

Packaging Labelling Legislation in Europe: A 2026 Regulatory Update

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13 May, 2026

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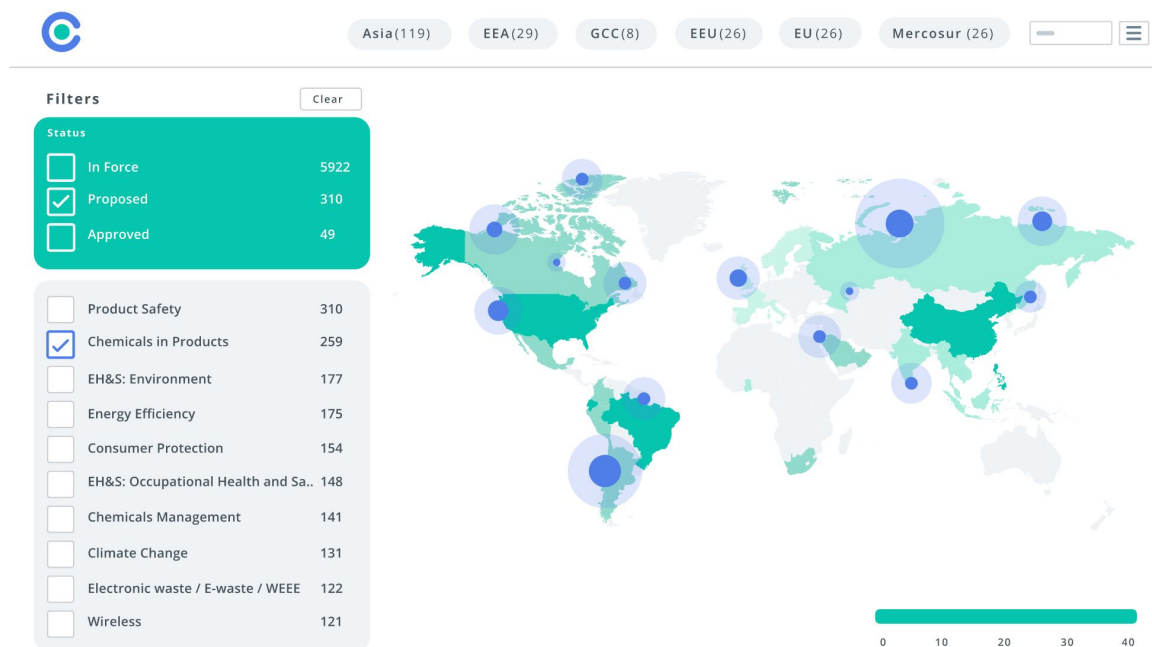
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01. Introduction

The packaging legislation landscape in Europe has reached a significant turning point with the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste (the PPWR).

This marks a decisive shift from the previous directive-based approach to a directly applicable regulation, ensuring increased alignment of packaging rules and labelling requirements across member states.

Due to the increased focus on the PPWR, there has been a deceleration in the introduction of national packaging labelling legislation across Europe, as member states await the implementation of new EU-wide packaging labelling requirements under the PPWR.

This white paper outlines the current situation at EU level, with particular attention to waste sorting labelling under Article 12(1) and the latest report published by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), which is expected to inform the development of the forthcoming implementing act on harmonised EU labelling under Article 12.

An overview of current country-specific packaging material labelling obligations in Europe is also outlined in the Appendices of this whitepaper, including:

- Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EU;
- Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EEA;
- Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in Non EU/EEA States in the Single Market;
- Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the Rest of Europe Outside the EU/EEA/Single Market and the EAEU; and
- Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EAEU.

02. European Union

Article 12 Requirements

Article 12 of the PPWR introduces a harmonised labelling system for various packaging formats to facilitate proper waste management and increase sustainability, placing new obligations on all actors within the packaging lifecycle to comply with phased labelling requirements. Key measures include:

- All packaging placed on the market (excluding deposit-return system and certain transport packaging) must bear a harmonised label indicating its material composition and, in addition to the harmonised label, information on the destination of separate components may be provided by using a QR code or other type digital data carrier;
- Packaging placed on the market containing substances of concern shall be marked by means of standardised, open, digital-marking technologies in accordance with Article 12(7);
- Reusable packaging must bear a label to inform users of its reusability and include a QR code or other type of digital data carrier with additional information on its composition and available collection points;
- Beverage packaging that is subject to deposit and return systems as referred to in Article 50(1) shall be marked with a clear and unambiguous label;
- Packaging containing recycled content may be labelled with information on the percentage of recycled material used. If used, recycled and bio-based plastic labelling are to comply with specifications set out in the relevant implementing acts; and
- Packaging subject to deposit and return systems or extended producer responsibility schemes may be marked with a QR code or other type of digital data carrier. The symbol must be clear, accurate, and not misleading about the packaging's recyclability or reusability.

