

EEA Core Set of Indicators - CSI 017

Generation and recycling of packaging waste

May 2005 assessment

working draft

About this document

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European Environment Agency





Key policy question: Are we preventing the generation of packaging waste?

Key message: There is a general increase in the per capita packaging put on the market. This is not in line with the primary objective of the Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste, which aims at preventing the production of packaging waste.

However, the EU target to recycle 25% of packaging waste in 2001 has been significantly exceeded. In 2002 the recycling rate in EU15 was 54 percent.

Only the UK, Denmark and Austria have reduced the per capita generation of packaging waste since 1997; in the remaining countries, the quantities of packaging waste generated increased. However the 1997 data are less certain, due to first year problems of newly established data collection systems, what in turn may influence trends.

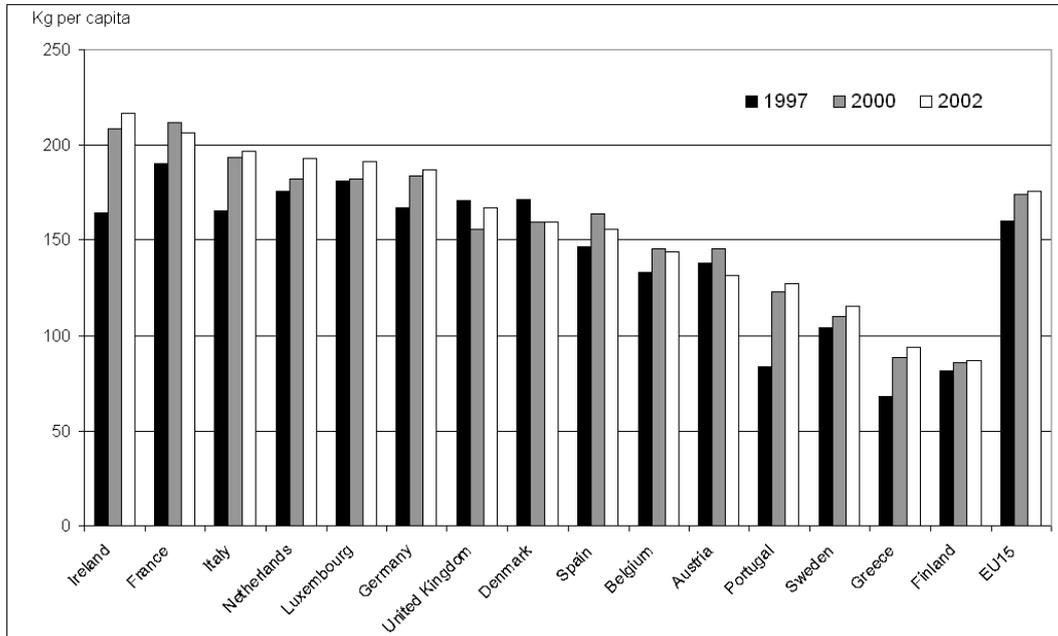
Between 1997 and 2002 the growth in packaging waste generation in EU15 almost followed the growth in GDP. Packaging waste increased by 10,0% in the period while GDP increased by 12,6%.

There are great variations in the use of packaging per capita in Member States, ranging from 87 kg/capita in Finland to 217 kg/capita in Ireland (2002). The average 2002 figure for the EU15 was 172 kg/capita. This variance can partly be explained by the fact that the Member States have different definitions of packaging, and different understanding of which types of packaging waste need to be reported to DG Environment. This illustrates the need for a harmonisation of methodology in reporting data in accordance with the directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste. For example, some country reports include wood and textiles as packaging materials whereas other countries do not include these materials.

As a result of the lack of transparency of methodologies, data may not be directly comparable between countries as regards quantities of waste generated.

