

Tobacco Europe¹ contribution to the European Commission's Call for Evidence on the implementing acts under Article 7 of the PPWR

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Introduction

Tobacco Europe welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the European Commission's Call for Evidence concerning the implementation of Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on Packaging and Packaging Waste (PPWR).

Tobacco Europe supports the objectives of the PPWR, including the promotion of circularity, increased use of recycled materials, and the development of a well-functioning internal market for recycled plastics. The implementing framework should provide regulatory certainty, support investment across the recycling value chain and encourage innovation, while ensuring that recycled-content obligations are practical, evidence-based, verifiable and can be implemented consistently across the European Union.

Supporting a Technology-Neutral Recycling Framework

The transition towards higher levels of recycled content in packaging will require a diverse range of recycling solutions capable of addressing different waste streams, material characteristics and end-use requirements.

Mechanical recycling should remain the preferred option wherever technically feasible, environmentally appropriate, and capable of delivering recycled materials that meet the relevant quality standards as well as consumer expectations. However, the current availability of high-quality recycled polymers remains limited for certain applications requiring stringent material purity and performance. Implementation measures should therefore recognise that additional recycling technologies may play an important complementary role in increasing the availability of suitable recycled materials and supporting compliance with Article 7 requirements, particularly where mechanical recycling alone cannot currently meet market demand.

Available analysis, including work by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre², indicates that additional recycling technologies, namely chemical recycling, may contribute to increasing the supply of recycled plastic over time, provided they are supported by appropriate investment, scale up, and safeguards. The implementing framework should allow for the future recognition of such technologies where they can demonstrably meet PPWR requirements.

Tobacco Europe therefore supports a technology-neutral approach, provided that all recognised recycling technologies are subject to clear sustainability, traceability and verification requirements. This should include evidence that recycled-content outputs are credible, that allocation methods are transparent and that environmental outcomes are aligned with the objectives of the PPWR.

Recognition of Mass-Balance Methodologies

Certain recycling pathways operate within integrated industrial processes where recycled and virgin feedstocks are processed together before being converted into final materials.

¹ Tobacco Europe is the European umbrella organisation representing three of the largest tobacco and nicotine products manufacturers, namely British American Tobacco (BAT), Imperial Brands (IMB) and Japan Tobacco International (JTI).

² <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC147061>

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In these circumstances, mass-balance systems can provide an important means of allocating recycled content and demonstrating traceability through complex value chains, provided they are based on robust chain-of-custody controls, transparent allocation rules, independent and third-party verification and safeguards to prevent double counting or misleading recycled content claims.

Tobacco Europe therefore supports implementation rules that:

- recognise robust mass-balance allocation methodologies, where they are clearly defined and independently verified;
- provide legal certainty for economic operators across the supply chain;
- require transparent chain-of-custody and allocation rules;
- protect the credibility of recycled content claims and avoid double counting by requiring reliable evidence, appropriate documentation and a recognised verification system;
- facilitate investment in recycling and recycling-related infrastructure.

A practical and predictable mass-balance framework should reflect the reality of integrated European recycling and manufacturing value chains. Tobacco Europe therefore endorses an approach whereby recycled-content accounting can be verified at EU level based on the aggregate volumes placed on the Union market. Such an approach would provide greater legal certainty, reduce unnecessary administrative burden and avoid inconsistencies that could arise from Member State-specific calculations, while maintaining robust traceability and accountability requirements.

Capacity Development and Market Readiness

Successful implementation of Article 7 will depend not only on regulatory requirements but also on the ability of recycling systems and supply chains to deliver sufficient quantities of compliant recycled materials at the required quality, scale and consistency. Implementation timelines and methodologies should therefore take account of market readiness, material availability and the capacity of operators to secure verified recycled content

Tobacco Europe therefore encourages the Commission to consider implementation in a manner that supports:

- investment in recycling capacity;
- development of recycled-material supply chains;
- innovation and scaling-up of recycling technologies;
- market availability of recycled materials required to meet future obligations.

Continued monitoring of market readiness, recycling capacity and material availability will help support an efficient transition towards higher recycled-content use throughout the packaging value chain.

Use of Existing Verification and Certification Systems

The implementation framework should build, as far as possible, on existing traceability, certification and chain-of-custody systems already operating within international supply chains, provided those systems are capable of demonstrating compliance with PPWR requirements.

Recognition of established international certification and chain-of-custody schemes is essential to ensure that recycled materials originating from outside the European Union can demonstrate equivalent traceability, quality and verification standards.

Where established third-party verification systems meet necessary PPWR standards, duplication of certification, reporting or audit requirements should be avoided.

This would support consistent recycle quality irrespective of material origin, avoid unnecessary trade barriers and help secure sufficient volumes of high-quality recycled material needed to meet the recycled-content requirements established under Article 7 of the PPWR.

This approach would reduce administrative burden, support efficient implementation, improve consistency across markets and facilitate compliance throughout the value chain.

Compliance Flexibility

Packaging portfolios often comprise multiple packaging formats, materials and components that perform different technical, regulatory and functional roles.

Implementation methodologies should therefore provide sufficient clarity and practical flexibility to enable operators to comply efficiently while ensuring that recycled content objectives of Article 7 can be met and verified.

Tobacco Europe encourages the Commission to avoid unnecessarily prescriptive approaches that could limit the use of compliant recycled content where it is technically feasible and appropriate for the relevant packaging application.

Implementation measures should also recognise that packaging performs important technical, regulatory and consumer-information functions. Recycled content requirements should therefore be implemented in a way that preserves packaging performance, product integrity, mandatory labelling, traceability and consumer safety, while supporting the transition to circularity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tobacco Europe recommends that the Commission:

- maintain a technology-neutral implementation framework under Article 7, subject to clear sustainability, traceability and verification requirements;
- recognise robust mass-balance methodologies that are clearly defined, independently verified and supported by transparent allocation rules across the EU;
- ensure recycled content claims are evidence-based, documented and protected against double counting;
- support investment in recycling capacity, supply-chain development and market readiness;
- make use of existing certification and chain-of-custody systems where they are capable of demonstrating PPWR compliance;
- provide practical implementation flexibility to reflect different packaging applications, material constraints and applicable regulatory requirements.

Tobacco Europe remains available to contribute technical information and practical implementation perspectives as the Commission develops the implementing and delegated acts under Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 2025/40.