The PPWR prohibits the use of any labels or symbols that could mislead or confuse consumers about the sustainability or recyclability of specific packaging. Overall, labels must:

- Utilise pictograms that are simple and accessible, including for individuals with disabilities;
- Be visible, legible, and securely attached to the packaging, ensuring that information cannot be easily removed; and
- Be accessible to consumers before purchase, including through online channels.

Implementing Acts and JRC Report

Implementing acts establishing the format and design of the abovementioned labels are to be published by 12th August 2026. The implementing act establishing the methodology for marking packaging containing substances of concern will be published separately by 1st January 2030.

In January 2026, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) published a technical report on their proposed harmonised waste sorting labels for Article 12. This report will heavily influence the aforementioned implementing acts.

Earlier reports published by the JRC had drawn criticism for proposing the use of both text and colour in the consumer waste sorting labels. Stakeholders argued that this would lead to greater fragmentation across the EU as it would require economic operators to translate the text of the labels into over 20 different languages. In this January report, the JRC have reiterated their preference for both text and colour on labels. Page 71 of the report states: "Text should therefore be included by default and omitted only where clearly justified by technical, economic, or regulatory constraints".

At the same time, they acknowledge difficulties in translating text across all Member States. For now, we await the content of the upcoming implementing acts which will finalise the design of the harmonised labels and the rules surrounding the use of both text and colour.

Impact of EU Measures on National Packaging Labelling Requirements

From the EU Commission's point of view, they have made it clear that current national packaging requirements in EU member states should be repealed by the time the EU-wide measures come into force. Page 30 of the draft guidance document published by the Commission in March states that "Member States will not be allowed to keep their national labels next to EU harmonised labels after 12 August 2028 or 24 months from the date of entry into force of the implementing act specifying the labelling rules and pictograms."

Despite the above, it remains to be seen whether Member States will fully comply with the Commission's instructions.

Article 15 - Separate Labelling Requirement for Manufacturers

Finally, it should be noted that separate labelling requirements are set out in Article 15, which obliges manufacturers to provide identifying information - such as their name, trade name or trademark, and the batch, type, or serial number - on the packaging or in accompanying documentation. The primary purpose of these requirements is to ensure traceability for market surveillance authorities. They fall outside the scope of this white paper.



03. Conclusion

Regulation (EU) 2025/40 represents a major step towards the harmonisation of packaging and packaging waste requirements across Europe, with Article 12 introducing a comprehensive EU-wide framework for packaging labelling.

While the forthcoming implementing acts will provide greater clarity on the final format and specifications of harmonised labels, the overall direction is clear: existing national packaging labelling systems are expected to give way to a harmonised EU-wide approach.

In the meantime, businesses must continue to navigate a fragmented regulatory landscape, as current national labelling obligations remain in force pending implementation of the new EU measures. Given the ongoing developments at EU level, including the publication of the JRC report and the forthcoming implementing acts, companies placing packaging on the European market should continue to closely monitor regulatory developments and assess the potential impact of future harmonised labelling requirements.

[Speak with our team](#) to learn more about managing your [packaging compliance](#), or for help with regulator engagement.

04. Appendix 1: Overview of Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EU

EU & EU Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
EU	Mandatory from 12 August 2028 or 24 months from the date of entry into force of the relevant implementing act(s), whichever is latest. All packaging placed on the market (excluding transport and deposit-return system packaging) must be labeled with information on its material composition to facilitate consumer sorting. A harmonised EU label is yet to be determined. A QR code may be used in addition to the on-pack labelling. Until 12 August 2028, packaging material information may be voluntarily marked in accordance with Commission Decision 97/129/EC.	Labelling for reusable packaging is mandatory from 12 February 2029 or 30 months from the date of entry into force of the relevant implementing act, whichever is the latest. Further information on reusability shall be provided through a QR code or other type of standardised, open, digital data carrier.
Austria	Voluntary*	N/A
Belgium	Voluntary*	N/A
Bulgaria	Mandatory - Specifications for packaging material labelling are set out in Article 5 of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Ordinance. This national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	The use of the Mobius Loop symbol and the Tidyman symbol is no longer mandatory in accordance with Decree No. 419/2022.
Croatia	Voluntary* - No longer mandatory following the implementation of Ordinance NN 116/2017.	Manufacturers who place returnable (reusable) packaging on the market are obliged to mark such packaging with a mark for returnable packaging in accordance with Annex IV of Pravilnik NN 137/2023. This national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 February 2029 or 30 months from the date of entry into force of the relevant implementing act, whichever is the latest.

