

**Jeju International
Environment Plus Forum 2025**
Global Session



**The EU Strategy & International
Cooperation on Plastics**

Jong Han Rhee

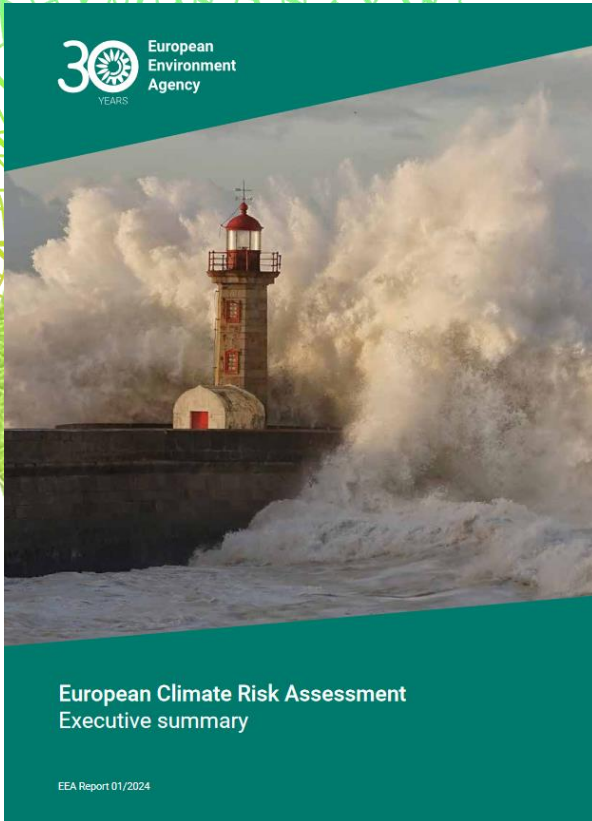
***Policy Officer for Environment & Climate
EU Delegation to the Republic of Korea***

16 July 2025



Planetary Crisis of Climate Change:

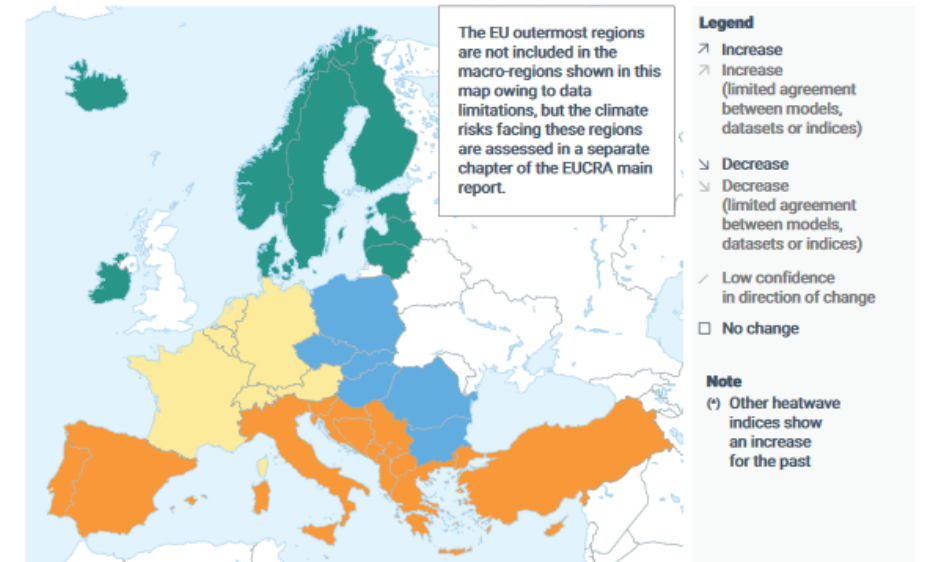
Climate Risks – Europe & the World



1st ever European Climate Risk Assessment (Mar 2024)

- Europe is heating at twice the global rate
- Europe will have to learn to live with 3 degrees warmer, even the Paris Agreement 1.5 degrees target is met

| Land regions | Northern Europe | | | Western Europe | | | Central-eastern Europe | | | Southern Europe | | | European regional seas | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------|------|----------------|--------|------|------------------------|--------|------|-----------------|--------|------|-------------------------|------|--------|
| | Past | Future | | Past | Future | | Past | Future | | Past | Future | | | Past | Future |
| | | Low | High | | Low | High | | Low | High | | Low | High | | | |
| Mean temperature | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | Sea surface temperature | ↗ | ↗ |
| Heatwave days | ☐(*) | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | | | |
| Total precipitation | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↘ | ↘ | ↗ | ↗ | ↘ | ↘ | ↘ | ↘ | Sea level | ↗ | ↗ |
| Heavy precipitation | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | | | |
| Drought | ↗ | ↘ | ↘ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | ↗ | | | |





EU Action and Response to Climate Change: **the European Green Deal**



“

Europe was the first continent to declare to be climate neutral in 2050, and now we are the very first ones to put a concrete roadmap on the table. Europe walks the talk on climate policies through innovation, investment and social compensation.

