversity

KEY FOR AN AMBITIOUS, PRACTICAL AND FUTURE-PROOF PACKAGING WASTE MANAGEMENT



Realistic yet ambitious goals: the path to achieving climate neutrality together

PROs need to become intensively involved in integrating climate protection assessments into their operational plans and strategic decisions to ensure the achievement of planned goals. At the same time, when striving for effectiveness and proportionality, policy-making needs to embrace a wider perspective to connect the various policies impacting PROs, all converging towards key EU circularity and climate goals.



Harmonization and transparency

Despite the (positive) diversity that characterises EPR schemes across Europe, it is important to enable harmonization based on principles and make cooperation possible. Some of the elements to be addressed include more transparent reporting and increased accessibility to data, the creation of a central platform or authority to guarantee representation and ensure fair competition, while allowing strategic investments to flow where needed.



Efficiency through diversity

Moving forward collectively should be translated, on the one hand, into stronger cooperation among stakeholders, creating more dialogue platforms and strengthening the exchange of ideas among policymakers and PROs, national and local authorities, industry. On the other hand, each PRO anchored in its national ecosystem must strive for the best possible results, taking into account the available resources and infrastructure. Hampering such efforts by forcing a common yet ineffective framework would inevitably delay or even impede the achievement of the EU climate targets.



PROs as strategic actors for better implementation of EU legislation

The essence of EPR schemes is the ability to build the bridge between policymakers and industry. For EU institutions, PROs constitute a strategic resource to turn climate ambitions into reality, cementing regulation and ensuring their effective implementation. For industry, PROs represent a reference point to navigate EU and national packaging legislation. For local authorities, industry and PROs constitute the only way to implement EPR principles. Hence, creating a constructive dialogue among them is essential to ensure the implementation of EU's waste acquis.



Future-proof legislation

The revision the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD), as well as the planned revision of the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) need to ensure that all targets contribute to achieving climate neutrality in an efficient and substantial way, taking into consideration real life conditions. Setting ambitious yet unmeetable goals would rather hamper the achievement of EU's climate goals.



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.