EU & EU Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Cyprus	Voluntary*	N/A
Czechia/Czech Republic	Voluntary*	A person who places products on the market in returnable prepaid packaging shall be obliged to mark such packaging as returnable prepaid packaging (outlined in Section 9 of Act 477/2001).
Denmark	Voluntary* - However, Denmark has created a voluntary labelling system for waste sorting that can also be used on packaging. Further details can be found here . It has subsequently been introduced to other Nordic countries including - Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It is likely that this voluntary labelling system will be impacted by harmonised labelling under the PPWR. See Article 12(8) of the PPWR.	N/A
Estonia	Voluntary*	N/A
Finland	Voluntary* - However, the Danish voluntary labelling system for waste sorting may be used on packaging. Further details can be found here .	N/A
France	Mandatory - France has created its own national sorting system to better help consumers identify and dispose of waste packaging appropriately using the Triman logo. Official guidelines and further details on the design and use of the Triman logo are provided by CITEO and Adelphe, French PROs for Packaging. The EU Commission has initiated an infringement procedure against France for the use of the Triman logo so this labelling requirement may be withdrawn or amended in the near future. The latest update may be viewed here . In any case, this national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	N/A
Germany	Voluntary*	N/A
Greece	Voluntary*	N/A
Hungary	Voluntary*	N/A
Ireland	N/A - No material labelling measures are cited in Irish packaging legislation.	N/A

EU & EU Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Italy	Mandatory - Compliance with the Italian Environmental label may be achieved through the use of digital means i.e. Apps, QR codes, and websites. This national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	N/A
Latvia	Voluntary*	N/A
Lithuania	Voluntary*	N/A
Luxembourg	As set out in Article 9 of Law, 9 June 2022 packaging shall indicate the materials used in its production in accordance with Commission Decision 97/129/EC. The marking shall be affixed either to the packaging itself or to the label. It must be clearly visible and easily readable. The marking must have an appropriate lifespan, including when the packaging is opened. This national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	N/A
Malta	In accordance with Article 18 of Regulations L.N. 277/2006, producers shall ensure that the nature of any packaging material used is indicated on the packaging for the purposes of its identification and classification in order to facilitate the collection, reuse and recovery including recycling of packaging waste. Producers shall ensure that packaging bears the appropriate marking either on the packaging itself or on the label according to any existing laws and regulations. Such marking shall be clearly visible and easily legible, appropriately durable and lasting, even when the packaging is opened. This national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	N/A
Netherlands	Voluntary*	N/A
Poland	Voluntary*	N/A

EU & EU Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Portugal	Voluntary*	Article 28(5) of Decree-Law No. 152-D/2017 states that, packers whose packaging is managed within the scope of the Integrated Packaging and Packaging Waste Management System (SIGRE) must adopt one of the following measures: a) labelling of non-reusable primary and secondary packaging, indicating their appropriate destination, namely, the colour of the correct recycling bin where packaging waste must be placed; or b) the provision of information on the destination of packaging waste by other means (in the instructions or at the point of sale). Secondly, reusable packaging shall be labelled. The symbols and further information has not yet been published. Finally, certain reusable packaging that is provided on a rental basis, as well as service packaging, shall be labelled according to the terms defined by environmental authorities. This FAQ document provides more information. It is likely that some or all of these measures will be impacted by the PPWR.
Romania	Voluntary* - Briefly mandatory until measures were revoked in 2018.	N/A
Slovakia	Voluntary*	N/A
Slovenia	Voluntary* - Briefly mandatory until measures were revoked in 2021.	N/A

