
EU INSTITUTIONS DEFINE PRIORITIES FOR 2026

A Joint Declaration on EU legislative priorities for 2026 was signed 18/12/2025 by the Presidents of Parliament, Council and Commission.

Given the speed and complexity of challenges faced by the European Union, unity, urgency and ambition are key. That is also the spirit behind which President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, representing the Council of the EU, and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, signed the Joint Declaration on the margins of the European Council today.

The Joint Declaration prioritises legislative actions that focus on boosting the EU's competitiveness and resilience, safeguarding citizens and businesses, while pursuing ambitious simplification goals and working towards agreement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. Utmost priority will be given to key policy objectives for a new era for European defence and security, to secure Europe's sustainable prosperity, competitiveness and simplification, to strengthen our societies and our social model and quality of life, to ensure comprehensive approach to broader management and migration, to protect our democracy, uphold our values and to leverage our global influence and partnerships.

Further information: [Joint declaration on EU legislative priorities for 2026](#)

Source: European Parliament press service 18/12/2025

EU AGREES ON A 2040 CLIMATE TARGET THAT SETS A CLEAR PATH TOWARDS A DECARBONISED AND COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

The EU is setting a legally binding climate target of 90% reduction in net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for 2040. The Commission welcomes the provisional political agreement between the European Parliament and EU Member States on this headline target and the amendment of the EU Climate Law. The deal also includes the possibility to use high-quality international credits to reach the 90% GHG emissions cut by 2040, compared to 1990 levels, with an adequate contribution of up to 5%. [link](#)

Source: EC newsroom 12/12/2025

EU COUNTRIES AGREE TO TAX CHEAP PACKAGES FROM JULY

Cheap packages entering the EU will be charged a tax of €3 per item from next July, the bloc's 27 finance ministers agreed. The deal effectively ends the tax-free status for packages worth less than €150.

The flat tax will apply for each different type of item in a package. If one package contains 10 plushy toys, the duty is applied once. But if the shipment also contains a charging cable, another €3 is added. The flood of untaxed and often unsafe goods prompted the European Commission to propose a temporary solution for the packages under €150 a month ago. This "de minimis" rule allows exporters like Shein and Temu to send products directly to consumers, often bypassing scrutiny. [Link](#)

Source: Politico 20/12/2025

LEVERAGING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT TO CUT PACKAGING WASTE AND PROMOTE REUSE IN EUROPEAN CITIES

European cities are tackling the growing burden of single-use packaging waste from food and beverages, which are filling up urban waste streams. Packaging represents 36% of all plastic produced globally, and most is used once before being discarded.

Cities are at the frontline of managing the environmental and economic consequences of this system. As municipalities transition toward circular economy strategies, public procurement can support the

roll-out of reuse systems at scale. Well-designed and scaled reuse systems, such as deposit schemes, refill stations and return logistics, can cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70% compared with single-use packaging by avoiding raw material extraction, manufacturing and energy-intensive waste processing.

According to the City Practitioners Handbook: Reuse Starter Kit for Food and Beverages, cities can leverage their purchasing power to shift markets by prioritising durable, reusable solutions in their own operations. The report highlights that replacing single-use items in public canteens, school meal programmes, or municipal facilities is an “easy-to-implement” intervention with immediate impact, reducing waste volumes while modelling behaviour for residents and businesses. [link](#)

SOURCE: EC NEWSROOM 15/12/2025

CIRCULARITY PACKAGE: MINIMAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AHEAD OF FUTURE LEGISLATION

On 23 December, the Commission quietly adopted its circularity package. Intended to provide rapid solutions to the recycled plastic crisis, the package brings together a variety of announcements, postponing most decisions until the end of 2026, in the future text on the circular economy.

No official presentation or press conference. Just a press release published on 23 December announcing the adoption, via a written procedure by the College of Commissioners, of the emergency measures promised by Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall before the end of 2025. However, this circularity package, also known as the ‘Winter Package’, was eagerly awaited by the European plastics industry – particularly the recycled plastics sector – which has been facing a wave of factory closures over the past two years.

The communication details a set of ‘pilot measures’ specific to the plastics industry, foreshadowing a second act in the autumn – the famous text on the circular economy, which is expected to cover a much broader spectrum.

Only one text on the table

Only the delegated act on end-of-waste criteria accompanies the communication adopted on 23 December. This is a text that the plastics sector was expecting at the end of 2025 anyway. It aims to facilitate the movement of recycled materials within the EU. A consultation on this draft text, launched on the same day, will run until 26 January.

However, contrary to the hopes of industry, the implementing act of the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive on chemical recycling was not published in the package. The latest version has been sent to Member States for a vote, according to the European executive.

According to a Commission representative, it confirms the use of the ‘mass balance’ approach to measure and verify the actual presence of recycled material in plastic products. This method means that operators will have to deduct materials that are converted into fuel or lost from the calculation of recycled content.

The Commission has also launched the evaluation of the SUP Directive with a first call for contributions, which will remain open until 17 March. This evaluation was in any case provided for in Article 15 of the Directive and will not be finalised until summer 2027.

SOURCE: CONTEXTE 5/01/2026

FRANCE: TOTAL BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC CUPS POSTPONED UNTIL 2030.

