

## Circular economy & Management of specific waste streams (packaging)

### EXPRA Packaging and Recyclability online tool: P4R

In light of the publication of the Circular Economy Action Plan by the European Union (EU), EXPRA, the European umbrella organisation representing 26 non-profit packaging and packaging waste recovery and recycling systems owned by the obliged industry, recognised the need to focus on packaging design, collection and sorting infrastructure to minimise the environmental impact of both the product and its package. EXPRA and its members strongly believe that industry-owned EPR organisations should help the obliged companies to improve the environmental performance of their products and packaging by providing advice and information on packaging optimisation. Through its coordination efforts, the industry-owned EPR organisations should function as a 'bridge' between the obliged companies and the recyclers. This ensures that the obliged companies gain insight into the recyclability of their packaging and enables them to take the end-of-life treatment into account during the design of the packaging.

The Packaging for Recycling (P4R) online toolkit is developed per material and waste management stage, and provides information on recycling systems in Europe as well as the collection, sorting and recycling aspects/specifics of the different types of packaging. The website provides a dynamic online information tool aimed at allowing users to self-assess the recyclability of their packaging, according to a roadmap based on the following four recyclability critical control points: design, labelling, collection and sorting.

The project's three main objectives are:

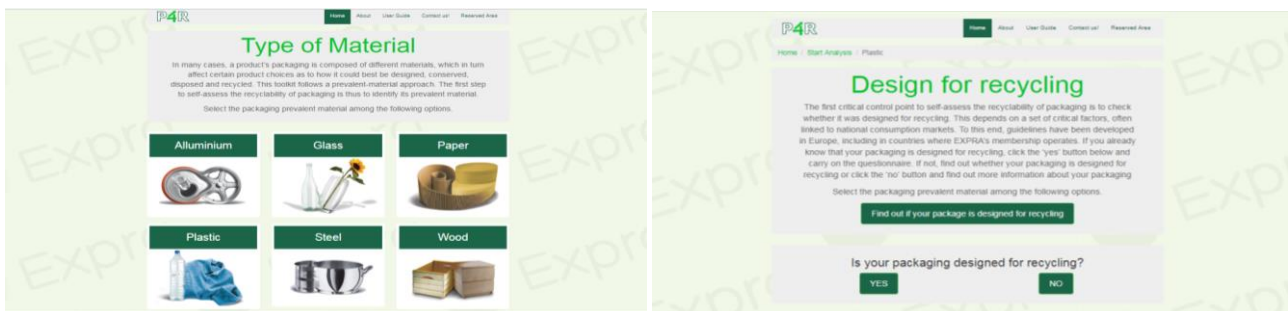
- Raising awareness of recyclability and relevant guidelines;
- Informing of cutting-edge and innovative packaging trends;
- Strengthening the links between packaging producers and recyclers.

Considering the (prevalent) packaging material, and based on an interactive online questionnaire, this toolkit allows users to find out how recyclable their packaging is. In so doing, it facilitates access to best practices and guidelines, across Europe, on packaging design, labelling, collection systems and sorting. It also includes an overview of Research and Development (R&D) initiatives currently under development.

### Packaging recyclability roadmap

This website provides a dynamic online information tool aimed at allowing users to self-assess the recyclability of packaging and a roadmap based on the following recyclability critical control points: design, labelling, collection and sorting. It brings together best practices by the Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance (EXPRA) membership as well as information on how to best reduce the environmental impact of packaging while optimising its resource efficiency. The toolkit particularly covers the most-frequently used materials for packaging: aluminium, glass, paper, plastic, steel and wood.

Below are shown the consecutive steps (critical control points) to be followed by the tool users:



### Type of Material

In many cases, a product's packaging is composed of different materials, which in turn affect certain product choices as to how it could best be designed, conserved, disposed and recycled. This toolkit follows a prevalent-material approach. The first step to self-assess the recyclability of packaging is to identify its prevalent material.

### Design for recycling

The first critical control point to self-assess the recyclability of packaging is to check whether it was designed for recycling. This depends on a set of critical factors, often linked to national consumption markets. To this end, guidelines have been developed in Europe, including in countries where EXPRA's membership operates. If the user already knows that the company's packaging is designed for recycling, he/she should click the 'yes' button below and answer the respective questions. If this is not the case, the user should find out/check whether the packaging is designed for recycling or click the 'no' button and find out more information about the packaging

### **Labelling for recycling**

The second critical control point to self-assess the recyclability of packaging is to identify whether there are any mandatory or voluntary labelling requirements in force. These aim at facilitating that consumers fulfil their responsibility for separating and delivering to the collection infrastructures for their used packaging in the advised/proper manner. If the user already knows that the packaging under investigation is labelled for recycling, he/she should click the "yes" button below and answer the relevant questions. If not, the user should find out this information and guidelines on labelling requirements currently in use across Europe or click the "no" button for more information.

### **Collection for recycling**

The third critical control point to self-assess the recyclability of packaging is to identify whether there are any collection systems in place to help ensure that it is ultimately recycled. Via its membership and experience, EXPRA has developed a set of material-specific information outlining the type of packaging collected for recycling in place across Europe. For household packaging, these can vary from mixed collection, separate collection or reverse vending machine (with or without deposit systems). If the user already knows that the packaging is collected for recycling, he/she should click the "yes" button below and carry on with the questionnaire. If not, the user should find out information and guidelines on the packaging collection systems currently in place across the different countries in Europe, or click the "no" button for more information.

### **Sorting for recycling**

The final critical control point to self-assess the recyclability of packaging is to identify whether there are any sorting for recycling systems in place to help ensure that it is ultimately recycled. Within the sorting process, certain challenges may arise, for example in achieving correct optical separation or in air blowing systems. Residues and fractions can also compromise the quality of the recycled material. Via its membership and experience, EXPRA has developed a set of material-specific informations and guidelines outlining the sorting systems in place across Europe. If the user already knows that the packaging is sorted for recycling, he/she should click the "yes" button below and carry on with the questionnaire. If not, the user should find out information and guidelines on the packaging sorting systems currently in place across Europe or click the no button for more information.

The online tool is currently under development as the relevant information is being uploaded and trials are being performed. The tool will be finalized and functioning by Q2 of 2019 and has been welcomed by the obliged industry as a very useful and needed support in **the process of developing a more sustainable packaging.**