

Regulatory Overview, Print, Paper And Packaging

May 2026



EU Green Claims Directive (GCD) Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition (ECGT)

The European Union intends new legislation to strengthen rules around environmental marketing, through the proposed Green Claims Directive (GCD), supported by existing guidance under the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD), and the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition (ECGT) Directive. Together, these frameworks aim to ensure that all environmental claims made by businesses are accurate, substantiated and not misleading.

These Directives are designed to strengthen consumer protection and tackle greenwashing by ensuring that environmental information is clear, reliable and comparable. It will require companies to provide robust, science-based evidence for explicit green claims, such as; eco-friendly, sustainable, carbon neutral, and tightening controls on environmental labels addressing the growing number of unverified eco-labels in the EU market.

Timeline

The EU Green Claims Directive (GCD) has not yet entered into force and its adoption was paused in 2025 due to political pressure, with compliance likely delayed until 2027-2028. The related Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition (ECGT) Directive (published March 2024) is currently in force and applies from September 27, 2026.

Sources

- European Commission, Proposal for a Directive on Green Claims, 2023
- European Commission, New EU rules to empower consumers for the green transition enter into force, 2024

European Deforestation Regulations (EUDR)

The EU Regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR) entered into force on 29 June 2023, forming a key part of the EU's strategy to combat global deforestation and forest degradation. The Regulation targets commodities most associated with deforestation, namely; cattle, wood, cocoa, soy, palm oil, coffee and rubber, as well as many derived products such as paper, furniture, packaging and printed materials.

Under EUDR, any operator or trader placing these products on the EU market, or exporting them, must demonstrate through mandatory due diligence that they are deforestation-free, legally produced, and traceable to the exact plot of land where they originated. This includes providing geolocation data and risk assessments to ensure supply chains are compliant.

The Regulation applies to virgin fibre-based products. Fully recycled paper and board are excluded, although products containing a mix of recycled and virgin fibre fall within scope. A revision to the regulation, November 2025, printed products (such as books, newspapers, journals, and magazines) are now excluded from scope. Printed packaging and labels under HS code 4819 (when sold as standalone products) or paper/cardboard products (not printed books) still require compliance.

EUDR replaces the EU Timber Regulation and significantly strengthens enforcement, with penalties for non-compliance set at Member State level. National competent authorities will oversee implementation and checks.

For users of print and paper, specific advice on impact and compliance is best sought from your supplier.

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Timeline

Compliance is delayed to 30th December 2026, providing operators and traders more time to prepare for their due diligence obligations that paper-based products that are sold or exported from the EU are deforestation-free.

Sources

- European Commission, Regulation on Deforestation-free products, accessed November 2024
- Intergraf, EUDR, 2025

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) remains a central pillar of the EU's Circular Economy Action Plan, placing responsibility on producers for the full lifecycle of their products, particularly the collection, recycling and disposal of waste. The principle reinforces that the producer (and potential polluter) pays, incentivising more sustainable product design and waste reduction.

EPR requirements are primarily implemented through the revised EU Waste Framework Directive and the proposed Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), which will further harmonise rules across Member States. These measures introduce modulated fees, meaning producers may pay higher or lower contributions depending on the environmental performance of their products, such as recyclability or material use.

At national level, EPR schemes are already in place or expanding across Europe, particularly for packaging, paper, electronics and textiles, with increasing reporting and compliance obligations for businesses placing products on the market.

Sources

- European Commission, Waste and Recycling, accessed April 2026
- European, Extended Producer Responsibility accessed April 2026

Packaging And Packaging Waste Regulations (PPWR)

The EU is advancing the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) as part of its Circular Economy Action Plan, aiming to significantly reduce packaging waste and improve sustainability across all packaging materials. Replacing the existing Packaging Directive, PPWR will introduce harmonised, legally binding rules across European Member States, focusing on waste reduction, recyclability and increased use of recycled content.

Key measures include stricter design for recycling requirements, targets to reduce overall packaging waste and mandatory recyclability criteria for all packaging placed on the EU market. The regulation also strengthens Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations, requiring producers to contribute financially to waste management, with fees modulated based on environmental performance. Additional provisions address reuse targets, restrictions on unnecessary packaging, and clearer labelling to support consumer sorting and recycling.

PPWR applies to all packaging types, including consumer, industrial and transport packaging, with particular relevance for fibre-based materials such as paper and board.

Timeline

PPWR entered into force February 2025, and legally binding across all EU Member States from August 2026. Mandatory recyclability for all packaging will be introduced in 2030.

Sources

- European Commission, Packaging waste, accessed April 2026
- Cefi, Cefi position paper on the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, 2022



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Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD)

The EU Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) aims to reduce the environmental impact of the most commonly found plastic items in marine litter. It introduces a range of measures including bans, consumption reduction targets and design requirements for products such as; cutlery, plates, straws, stirrers, cotton bud sticks and certain food and beverage containers.

The Directive also places increased responsibility on producers through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, requiring them to cover the costs of waste management, clean-up and awareness campaigns. Additional measures include labelling requirements and targets for recycled content in plastic bottles, alongside separate collection targets.

Timeline

SUPD came into force and adopted across EU Member States in 2021/2022 which outlined rules for the calculation, verification and reporting on the reduction in the consumption of single-use plastic food containers and beverage cups. Further targets and milestones are planned, including; 77% separate collection target for plastic beverage bottles by 2025, rising to 90% by 2029, and a mandatory 30% recycled content in all single-use plastic beverage bottles by 2030.

SUPD is currently undergoing a formal evaluation process by the European Commission due to be published July 2027.

Sources

- European Commission, Single-use plastics, accessed April 2026
- European, Single Use Plastics Directive, accessed April 2026



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