This ban, provided for in a 2021 decree, was due to come into force on 1 January 2026. However, the government decided to postpone the deadline, stating in a progress report published in November that the level of technological maturity was ‘generally insufficient to consider large-scale deployment of single-use cups that no longer contain plastic’. This has now been done with the decree published in the Official Journal on 30 December, which remained unchanged after the public consultation

conducted in December. Currently, plastic cups are banned, but paper and cardboard cups may contain up to 8% plastic. According to the summary published by the ministry, this composition hinders their recycling, as stated by the majority of contributions opposed to the postponement during the consultation. A new progress report is planned for 2028.

SOURCE: CONTEXTE 5/01/2026

PACKAGING RULES IMPLEMENTATION

The EU's landmark packaging and packaging waste regulation will enter into force in August, which means that companies will need to review the kind of packaging they use when selling products on the EU market, how much they use, and the amount of PFAS and recycled content it contains.

SOURCE: POLITICOPRO 5/01/2026

EUDR ENCORE:

The European Commission has been tasked with a review of the EU's anti-deforestation law by April of this year, under the deal struck by co-legislators in December. It's a key date for all those concerned by the file, including Bart Vandewaetere, VP for Government Relations and ESG engagement for Nestlé Zone Europe. "I'm really worried by this April review," he told Morning Sustainability. "I'm afraid that there will be again some people that will wake up, will trigger political forces, and will say, we need to review again. This is the worst possible."

SOURCE: POLITICOPRO 5/01/2026

COMMISSION SNEAKS CIRCULAR ECONOMY RULES UNDER THE TREE:

The European Commission announced a package of measures on the circular economy on Dec. 23, including a pitch to allow companies to use chemically recycled plastics to meet mandatory recycling content targets in PET bottles.

Why? Brussels wants to boost Europe's recycling capacity and help the bloc transition to a circular economy. "Pressures on certain sectors are already acute," and the EU's plastic recycling sector is already facing "reduced capacity utilisation, significant financial losses and, in some cases, bankruptcies," the executive wrote in the package.

Trade measures incoming: The Commission also said it would introduce new custom codes to differentiate between virgin and recycled plastics coming into the EU and better monitor the market. It will also audit recycling plants "both within and outside the EU" to ensure compliance with its standards. [Read more from me here.](#)

Reactions: "The responses provided so far are insufficient given the economic, industrial, and social stakes," said French recycling firm Veolia, echoing other recycling lobbies' dissatisfaction with the proposals. The package "fails to include provisions to boost demand and prioritize European-made recycled content," said the European waste management industry group FEAD.

SOURCE: POLITICOPRO 5/01/2026

EU TARGETS VIRGIN PLASTIC IMPORTS WITH NEW CIRCULARITY MEASURES

European Commission proposes urgent action to support EU recyclers amid cheap virgin plastic imports.

The European Commission (EC) has unveiled new measures to tackle rising imports of cheap virgin plastic in the EU. The plan outlines “urgent action” needed by EU member states to boost the recycling sector, which is said to face high energy costs, low prices for virgin plastic, and a lack of demand for recycled plastics.

The EC says it aims to create a single market for recycled plastics through union-wide end-of-waste criteria. Under the EC’s measures, the new rules will allow recycled plastics to “no longer be classified as waste and to circulate more easily across all 27 member states subject to harmonized criteria applicable throughout the union.”

“These measures aim to facilitate the use of recycled plastics in manufacturing, reduce administrative burden for recyclers, notably for SMEs, and support a more stable supply of high-quality recyclates across the union.”

The EC revealed that, according to industry estimates, the lack of EU end-of-waste criteria for plastics results in approximately €120 million (US\$140.3 million) in annual costs to the EU plastics recycling sector.

SOURCE: PACKAGING INSIGHTS 7/01/2026

STUDIES/REPORTS

JRC REPORT ASSESSES FEASIBILITY OF PPWR

The [report](#) assesses Articles 29(2) and 29(3) of the PPWR and the 100% reuse targets on economic operators that use transport packaging or sales packaging used for transporting products, between two sites of the same company or between two sites located in the same Member State.

It explores the legitimacy of adding add new exemptions by analysing the impact of the target on the environmental performance of the system, the resilience of supply chains or food safety, and economic constraints of the sector.

PLASTIC PALLET WRAPPINGS AND STRAPS

Study on exclusion of plastic pallet wrappings and straps from the 100 % reuse obligations of transport packaging in the packaging and packaging waste regulation

Directorate-General for Environment, Plastic pallet wrappings and straps – Study on exclusion of plastic pallet wrappings and straps from the 100 % reuse obligations of transport packaging in the packaging and packaging waste regulation, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025,

[Link to study](#)

Source: European Commission: Publications Office of the European Union, 15/12/2025

THE PER- AND POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES (PFAS) AND THEIR ROLE AS ENABLERS IN THE COMPETITIVENESS OF EUROPEAN INDUSTRY

This study examines how PFAS support European industrial competitiveness and the potential impact of a full or partial restriction. Focusing on six key fluoropolymers and F-gases used in aerospace, defence, green energy, and semiconductor sectors, it finds that substitution is often unfeasible, particularly in aerospace, defence and semiconductor sectors. Substantial economic losses and job impacts are predicted under both above restriction options, with risks to Europe’s global competitiveness. [Link](#)

SOURCE: DEHAVILLAND 5/01/2026