EU & EU Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Spain	Voluntary* However, from 1 January 2025 household packaging must be labelled with instructions for its disposal by consumers. Producers are free to use whichever symbols/text they wish as long as the requirements of Article 13.2 and 13.8 are satisfied. The EU Commission has launched an infringement procedure against Spain in relation to these labelling requirements as it believes that these labelling requirements create an unnecessary barrier to intra-EU trade. The latest update may be viewed here. In any case, this national requirement will be replaced by EU measures on 12 August 2028.	Packaging must indicate its reusability, and the symbol associated with the deposit and return system under Articles 46.8 and 47.7 (only applies to reusable packaging and certain beverage containers which have a deposit and return system); Compostable plastic packaging shall be labelled to confirm certification with European standard UNE EN 13432:2001; Compostable containers in domestic or industrial composting shall state "do not leave in the environment". The marking of packaging with the words "environmentally friendly", or any other equivalent that may lead to its abandonment in the environment, is prohibited. Packaging must bear these markings either on the packaging itself or on the label. Such marking must be clearly visible and easily legible and must have adequate persistence and durability, even after the packaging has been opened. It is likely that some or all of these measures will be impacted by the PPWR.
Sweden	Voluntary* - However, the Danish voluntary labelling system for waste sorting may be used on packaging. Further details can be found here.	N/A

* Indicates that material identification packaging labelling is voluntary until the application of EU-wide mandatory material identification labelling requirements on 12 August 2028.

05. Appendix 2: Overview of Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EEA

EEA Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Iceland	Voluntary - In accordance with Article 5 of Regulation No. 609/1996, the composition of the packaging material(s) may be indicated in order to enable their identification and sorting. If labels are used, the markings shall be in accordance with the identification system in Annex II of the Regulation. Annex II replicates Decision 97/129/EC. Furthermore, the packaging must be marked appropriately, either on the packaging itself or on a label attached to it. Markings must be visible and easy to read, and must remain and last as appropriate, even when the packaging is opened.*	Additionally, the Danish voluntary labelling system for waste sorting may be used on packaging. Further details in English can be found here.
Liechtenstein	Mandatory - In accordance with Article 7 of the 1997 Ordinance on Packaging and Packaging Waste, the manufacturing material of packaging must be made visible on the packaging or on a label in accordance with Decision 97/129/EC. Furthermore, the marking must be clearly visible, legible and durable, even after the packaging has been opened.*	N/A
Norway	Voluntary - There is a voluntary national labelling scheme known as the Sorting Labels.. Further details can be found here.*	N/A

* Regulation (EU) 2025/40 will be implemented in the EEA States once it is incorporated into the EEA Agreement. The review process by the EEA has begun and further details can be viewed [here](#).

06. Appendix 3: Overview of Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in Non EU/EEA States in the Single Market

Non EU/EEA Member States in the Single Market	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Switzerland	N/A	N/A
Northern Ireland	N/A - However, the labelling measures established by Regulation (EU) 2025/40 will be applicable, as clarified by the Northern Ireland Assembly here . Further information is provided in EU Commission Notice C/2025/946 .	N/A

07. Appendix 4: Overview of Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the Rest of Europe Outside the EU/EEA/Single Market and the EAEU

Non EU/EEA/Single Market	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
United Kingdom (UK)	Despite the introduction of recyclability labelling requirements in the 2023 proposed regulations, these requirements were omitted from the final regulations which entered into force in January 2025. DEFRA has stated that this is a temporary position, and that they intend to introduce mandatory labelling in alignment with the Regulation (EU) 2025/40.	N/A
Ukraine	In accordance with Article 3.5 of Order No. 289, 2004 to facilitate collection, sorting, transport, reuse and recovery, including recycling, the packaging must be marked for identification and classification purposes: the relevant industry, the type of packaging material(s). The package shall contain the appropriate marking, either directly on the package itself or on a label, which must be clearly visible and easily recognizable. Marking must be wear-resistant and reliable, including when the package is opened.	N/A
Republic of Moldova	Voluntary	If manufacturers of packaging and/or packaged products mark the packaging to facilitate collection, reuse, recovery, and recycling, they shall apply the system of identification and marking provided in Annex no. 5 in Decision No. 561, 2020, so that the packaging contains indications of the nature of the packaging material or materials used, to allow identification and classification in the sector concerned. The marking shall be applied directly to the package or label and must be visible, legible and durable, even after opening the package. Manufacturers who sell products packed in reusable primary packaging shall inform consumers about the reusable nature of the packaging, as the case may be, the deposit value and about the collection system.
Georgia	N/A	N/A