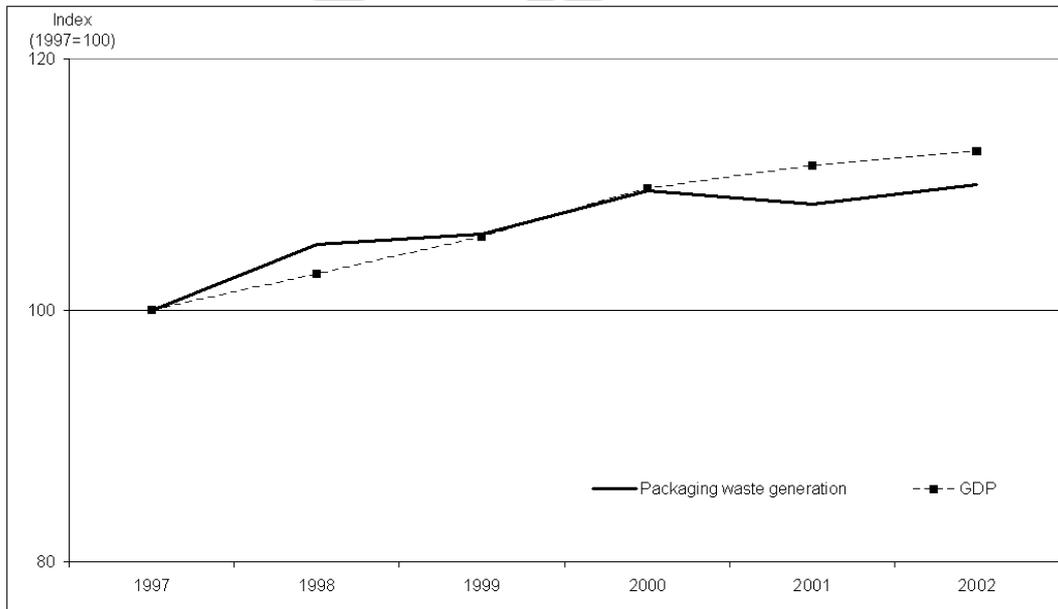


Fig. 1: Packaging waste generation per capita and by country



Data source: DG Environment and the World Bank

Fig. 2: Generation of packaging waste and GDP in Europe



Data source: DG Environment and Eurostat

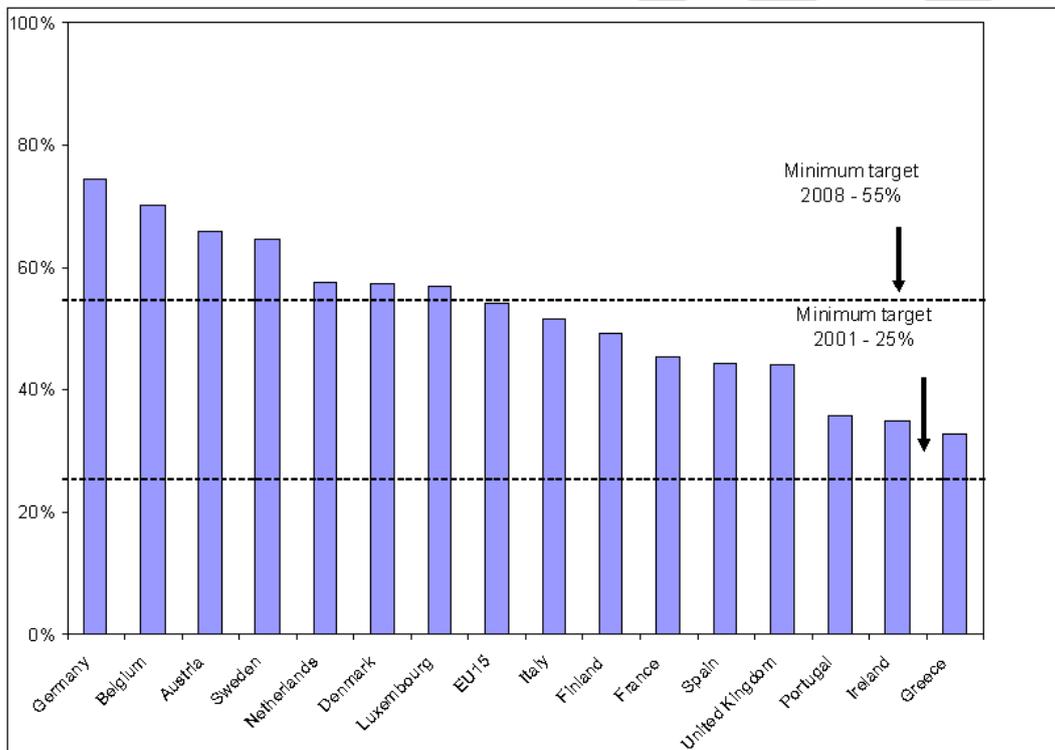
Specific policy question: Do we manage the generated waste (packaging) in a sustainable way?

