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POLICY MONITORING BRIEF

PPWR

NEW EU PPWR GUIDANCE CLARIFIES KEY COMPLIANCE RULES BUT LEAVES IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OPEN

The European Commission has published a second edition of its PPWR Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) just days before the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) begins applying on 12 August 2026. The updated guidance introduces more than 30 new or revised clarifications, addressing several practical compliance challenges for packaging manufacturers, importers, producers, and distributors. Key additions include guidance on the distinction between “manufacturer” and “producer” responsibilities, treatment of legacy stock, traceability requirements, technical documentation obligations, and the exclusion of goods merely transiting through the EU. The FAQs also introduce a new chapter encouraging national authorities to adopt a supportive enforcement approach during the initial implementation phase, although this recommendation is not legally binding and may be applied inconsistently across Member States.

One of the most significant changes is the Commission’s revised position on EN 13428:2004, a standard used to assess substances of concern in packaging. After previously indicating it would no longer provide a presumption of conformity, the Commission now states that the standard can continue to be used until an updated harmonised standard becomes available. The guidance also confirms practical flexibilities for legacy stock and packaging identification requirements. However, important uncertainties remain unresolved, particularly regarding compliance testing methodologies for the new PFAS restrictions and the application of certain recyclability requirements. While the updated FAQs provide valuable clarification in several operational areas, industry stakeholders have criticized the timing of the guidance, noting that many businesses had already finalized compliance programs and investments before the latest interpretations were published. Read more.

SOURCE: PACKAGING EUROPE 04/08/2026

EU PACKAGING RULES TAKE EFFECT: STRONGER CONSUMER PROTECTION AND A MORE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The European Union’s new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) will start applying on 12 August 2026, introducing a common regulatory framework aimed at reducing packaging waste, strengthening the Single Market, and supporting the transition to a circular economy. One of the first key measures is a restriction on PFAS ("forever chemicals") in food-contact packaging, prohibiting the placement on the EU market of packaging that exceeds strict PFAS limits. The regulation is expected to improve consumer safety, reduce environmental pollution, and decrease Europe’s reliance on fossil fuel-based virgin plastics. Additional provisions harmonize packaging definitions and information requirements across Member States, making compliance easier for businesses operating across borders. Looking ahead, a harmonized packaging labelling system will apply from 2028, while most obligations, including recycled-content requirements, recyclability standards, and packaging waste reduction measures, will become applicable from 2030. The European Commission expects the PPWR to significantly reduce waste generation, greenhouse gas emissions, and environmental costs while enhancing the competitiveness and resilience of Europe's packaging sector. Read more.

SOURCE: EU COMMISSION NEWSLETTER 11/08/2026

EUROPEAN AGENDA

RESEARCHERS CALL FOR BETTER ALIGNMENT OF EU CLIMATE POLICY, COMPETITIVENESS AND INVESTMENT FRAMEWORKS

A new background paper by researchers from institutions including the Ecologic Institute, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) and the University of Stuttgart argues that EU climate policy must strike a careful balance between emissions reduction, industrial competitiveness and investment security. Against a backdrop of geopolitical uncertainty, energy market volatility and growing concerns over strategic autonomy, the authors emphasize that climate targets can only be achieved if governance, financing, industrial policy, carbon pricing and energy infrastructure development are aligned. They call for a simplification of the increasingly complex regulatory landscape while preserving the effectiveness of climate legislation, and stress the need for targeted support measures to help households and businesses manage the upfront costs of the energy transition.

The paper identifies the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) as the cornerstone of European climate policy but argues that its design must be carefully coordinated with complementary industrial and investment policies. The authors recommend strengthening clean-tech supply chains through a geopolitically informed industrial strategy, improving risk-sharing mechanisms between Member States, and refining instruments such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to address competitiveness concerns. They also highlight the urgent need for a more integrated European energy infrastructure, warning that fragmented national planning and permitting procedures are creating legal uncertainty and slowing investment. According to the researchers, achieving climate neutrality will require greater coordination between EU and national authorities to ensure that decarbonisation efforts support both economic resilience and public acceptance of the transition. Read more.

SOURCE: KOPERNIKUS PROJECT ARIADNE 03/08/2026

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

JRC STUDY FINDS CHEMICAL RECYCLING HAS A STRATEGIC ROLE BUT FACES ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

A new study from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) examines the current and future economic viability of chemical recycling in the EU, with a particular focus on pyrolysis and solvolysis, the two most advanced technologies for converting difficult-to-recycle plastic waste into new plastic feedstock. The report finds that chemical recycling can complement mechanical recycling by processing mixed, contaminated, or complex plastic waste streams while producing high-quality recycled materials suitable for demanding applications, including food-contact packaging. However, the JRC concludes that chemically recycled plastics currently remain significantly more expensive than virgin plastics, with high capital and operating costs preventing cost parity under current market conditions.

Despite these economic challenges, the JRC notes that chemical recycling could play an important role in helping industry meet recycled-content requirements under EU legislation such as the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD). The report highlights that future market growth will largely depend on regulatory drivers, demand for high-quality recycled plastics, technological improvements, and economies of scale. While Europe currently leads globally in chemical recycling deployment, the sector remains at an early stage of development and faces uncertainty over whether sufficient demand will emerge to support large-scale investment. The JRC therefore views chemical recycling as a potentially valuable component of the EU's circular economy strategy, but one that will require continued assessment and supportive policy frameworks to achieve long-term commercial viability. Read more

SOURCE: JRC PUBLICATIONS 22/07/2026

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CLIMATE POLICY

EU PROPOSES ETS REFORM AND ELECTRIFICATION PLAN TO SUPPORT INDUSTRIAL DECARBONISATION

The European Commission has proposed a major update to the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) alongside a new Electrification Action Plan, aiming to strengthen Europe's industrial competitiveness while accelerating the energy transition. The ETS reform would ease the pace of emissions reductions for industry by adjusting the Linear Reduction Factor (LRF) and extending the allocation of free emissions allowances, while linking continued support to verified decarbonisation investments. Under the proposal, EU industry would reach net-zero emissions closer to mid-century, rather than by 2039 as previously envisaged. Additional measures include allowing a limited use of high-quality international carbon credits, strengthening the Market Stability Reserve, and mobilising more than €100 billion in climate-related investments through an ETS Investment Booster and national ETS revenues.

At the same time, the Commission's Electrification Action Plan seeks to double the EU's electrification rate from 23% today to 46% by 2040, reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels and enhancing energy security. Key initiatives include phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, lowering the electricity-to-gas price ratio, increasing annual heat pump installations to around 4 million units by 2030, and expanding charging infrastructure to enable 40% of EU trucks to operate on battery-electric power by 2040. The proposal also supports faster cross-border cooperation on nuclear energy projects. Meanwhile, the separate ETS2 system, covering buildings and road transport, remains unchanged and is scheduled to become fully operational in 2028. Together, these measures signal the EU's intention to combine industrial competitiveness with long-term climate ambitions while accelerating the electrification of its economy. Read more.

SOURCE: NORDEA 11/08/2026