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## **POLICY ISSUES**

### **PACKAGING AND PACKAGING WASTE**

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MEPs on the European Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) validated, on Tuesday 19 March, the Interinstitutional Agreement reached between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on 4 March on the 'Packaging and Packaging Waste' Regulation. The Member States' ambassadors to the EU had already given the green light to the provisional political agreement on Friday 15 March. As a reminder, the text, which has been the subject of intense lobbying, provides, among other things, for 100% of packaging to be designed as recyclable starting in 2030 and validates the planned disappearance of ultra-light plastic bags by the same date. To see the text of the agreement: link [here](#)

*Source: European Business Intelligence 19/03/24*

### **PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION: ABOUT JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE'S STUDY ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PACKAGING**

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Answer given by Ms Ivanova on behalf of the Commission [View](#)

### **AGRICULTURE MINISTERS PUSH TO WEAKEN ANTI-DEFORESTATION RULES FOR EU FARMERS**

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Austria and six other EU member states are seeking to delay the implementation of a new anti-deforestation law within the bloc, and exempt small-scale farmers from the rules, according to a note circulated among member states, seen by Euractiv, ahead of a meeting of the bloc's farming ministers on Tuesday (26 March). Link to [article here](#)

*Source: Euractiv, 28/03/24*

### **EUDR - ANTI-DEFORESTATION LAW WILL DEEPEN EUROPE'S COCAINE PROBLEM,**

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South American diplomats are warning the European Union that its haste to implement a new law against deforestation could have a major unforeseen consequence: pushing their poorer farmers into the illegal drug trade. Set for implementation this December, the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) will force foreign agricultural producers to prove they don't use denuded land — or lose access to the EU market. However, Peruvian and Colombian diplomats argue this will hurt their countries' crop substitution programs, which wean peasant farmers off coca leaf — the source of cocaine.

*Source: Politico 25/03/24*

### **PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION: DEFORESTATION REGULATION**

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[View](#) Rapporteur / Author [Alexander Bernhuber](#),

### **EU NATURE RESTORATION LAWS FACE COLLAPSE AS MEMBER STATES WITHDRAW SUPPORT**

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The EU's nature restoration laws appear on the verge of collapse after eight member states, including [Hungary](#) and Italy, withdrew support for the legislation. Link to [article here](#)

Source: *The Guardian* 25/03/24

## SCRAP THE WASTE FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE, REPORT SAYS

The Waste Framework Directive should be replaced by a Materials Framework Directive that considers waste as a resource, according to a [report](#) published by consultancy firm Eunomia.

The current set of circular economy policies should be extended and supported by new ones, according to the report, which was funded by recycling company Tomra and the NGOs Zero Waste Europe, Handelens Miljøfond and the Minderoo Foundation. "While several important components are either in place or proposed, no coherent, overarching vision yet exists for materials management at the EU level in the context of the climate challenge," the report says.

**Border expansion:** The report argues that the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism should extend to the materials production sector to reduce its emissions.

The European Commission has already said that it plans to review and potentially expand the two schemes to other sectors in 2025 depending on whether they are estimated to be at risk of carbon leakage.

**The trash podium:** Eunomia also suggests that waste produced by recycling activities, biowaste and residual waste (which cannot be recycled or reused) should be treated separately under the so-called waste hierarchy, a tool used to determine the best and worst ways of eliminating various types of waste.

Source: *Politico* 28/03/24

## WASTE SHIPMENTS: COUNCIL SIGNS OFF ON MORE EFFICIENT, UPDATED RULES

On 25 March, the Council adopted the revision of the regulation on shipments of waste. As revised, the regulation aims to reduce shipments of problematic waste to outside the EU, update shipment procedures to reflect the objectives of the circular economy and climate neutrality, to make use of electronic submission and exchange of information, and to improve enforcement and tackle illegal shipments. Link to article [here](#)

Reference : [Adoption of the legislative act](#)

Source: *Council of the EU* Press release 25/03/24

## UK TO LAUNCH CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM (CBAM) IN 2027

On 18 December 2023, the United Kingdom [announced](#) its plan to implement a carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) by 2027. The announcement follows a Government consultation "Addressing carbon leakage risk to support decarbonisation" (first Consultation) and comes in the wake of the implementation of an EU CBAM, which applies as of 1 October 2023 and is currently in its transitional phase until the end of 2025. On 21 March 2024, the Government launched a further consultation, open for comments until 13 June 2024 ([second Consultation](#)), providing updated details about the possible design and administration of the UK CBAM.