The target of 25% recycling of all packaging materials in 2001 has been achieved by a good margin by virtually all countries. Seven Member States already comply with the overall recycling target for 2008, when not taking the 'new' material wood into account. The total EU15 recycling rate has increased from 45% in 1997 to 54% in 2002.

As with the consumption of packaging per capita, the total recycling rate in Member States in 2002 varies greatly and ranges between 33% in Greece and 74% in Germany.

To achieve these targets several Member States have introduced producer responsibility and packaging recycling companies have been established. Other countries have improved an existing collection and recycling system.

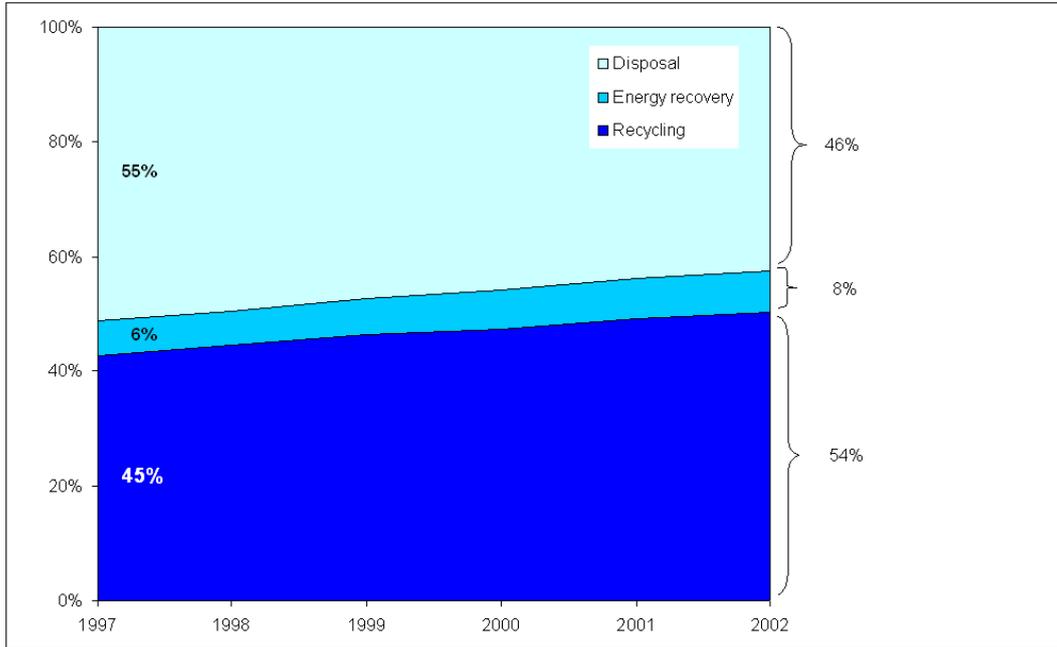
Fig. 3: Recycling of packaging waste by country, 2002



Data source: DG Environment



Fig. 4: Packaging waste treatment



Data source: DG Environment

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