Non EU/EEA/Single Market	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Republic of Serbia	In accordance with Article 15 of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Law of 2009, packaging shall be identified and labeled according to the natural properties of the packaging materials used in its production to facilitate collection, reuse and recycling, composting, bio-degradation and utilization for energy purposes. The packaging shall bear the appropriate marking either on the packaging itself or on its label, and if the size of the packaging does not allow it, on the attached instructions. The mark shall indicate the type of material used in the production of the packaging, as well as the possibility of reuse and recycling, if any. The label should be clear, visible and easy to read, i.e. durable and permanent, even when the packaging is opened. Further details on the label are available in the Regulation on Numbering, Abbreviations and Symbols Used for Identification and Labelling of Packaging Materials of 2009.	Packaging that can be reused or recycled is marked with special symbols. These symbols are presented in Annex 2, of the Regulation on Numbering, Abbreviations and Symbols Used for Identification and Labelling of Packaging Materials of 2009.
Montenegro	N/A	N/A
Republic of Albania	In accordance with Chapter 8 of Decision No. 177/2012, the manufacturer or packer of packaged goods shall mark packaging with; A. The identification number and abbreviation of the name of the packaging materials according to Appendix no. 4; B. The sign of recycling/recovery for packaging according to Appendix no. 4; and C. The note announcing the obligation for separate collection of packaging waste. Labels shall be clear, legible and fixed to the packaging even after it has been opened.	Marks for the recyclability/recoverability of the packaging and the type of material from which it is made shall be affixed. A separate mark for identifying biodegradable materials shall also be used. Details of both labels are available in Appendix no. 4 of Decision No. 177/2012.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	In accordance with Article 11 of Regulation of April 2023, in order to facilitate collection, reuse and recovery of packaging, packaging must be classified and labelled according to the materials used in production. Packaging shall be classified and labelled according to the Ordinance on Sheet Form, Content and Informing on Significant Features of Products and Packaging by Producers, "Official Gazette of F BiH" number 6/08.	N/A

Non EU/EEA/Single Market	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
Republic of Azerbaijan	On 21 October 2025, Azerbaijan proposed the introduction of material identification labels for packaging. If approved, the marking shall be affixed directly to the packaging or the accompanying documents in an abrasion-resistant and durable manner. The marking must also include the digital code and/or the letter designation of the material, in accordance with Appendices 1 and 2 of the Draft.	N/A
Republic of Türkiye /Turkey	Voluntary	Packaging material and recyclability labelling is voluntary, in accordance with Article 14 of the 2021 Regulation on the Control of Packaging Waste. If manufacturers opt to label their packaging, the abbreviation and material number of the packaging can be added in accordance with the Package Labelling System set out in Annex-2 and the label illustrated in Annex-3. The labelling must be easily visible, readable and durable.