Source: *UK Government* 21/03/24

## CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS

The eurozone's bailout fund will include risks linked to climate change in its scrutiny of governments' finances. The European Stability Mechanism (ESM) unveiled its plans after last year became the hottest year since records began in 1850, spelling trouble for governments on the front lines of climate change. Rising sea levels and severe drought, for example, could put national coffers under severe stress and create a domino effect on public policy. The ESM will scrutinize how "these shocks can translate into impaired financial assets and rising insurance costs," the economists wrote. "We also investigate how government policies and better-developed insurance markets could mitigate these adverse shocks and contribute to climate adaptation."

Source: *Politico* March 2024

## MICROPLASTICS

The European Commission accused of quietly narrowing the scope of the "glitter regulation" - The regulation aimed at banning the marketing of intentionally added plastic micro-particles entered into force in October 2023. But could this text "be rewritten after its entry into force?" wonders H       Duguy from the NGO ClientEarth, on the Euronews website. The first alert dates back to the end of November. Goodwill, a company specializing in Christmas decorations, then initiated action before the EU Court of Justice, requesting the annulment of this regulation. A few weeks later, notes ClientEarth, the Commission's website was modified. A passage was removed: the one specifying that decorative objects - such as "Christmas decorations" - are prohibited in cases where glitter detaches from the article during normal use (see the site before and after). However, "it is solely the responsibility of the EU Court of Justice - and not of the Commission - to rule on uncertainties related to the interpretation of European legislation," emphasizes H       Duguy. According to several sources, the executive is currently preparing guidelines specifying the implementation of the text. Only the Member States are involved in the work, and not the stakeholders, regret ClientEarth and Surfrider.

*Source: Contexte 27/03/24*

## MARINE BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

Two NGOs highlight the "political inertia" of Member States in terms of marine biodiversity protection - EU countries risk not being able to achieve their 2030 goal of protecting 30% of European seas, and strict protection of 10%, warn Oceana and Seas at Risk. Their analysis published on March 26 responds to the interim assessment of the European Commission's eighth Environment Action Programme. The NGOs point out the "lack of political will" of the countries concerning strict protection, which they consider to be the most effective marine conservation status, and which is poorly taken into account by the States. The NGOs' assessment does not concern France: it focused on the orientations of seven States (Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden). Only four of them have made concrete commitments on marine environments. States are required to communicate on how they plan to achieve marine protection objectives as part of the EU's biodiversity strategy.

*Source: Contexte 27/03/24*

## HOW CAN AN EU-WIDE PFAS RESTRICTION BE A GAME-CHANGER FOR HEALTH?

How can EU decision makers ensure people, and the environment are not unwittingly exposed to substances that can literally take forever to break down and can have a myriad of negative effects on our health? Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), a class of over 10 000 chemicals also known as "forever chemicals" are taxing our health and economy. HEAL's new infographic highlights key strengths and weaknesses in the proposed EU restriction on PFAS. [View](#)

*Source: Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) 27/03/24*

## EUROPEAN COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE FINANCIAL SECTOR SYSTEMATICALLY INCLUDE BIODIVERSITY IN ITS DECISIONS

EU - The European Commission recommends that the financial sector systematically include biodiversity in its decisions - Financial institutions and businesses assess little, or incompletely, the financial risks related to biodiversity and nature, which prevents the development of concrete mitigation measures. This [is the finding of the study by the Directorate-General for Financial Stability \(European Commission\) published on March 22](#). Agriculture, real estate, construction, and healthcare are identified as the sectors most dependent on nature, and therefore the most exposed to risks, in the European economy. To address this, the study proposes a guide (assessment framework) for financial institutions to systematically evaluate the financial impacts resulting from risks. It includes the development of nature-related scenarios, precise assessments taking into account location, and good practices for the short, medium, and long term. The study reminds that 55% of global GDP is "moderately or strongly dependent on nature," making economies "integrated with nature." Despite this, nature tends to be perceived "as an externality," whereas it can present investment opportunities.

