

Circular Packaging and Reusables Thematic Working Group (TWG) Fact Sheet (2021)



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Co-Designed & Co-Facilitated by Mabbett & Associates Ltd. and Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR)



In 2021, CIRCULÉIRE ran a Working Group on Circular Packaging, which took place over three months. It brought together 24 panel members from across the Irish ecosystem representing industry (37%), solution providers (29%), academia and research (12%), industry representatives and compliance bodies (12%), and the third sector (8%). This infographic summarises its key findings.

Packaging In Ireland

Packaging waste represents around 1/3 of all municipal waste.

- ▶ Total municipal waste 2018: 2,912,355 tonnes; ^[1]
- ▶ **Total municipal waste generated has increased by 8% since 2013;**
- ▶ Total packaging waste 2019: 1,124,917 tonnes; ^[2]
- ▶ **Total packaging waste generated has increased by 29% since 2013;**
- ▶ Packaging waste per person across Europe: 67.8kg to 227.6kg per year;
- ▶ Packaging waste per person in Ireland: 208kg per year in 2018; ^[3]
- ▶ Online retail generated 14,765 tonnes of packaging waste in Ireland in 2020. ^[4]

Barriers To Circular Packaging

Identified in literature and corroborated by TWG Panel Members.

Technological

- ▶ Multitude of materials used for packaging each require different circular solutions;
- ▶ Complexity of packaging designs limits practical solutions.

Economic

- ▶ Packaging from virgin materials remains cheap;
- ▶ Packaging is part of a product's marketing.

Health and Safety

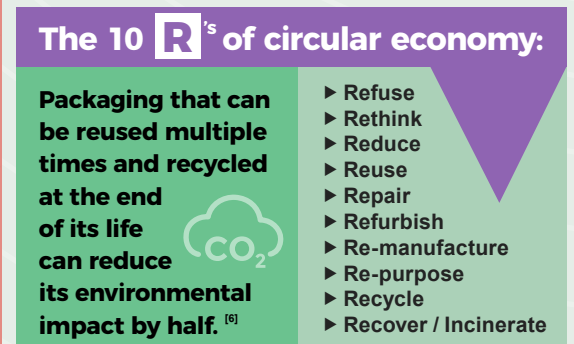
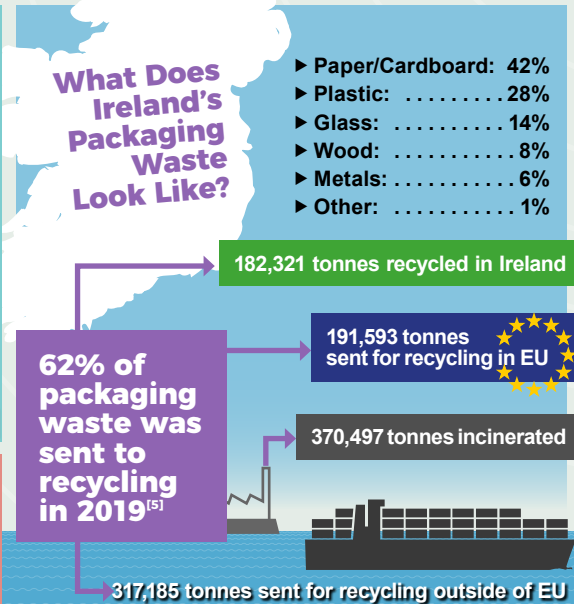
- ▶ Risk of product contamination and chemical leaching from certain packaging materials.

Infrastructure

- ▶ Limited infrastructure for packaging recovery and reuse networks;
- ▶ Limited in-country recycling infrastructure.

Information

- ▶ Lack of awareness of existing circular alternatives and environmental impact of these alternatives;
- ▶ Industry and Consumer apathy.



Key Innovation Opportunities Identified By TWG Panel Members

Cross Sectoral Opportunities

- ▶ Improve public and industry awareness of circular packaging solutions: Establishment of a central information hub to provide information to businesses on existing circular packaging options, and a registry of circular packaging solution providers operating in Ireland;
- ▶ Develop local and regional infrastructure networks: Development of local collection and processing points for reusable packaging;
- ▶ Improve awareness on material types and circularity: development of packaging labelling systems for circularity.

Sector specific opportunities

- ▶ Food and Hospitality: implementation of reusable food container and returnable networks for the hospitality and take away industry;
- ▶ Food & Drink Manufacturing: Develop mono-material and standardised packaging to facilitate recovery and recycling for currently non-recycled or hard-to-recycle packaging;
- ▶ Transport and logistics: Returnable and trackable pallet hoods to replace plastic pallet wrap.

The opportunities listed above have been considered to have high potential impact across Ireland. Additional opportunities are detailed in the CIRCULÉIRE Synthesis report.

Why Circular Packaging:

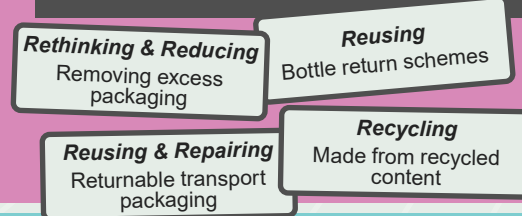
The European Green New Deal aims for all packaging in the EU market to be reusable or recyclable by 2030.

Circular packaging is also a way for companies to reduce carbon footprint of their products and retain the value of the packaging they use. Worldwide, 95% of the value of plastic packaging materials is lost to the economy. ^[7]

What does Circular Packaging look like?

Circular Packaging aims to embed circular economy principles in the design and production of packaging systems, to maintain the quality, value and use of the packaging materials for as long as possible and to reduce its environmental footprint.

Circular packaging can include:



Circular Packaging Enablers and Wider Recommendations

Strategic Policy Direction

- ▶ Devise and monitor national targets for the introduction and uptake of reusable pre- and post-consumer packaging;
- ▶ Stronger policy to prioritise and emphasise packaging design for whole product lifecycle and material reuse;
- ▶ National Government commitment to the European Plastics Pact.

Funding and Collaboration

- ▶ Provision of results-based funding for high-risk high-impact circular opportunities and innovations, to incentivise entrepreneurship and enable scale-up of circular packaging projects;
- ▶ Support intermediaries to broker collaboration between packaging manufacturers, industry, research & development, and waste management aimed at fostering circular packaging innovations.

Industry drivers

- ▶ Industry-focused commitments, e.g. building on efforts like Plastic Action Alliance, to scale-up implementation of circular packaging innovations across supply chains.

[1] EPA (2020) Municipal waste statistics for Ireland
 [2] EPA (2021) Packaging waste statistics for Ireland
 [3] Eurostats (2021) Packaging waste by waste management operations
 [4] EPA (2021) Packaging Waste from Online Retailers
 [5] EPA (2020) Packaging Waste Statistics for Ireland
 [6] Zero Waste Europe (2020) Reusable vs Single use packaging
 [7] Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2016) Rethinking the future of plastic, p.12



An Roinn Comhshaoil, Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
 Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

