

From the EU: reuse more, throw less

*Italy ranks third, after Ireland and Germany, among the largest producers of packaging waste per capita in Europe and second, after Germany, as a recycler of packaging waste. But the European Commission calls for "less packaging and less plastic waste"*

For once, European lobbyists have failed to make a full breakthrough in the European Parliament's Environment Committee, which, on 24 October, approved the Packaging Regulation (a slightly pejorative of the original proposal). The aim is to reduce the production and disposal of packaging waste by re-using packaging and packaging. Eurostat data (which you can find [here](#)) show that in 2021 packaging waste reached 188.7 kg per capita as a European average, a further increase of 10,8 kg compared to the previous year continuing the general growth trend observed since 2012 with only a slight exception in 2018..

In the period 2010-2021, the production of all types of packaging waste increased, albeit to a different extent. The highest relative increases were observed for wood packaging waste, followed by plastic, paper and cardboard. In absolute terms, paper and board packaging waste has increased more.

The recycling rate of packaging waste has increased steadily from 2010 to 2016, before returning to the level of 2010 in 2020 and 2021.

Packaging means, according to Directive (EU) 2018/852, any material used to contain, protect, handle, deliver or present goods. Packaging waste can come from a wide range of sources, including supermarkets, retail outlets, manufacturing industries, households, hotels, hospitals, restaurants and transportation companies. Items such as glass bottles, plastic containers, aluminum cans, food wraps, wooden pallets and drums are all classified as packaging. The main packaging materials are glass, paper and cardboard, plastic, metals (aluminium and steel) and wood.

Italy ranks third, after Ireland and Germany, among the largest producers of packaging waste per capita in Europe (229.9 kg) and second, after Germany, as recycler of packaging waste (160.4 kg per capita).

If the Commission's proposal passes the plenary's scrutiny (expected in mid-November) unscathed, the principle of "less packaging and less plastic waste" will take shape, and therefore, among others, will enter into force the prohibition of use of disposable packaging for fruits and vegetables under 1 kg; as well as will not be allowed to sell very light plastic bags (under 15 microns) unless required for hygienic reasons or supplied as primary bulk food packaging.

The European Commission also calls on Member States to reduce packaging waste per capita by 5% by 2030 and by 15% by 2040 compared to 2018 levels, while the reduction in plastic packaging waste should be 10% by 2030, 15% by 2035 and 20% by 2040.