08. Appendix 5: Overview of Current Labelling Requirements for Packaging in the EAEU

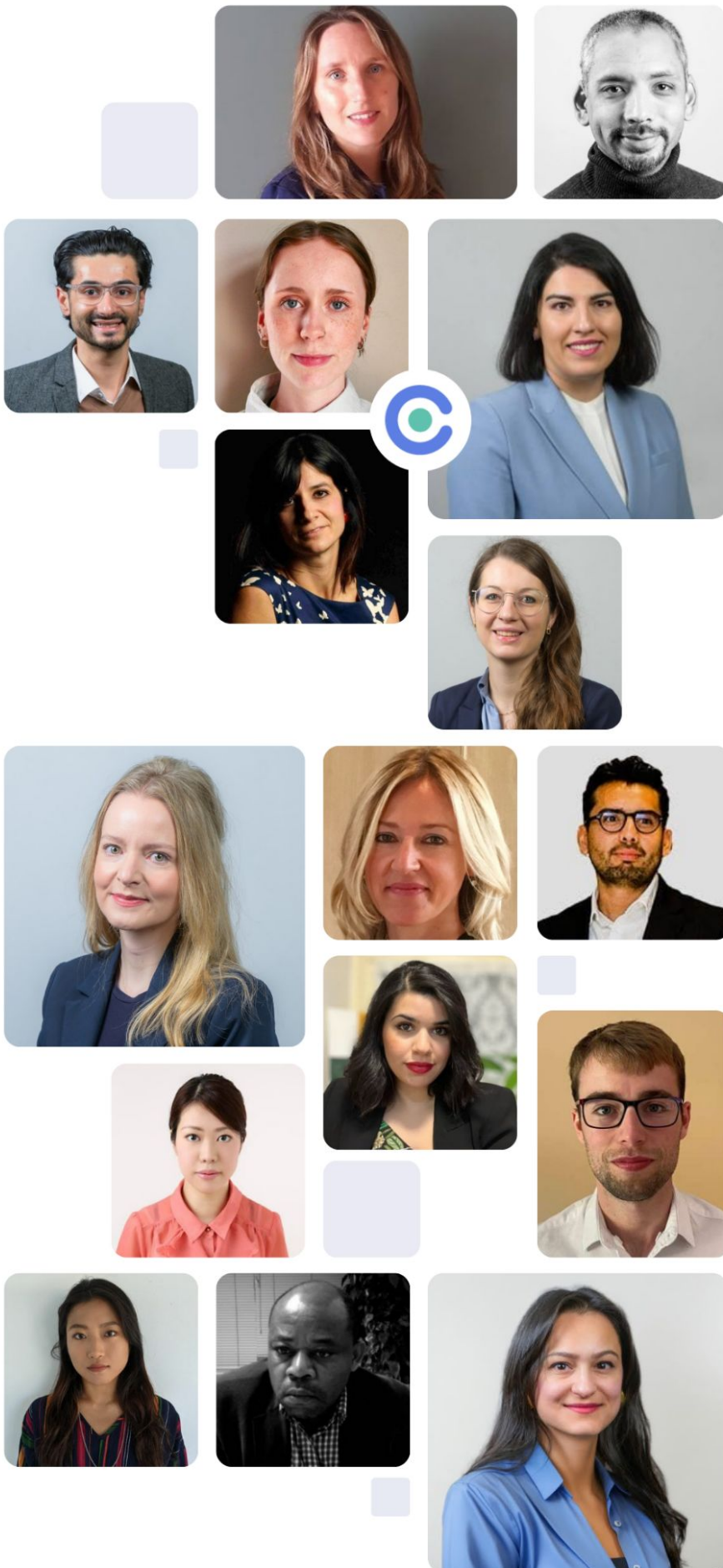
Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU/EEU) (Customs Union) Member States	Status of Material Identification Labelling	Additional Labelling Requirements
EAEU/EEU	In accordance with Article 6 of Decision No. 769 of 2011, packaging must contain the information necessary for identifying the material from which the packing is made, and also information on the possibility of reusing it, including informing the customers. The marking must contain a numerical designation and/or an alphabetical designation (abbreviation) of the material of which the packing is made, in accordance with Supplement 3, and contain pictograms and symbols in accordance with Supplements to this Decision.	Labelling obligations for denoting the reusability of packaging are set out in Article 6 and Figure 4 of Decision No. 769 of 2011.
Republic of Armenia	On 24.10.2021 the Armenian Decision No. 1544-N of 2006 on Packaging and Packaging Waste expired. Although it contained detailed labelling obligations in Chapter 5, it was replaced by EAEU Decision No. 769 of 2011. For details on this Decision please see the above section on the EAEU/EEU.	Decision No. 1544-N of 2006 contained mandatory labels for; denoting reusable packaging, and identifying packaging made of partially or fully secondary polymer raw materials, by indicating its percentage ratio. However, this Decision was repealed on 24.10.2021 by EAEU Decision No. 769 of 2011.
Republic of Belarus	Please see the above section on the EAEU/EEU.	Please see the above section on the EAEU/EEU.
Russian Federation	Please see the above section on the EAEU/EEU.	Please see the above section on the EAEU/EEU.

09. Referenced Legislation

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- CITEO: New Sorting Label for Household Packaging in France, Guidance Document, April 2022
- Croatia: Management of Packaging, Waste Packaging and Single-use Plastic Products, Pravilnik NN 137/2023
- Cyprus: Packaging and Packaging Waste Law No. 32(I), 2002
- Czech Republic: Packaging Act 477/2001
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- Germany: Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste, Act BGBl. 2234, 2017
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Boost your compliance capabilities without expanding your headcount.

Empower your business today - begin your journey and **speak to a regulatory expert.**

OUR NUMBERS

300+

CUSTOMERS WORLDWIDE

195

COUNTRIES COVERED

115,000+

REGULATIONS