



SUMMARY

A NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Rethinking extended producer responsibility chains

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The system of extended producer responsibility (EPR) chains for waste disposal is complex and technical in nature, and deals with a wide range of economic, health, social and environmental issues. First established in France in the early 1990s with the creation of household packaging disposal chain, the principal aim of such legislation is to extend producers' responsibility to managing products' end of life.

It therefore focuses on encouraging producers to eco-design their products, to reduce the volume of waste they create, to accelerate the development of recycling, and to stop passing on waste management costs exclusively to local authorities.

The system thus established, which is particularly well-developed in France with over 20 different EPR chains, should be seen as a key feature in the need to transition to a circular economy. These extended producer responsibility chains have had, and continue to have, a positive impact. They have, for example, raised awareness among stakeholders of the need to use natural resources rationally and to recover waste. The system has, however, become more complex and cumbersome since the 1990s, and needs to be re-assessed in order to improve its scope and effectiveness.

This note will give readers the opportunity to discover and understand how extended producer responsibility chains operate. It highlights their limitations, particularly the ceilings imposed on recycling rates in mature chains of operation, the rigidity that hinders their application to other products, the uncertainty surrounding their legal status, and the complexity of their administrative and monitoring procedures.

The note makes three proposals on the basis of this analysis:

- 1) The reform of the organisational structure of EPRs through the merging of certain chains.**
In addition to simplifying the system as a whole, such a change would allow for greater pooling of resources, greater flexibility for developing future operations, and a reduction of costs.
- 2) The reinforcement of stakeholders' sentiment of joint responsibility,** so as to make EPRs a key tool in the transition to a circular economy. One noteworthy proposal is to establish "consumer responsibility" early on (i.e. at the time of purchase), which could lead to the introduction of a "waste code"; likewise, "local authority and operator responsibility" could be established downstream.
- 3) The creation of a waste regulation authority (WRA)** responsible for rationalising the coordination of the chains, and for improving their monitoring and effectiveness.