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

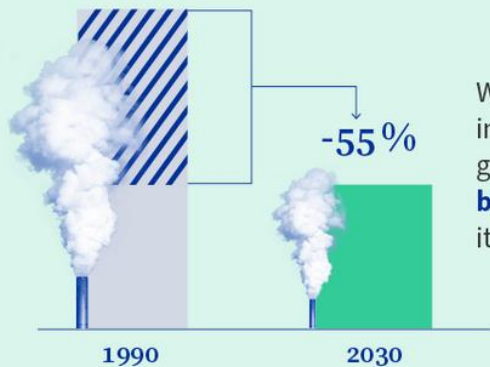




The European Green Deal:

Climate Targets – road to 2050

What the EU pledged



With the launch of the **European Green Deal** in 2019, the EU committed to cutting its net greenhouse gas emissions by **at least 55% by 2030**, compared to 1990 levels, up from its 40% commitment in 2014.

The EU's end goal is to reach **climate neutrality by 2050**. This will require a transition which should:



require action from **all sectors of the economy**



be **socially balanced and fair**



preserve the EU's **competitiveness**

- The EU targets to become **climate neutral by 2050** with the mid-term goal to reduce GHG emission by **at least 55% by 2030**.
- In July 2025, the Commission proposed an amendment to the EU Climate Law, setting a target to **reduce the emission by 90% by 2040**.





Delivering the 2030 Climate Targets:

‘Fit for 55’ legislation package

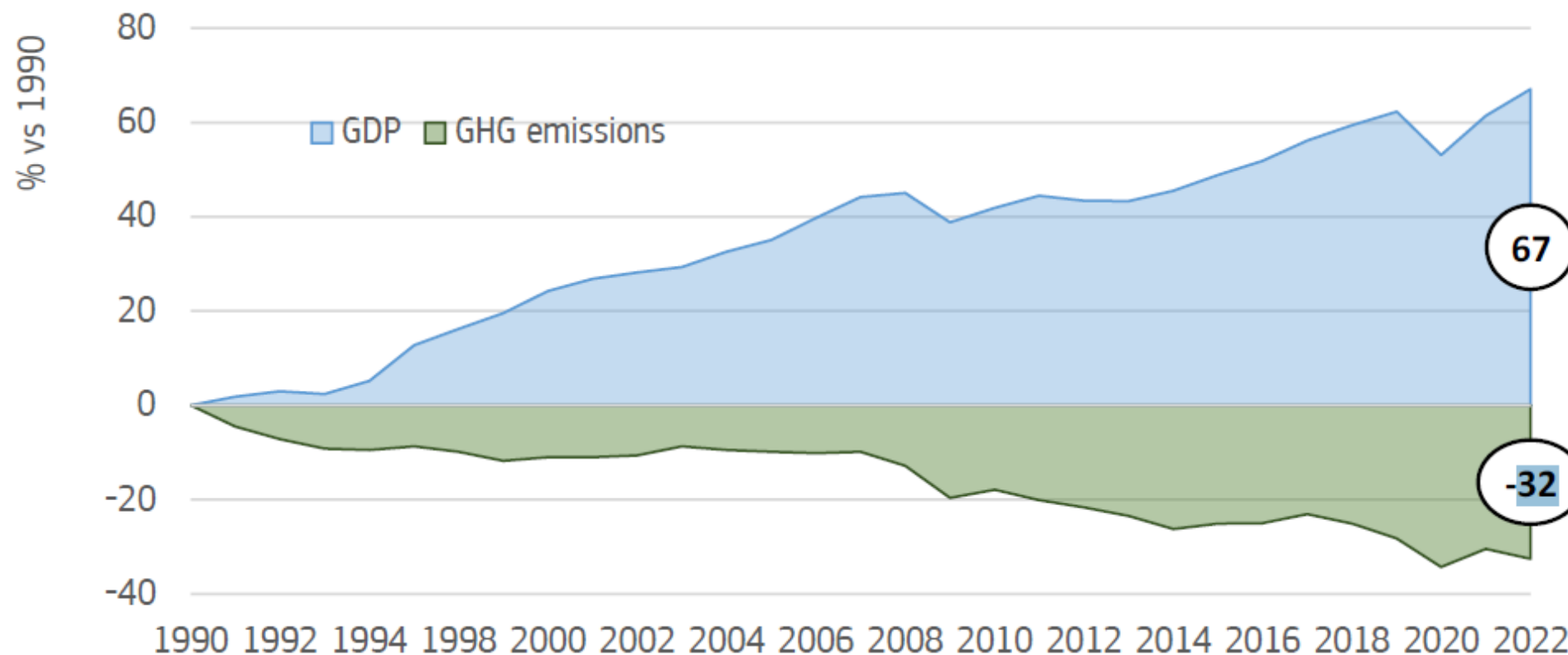


- The **European Climate Law** adopted in 2021, set the EU climate goals into legislation
- ‘**Fit for 55**’ legislation package put in place, with full adoption of comprehensive, interconnected legislations to reach the EU’s 2030 goal



Road to 2050 Climate Neutrality: Where the EU stands

Decoupling between economic growth and GHG emissions





Circular Economy Transition

Need for Action



- From 1970 to 2017, the annual global extraction of materials **tripled** and it continues to grow.

Source: The International Resource Panel, [Global Resources Outlook](#), 2019



- More than **90%** of biodiversity loss and water stress come from resource extraction and processing.

Source: The International Resource Panel, [Global Resources Outlook](#), 2019



- Annual waste generation will increase by **70%** by 2050

Source: [World Bank](#) What a waste 2.0, 2018



- Only **12%** of the materials used by EU industry come from recycling.

Source: [Eurostat](#), 2016 figures



- About **50%** of total greenhouse gas emissions come from resource extraction and processing

Source: The International Resource Panel, [Global Resources Outlook](#), 2019



The EU Zero pollution action plan (ZPAP) targets for marine litter reduction

- By 2030, **reduce by 50% plastic litter at sea and by 30% microplastics** released into the environment
- Targets calculated on basis of **Single Use Plastics (SUP)** and **microplastics measures**; additional measures might be needed
- **MSFD (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)** is essential for their delivery and monitoring



Circular Economy Transition

Opportunities

- Fostering **greener and more resilient value chains**



- **Protecting nature:** addressing **resource scarcity, biodiversity loss, climate change**



- **Job creation:** in waste management, digitalisation, materials innovation
- **Eliminating Pollution / Waste to avoid costs and create new revenue streams**



‘Fit for 55’ legislation package:

The EU strategies on CE and plastics

The logo for The European Green Deal, featuring a green circle with a white outline of a leaf and a circular arrow.

The European Green Deal

A climate-neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy

The logo for the Circular Economy Action Plan, featuring a green circle with a white outline of a leaf and a circular arrow.

Circular Economy Action Plan

For a cleaner and more competitive Europe

Maintaining the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible, & minimising the generation of waste

The logo for the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, featuring a blue circle with a white outline of a leaf and a circular arrow.

A EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR PLASTICS IN A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Improving the economics and quality of recycling & curbing plastic waste & littering



EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

Circular Economy Action Plan

Make sustainable products the norm in the EU
Empower consumers and public buyers
Sustainable production processes

Reduce Waste
Reduce Waste Exports
Boost market for high quality and safe secondary raw materials



35 actions

Electronics and ICT
Batteries and vehicles
Packaging
Plastics
Textiles
Construction and buildings
Food, water and nutrients

Plastic = Key element
in EU Circular
Economy Action Plan




EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

Circular Economy Action Plan

The new **Circular Economy Action Plan** presents new initiatives along the entire life cycle of products to transform our economy while protecting the environment.

TEXTILES



Worldwide, a full truck of **textiles** is sent to incineration or landfilled every second.

It is estimated that less than 1% of all textiles worldwide are recycled into new textiles.



Driving new business models will boost sorting, reuse and recycling of textiles, and allow consumers to choose sustainable textiles. Ecodesign will apply to a broader range of products: clothes will be made to last longer.



FOOD and PACKAGING



In 2017 packaging waste reached in Europe a record of **173 kg per inhabitant**.



New legislative initiatives on reuse to **substitute single-use packaging**, tableware and cutlery by reusable products in food services, as well as targets for reducing packaging waste will be proposed.

