

European Aluminium position on recycling targets

Towards ambitious but realistic aluminium packaging recycling targets in 2025

February 2017

On the vote in the European Parliament's Environment Committee

In the light of the European Parliament's ENVI Committee vote on 24 January on the Circular Economy package, **we strongly recommend Member States to support a new set of more ambitious but realistic recycling targets for all materials, aluminium included.**

The review of the calculation method is directly linked to the definition of recycling targets that Member States will have to reach by 2025 and 2030.

Ambitious recycling targets based on the new 'real recycling' measurement point have to be realistic, taking into account all available collection and separation options.

In this respect, we welcome the vote of the ENVI Committee on:

- **Calculating real recycling rates**

Measuring 'real' recycling rates with a single methodology at the point of 'input into the final recycling process' (for metals: at the entrance of the scrap remelting plant) will enable a real comparison of the national recycling results for all packaging materials. This avoids that pre-sorted fractions with high impurity levels will all be counted for recycling. It will also stimulate Member States to invest in more effective and cost-efficient sorting plants using the latest separation technologies and prevents that poorly collected and sorted fractions either end up in incineration or landfills or are being exported to third countries for further treatment under poor environmental and safety conditions.

- **Referring to the additional metal recovery from the incinerator bottom ashes and the need to take these results into account in the national recycling statistics**

Obviously we should give priority to separate collection at source for all materials but several Member States have already installed highly innovative bottom ash treatment facilities (e.g. the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark) while others have not yet invested enough into modern sorting plants and rely therefore on this option. On top, this further motivates Member States to recover the sometimes very valuable and precious metals fraction from the remaining household waste fraction sent for incineration.

- **Encourage the manufacturing of products with materials that can be recycled multiple times ('permanent materials')**

Materials that can be recycled multiple times without losing their properties should be encouraged as a way to reinforce the circular economy. Once collected and sorted 'permanent materials' such as metals always maintain their inherent characteristics and do not run the risk of being 'downcycled'. This even applies to metals recovered from the incinerator bottom ashes.

Our call to Member States

1. Ambitious and realistic recycling targets for all packaging materials

European Aluminium supports the original proposal of the European Commission to recycle 75% of all aluminium packaging by 2025, provided that all collection, sorting and recycling options are considered. **In order to reach this objective and to reap the full environmental and economic benefits of recycling, Member States should agree upon a set of more ambitious but realistic recycling targets for all materials, aluminium included.**

- Aluminium is a key contributor to the circular economy and is already recycled at high levels in nearly all our markets (transport and automotive, building and construction, beverage cans). In order to further close the loop and to maintain a level playing field, clear and balanced legislative recycling targets are needed for all materials – steel, aluminium, glass, plastics, paper & carton.
- Giving one material an advantage over another would be against the principle of material neutrality and would not make sense from an environmental point of view. The ultimate goal of the Circular Economy should be to phase out the landfilling and incineration of all recyclables. In this respect, a relatively low recycling target could give the wrong signal.
- A specific and more ambitious target for aluminium packaging would give a positive signal to Member States: the additional investments needed for a better and more advanced collection sorting will pay off, due to the combination of a higher yield of aluminium scrap and the relatively high value of used aluminium.

2. Possible time derogation

Moving towards more credible recycling results requires efforts from the whole recycling value chain and the timeframe to 2025 (and 2030) is relatively short. Moreover, considering the possible change of the calculation basis for measuring the recycling results to 'input to the final recycling process', several Member States will need more time to increase their investments into new and modern sorting plants.

European Aluminium is of the opinion that those Member States should be granted an additional period in order to achieve the same targets as originally proposed by the EU Commission for all Member States. This has already been done before when the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) was revised in 2004 (2004/12, 18 February 2004), while maintaining the same legal basis in order to guarantee an optimal functioning of the Internal Market for packaging.

Finally, it is important to encourage the exchange of best practices between Member States and to make better use of existing modern recycling facilities in neighbouring countries.

For further information, please contact:
Maarten G. Labberton, Director Packaging Group
E-Mail: labberton@european-aluminium.eu