## UK MARKETS REGULATOR CLAMPS DOWN ON FASHION SECTOR GREEN CLAIMS

Three U.K. fashion brands — ASOS, Boohoo and George at Asda — have signed “formal agreements to use only accurate and clear green claims, the U.K.’s Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [announced today](#). A recent investigation by the regulator found that the three brands were making misleading claims about the sustainability of their products. The companies have since agreed to change “the way they display, describe, and promote their green credentials,” according to the regulator. That includes avoiding “ambiguous” statements like “eco,” “responsible,” or “sustainable” and instead using “specific and clear” descriptions, such as “organic” or “recycled” accompanied by a “clearly displayed” percentage of recycled or organic fibers.

**Study up:** The authority also sent an open letter to the fashion retail sector asking businesses to learn the [Green Claims Code](#). The code is not a law in itself, but was produced by the government to help businesses understand existing consumer protection laws in the UK, in a bid to stop the growing number of greenwashing allegations made against retailers.

*Source: Politico 25/03/24*

## PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

- EU : Food safety – plastic food contact materials (FCMs) (deadline 10 April) Link [here](#)
- [EU emissions trading system](#) – update of the Verification and Accreditation Regulation Deadline 15 April 2024
- EU: Single Market Programme – interim evaluation (deadline 31 May 2024) Link [here](#)
- [Climate reporting](#) – amended templates to reflect ‘Fit for 55’ outcomes (deadline 11 April 2024)
- EU : Streamlining EU-level scientific and technical work on chemicals; Re-attribution and cooperation among EU agencies; European Commission, ( deadline April 3, 2024) Link [here](#)
- [EU: Chemical safety – better access to chemicals data for safety assessments](#); EU chemicals data portal; European Commission (Deadline April 4, 2024)
- USA: [Listing of specific PFAS as hazardous constituents](#); Environmental Protection Agency, Deadline April 8, 2024

## POSITION PAPERS

### POSITION PAPER: ON THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABLE LIFE IN 2040: WHAT CONSUMERS NEED BY BEUC

The Communication’ title “Securing our future” sets the right tone on how crucial stronger climate action is necessary to preserve the livelihood on our planet. Among the three policy options considered for the setting of the 2040 target, the European Commission rightly opted for the most ambitious one, i.e. a 90% GHG emissions reduction target for 2040. The Communication emphasises that acting as early as possible will make the transition more affordable and predictable. Conversely, “the more climate action is delayed, the greater human and economic consequences and the greater the need to fund restoration and adaptation”. The Commission does not limit itself to this dire diagnosis and sees the glass half full: a well-designed transition can deliver benefits for Europe’s economy and citizens. [View](#)

*Source: BEUC 27/03/24*

### TO GUARANTEE ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY RIGHTS IN EU STRATEGY, A COALITION OF NGOS IS CALLING FOR IMPROVED GOVERNANCE REGULATION

In a position paper published on Monday 25 March, a coalition of European NGOs, including Climate Action Network Europe, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF Europe) and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), exposes the shortcomings of the European Union’s climate governance mechanisms in terms of respect for procedural rights, in particular those established by the Aarhus Convention. See [article here](#)

For contact : EU Public Affairs Manager, Laura Mazzei - [laura.mazzei@fefco.org](mailto:laura.mazzei@fefco.org)

## STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS TO WASTE SHIPMENT REGULATION

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New Waste Shipment Regulation formally adopted By FEAD – [link here](#)

## STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS TO THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL OF THE EU BIOTECH AND BIOMANUFACTURING INITIATIVE

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[Medicines for Europe](#): European Commission Biotech Initiative Must Spearhead Next Wave of EU Biosimilar Advances for Patients and Stimulate Manufacturing