PLASTICS



Consumption of plastics is expected to double in the coming 20 years.

By 2050, plastics could account for 20% of oil consumption, 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, and there could be more plastics than fish in the ocean.



Single-use products will be **phased out** wherever possible and replaced by durable products for multiple use.

Acting on microplastics - restricting intentionally added microplastics, increasing the capture of microplastics at all relevant stages of the product lifecycle.



WASTE



Each citizen produces nearly **half a tonne of municipal waste per year**.



Measures will be introduced for **waste prevention and reduction**, increasing recycled content, minimising waste exports outside EU. An EU model for separate collection and labelling of products will be launched.



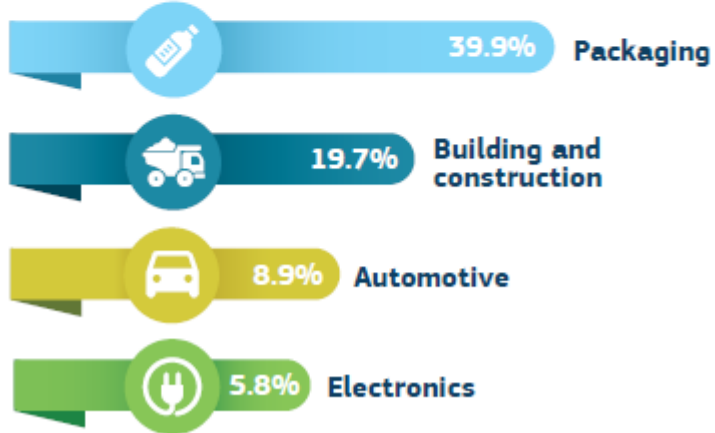


EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

The EU Plastics Strategy

EUROPEAN PLASTICS DEMAND IN 2015

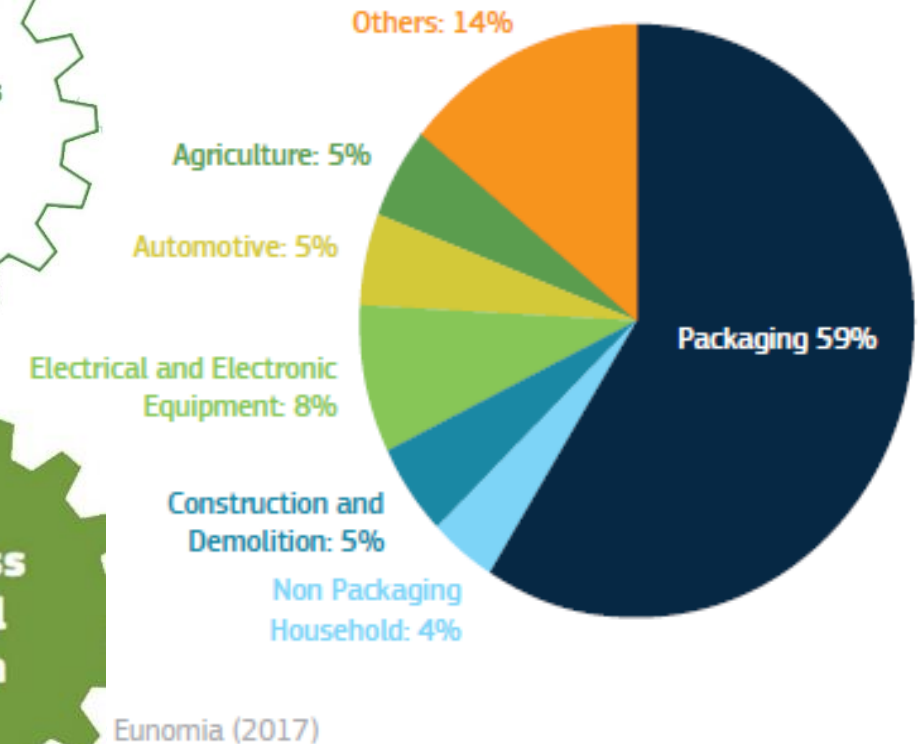
49 million tonnes



EU-28, Norway and Switzerland - Source: Plastics Europe (2016)



