

First step in the right direction: retailers and wholesalers call for wider reform of EPR requirements under PPWR and more

EU lawmakers have moved to ease some Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements after retailers warned that fragmented national rules were creating barriers to cross-border trade. EuroCommerce, which represents Europe's retail and wholesale sector, welcomed the proposals but called for wider reform.

Authorised representative implementation requirements under the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) have exposed differences in national EPR and waste legislation in the EU. Retailers argue that the resulting complexity could create new Single Market barriers, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses trading across borders.

The European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety voted on 5 October in favour of the proposal concerning authorised representative requirements for EU-based micro and small enterprises under batteries, packaging, textiles, footwear, electronics and single-use plastics EPR rules. A final plenary vote is expected before negotiations with the Council can begin.

At the same time, the Council has agreed to continue working on the Environment Omnibus proposal, a welcome move by EuroCommerce. The sector urged the co-legislators to reach an agreement swiftly and give companies certainty over authorised representative requirements.

Attention will now turn to the forthcoming Circular Economy Act (CEA). EuroCommerce wants it to tackle regulatory fragmentation and align EPR and waste legislation across member states.

The association also calls for proportionate secondary legislation under the PPWR. Authorised representative requirements is one of many practical hurdles facing businesses when implementing the PPWR. Businesses still face uncertainty over how several provisions will be interpreted and applied, while forthcoming secondary legislation could add reporting, calculation and documentation requirements. They also require clarification on how the PPWR will be applied and a 12-month grace period to address outstanding implementation problems.

Notes to the editor

EuroCommerce priorities for the Circular Economy Act

- harmonising waste and Extended Producer Responsibility rules
- facilitating the development of a functioning market for secondary raw materials
- strengthening enforcement and ensuring a level playing field
- providing investment and tax incentives that make circular business models commercially viable and scalable across the EU
- reducing administrative burdens and improving regulatory coherence for companies operating in several member states.

Addressing enforcement and a Level Playing field

Retailers also need simplification measures to go hand in hand with effective enforcement. Policymakers should ensure that producers based outside the EU have to meet the same EPR obligations when selling into the European market, allowing businesses to compete on equal terms.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 28 countries and 5 million companies, including leading global players and many small businesses. Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of businesses and individual customers. The sector generates 1 in 7 jobs, offering a varied career to 26 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.