[European Chemical Industry Council \(Cefic\)](#): Cefic Welcomes Biotech Initiative, Setting The Stage For Future EU Biotech Act

[Confederation of European Paper Industries \(CEPI\)](#): EU hails biotech & biomanufacturing as 'most promising tech area of the century' as sector's innovation leaders meet in Brussels

[EUCOPE](#): EUCOPE welcomes the European Commission's Communication on boosting biotechnology and biomanufacturing in the EU

## STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS TO NATURE RESTAURATION LAW

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[Governments freeze EU nature restoration law](#) By Greenpeace

[EEB input to the EU Environment Council Meeting, Brussels, 25 March 2024](#) By EEB

## STAKEHOLDERS' REACTIONS TO GREEN CLAIMS

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[EU Parliament backs Green Claims directive requiring robust circularity evidence](#) By EuRIC

[Green Claims Directive takes positive steps towards strengthening rules on environmental claims](#) By FoodDrinkEurope

## STUDIES/REPORTS/ARTICLES

### EEA REPORT: DO EUROPE'S MARKETS FOR RECYCLED RAW MATERIALS WORK?

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The EEA report 'Investigating Europe's secondary raw material markets' presents a set of criteria to analyse the functioning of markets for secondary, recycled raw materials. Improving markets for recycled raw materials is key to delivering a circular economy in the EU, reducing the need to extract natural resources and avoiding the associated environmental impacts.

Europe's ambitions for a circular economy require the timely provision of good-quality recycled raw materials to manufacturers. However, according to our report, from the eight most common recyclables, only aluminium, paper and glass have well-functioning secondary markets. Lack of standardisation and competition with new materials are among the challenges for other markets, such as wood and textiles. Link to report [here](#)

Source: European Environment Agency 28/03/24

### EUNOMIA REPORT: MANAGING MATERIALS FOR 1.5OC - AN EU REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR A LOW CARBON MATERIAL ECONOMY

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The report 'Managing Materials for 1.5oC: An EU Regulatory Framework for a Low Carbon Material Economy' presents a series of recommendations designed to enable Europe to prosper while reducing the pressure we place on the planet from our consumption of materials. The study was funded by a consortium comprised of Handelens Miljøfond, Minderoo Foundation, TOMRA and Zero Waste Europe all of whom have an active interest in questions relating to the way we can better manage materials in order to tackle environmental challenges. Link to [Report here](#)

Source: EUNOMIA 28/03/24

## **EPRS - ROLE OF MEPS IN SHAPING THE BLOC'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

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The European Parliament think tank published a study looking at the role of MEPs in shaping the bloc's environmental policy. Read it [here](#).

## **REPORT FEARS E-COMMERCE RETURNS ARE DRIVING UP WASTE, EMISSIONS AND COSTS**

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Online shopping returns lead to almost five times more packaging waste than in-person shopping, emit up to 24 million metric tonnes of CO2 annually, and often end up in landfill due to increasing financial burden on retailers, a new report from [CleanHub](#) claims.

Online shopping is said to generate 4.8 times more packaging than brick-and-mortar stores. Returned products can make additional contributions to packaging waste by requiring extra plastic and cardboard, with some retailers encouraging customers to apply extra materials in the returns process. [Link to article](#)

## **EC MAPPING GLOBAL FOREST COVER OF THE YEAR 2020 TO SUPPORT THE EU REGULATION ON DEFORESTATION-FREE SUPPLY CHAINS, PUBLICATIONS OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2024**

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION, JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE, AMEZTOY, I., VERHEGGHEN, A., DESCLÉE, B. ET AL., [HTTPS://DATA.EUROPA.EU/DOI/10.2760/262532](https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/262532)

Source: JRC 27/03/24

## **EVENTS**

### **CIRCULAR ECONOMY FORUM- BRUSSELS 15- 18 APRIL**

The world's leading event for circular economy thinkers, doers and leaders hits Brussels in April 2024, showcasing the most impactful circular solutions from around the world. Register here: <https://wcef2024.com/>