EU PLASTIC WASTE GENERATION IN 2015

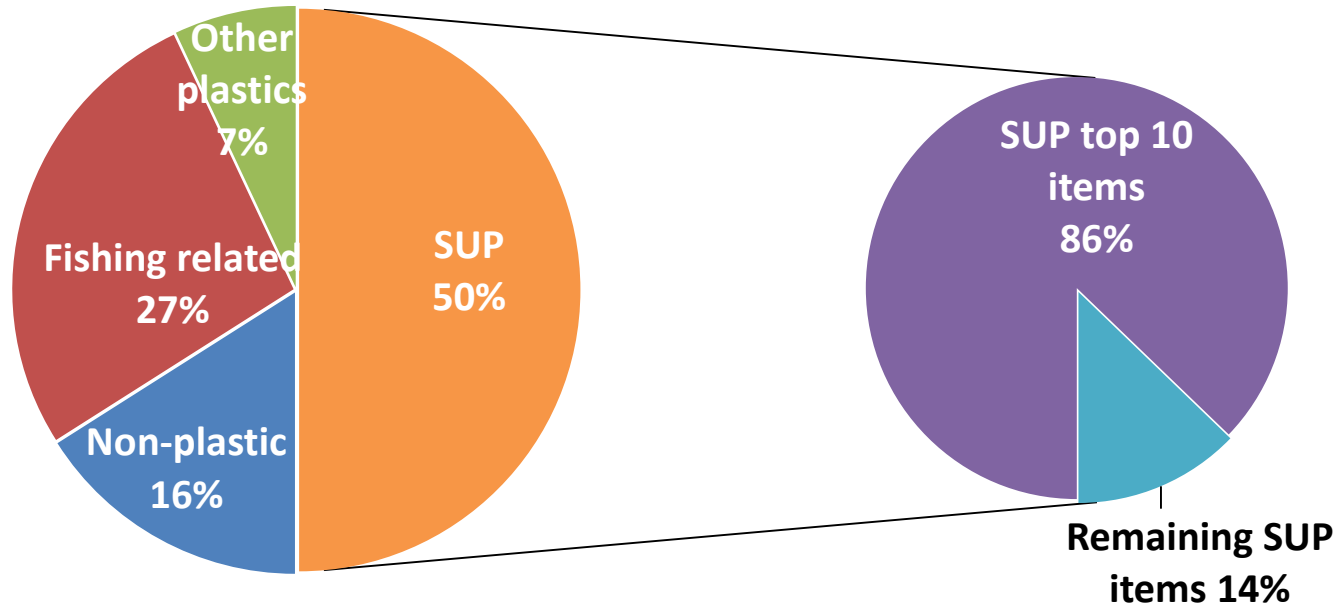




EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

Single Use Plastics Directive (SUPD)

- Covers 70% of all litter found on European beaches: Top 10 SUP (43%) + fishing gear (27%)



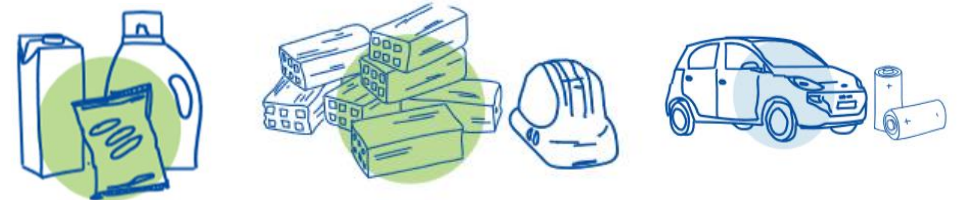
SUPD: targets for *plastic bottles*

Collection - 2025: 77%; 2029: 90%

Recycled content - 2025: 25%; 2030: 30%



Other laws: mandatory requirements for key products such as *packaging, vehicles, construction materials*





EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation

Objectives:

- Prevent and reduce packaging waste
- Make all packaging on the EU market recyclable by 2030
- Decrease the use of virgin materials
- Put the sector on track to climate neutrality by 2050

Implementation:

The requirements in the PPWR will be further specified in harmonised standards for packaging, guidelines, and subsequent adoption of implementing and delegated acts.





Biobased plastics and biodegradable & Compostable plastics

Objectives: contribution to a **sustainable plastics economy** by

- **Improving the understanding** around these materials and clarify where these plastics can bring genuine environmental benefits and under which conditions
- **Guiding** citizens, public authorities and businesses in their policy, purchasing or investing decisions
- **Preventing differences** at national level and fragmentation of the market by promoting a shared understanding across the EU on their production and use

Law: There is currently **no EU law in place** applying to biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics in a comprehensive manner.

A **non-binding EU Communication** brings clarifications and sets out the conditions to ensure that the overall environmental impact of their production and consumption is positive.



**Communication
Nov 2022**

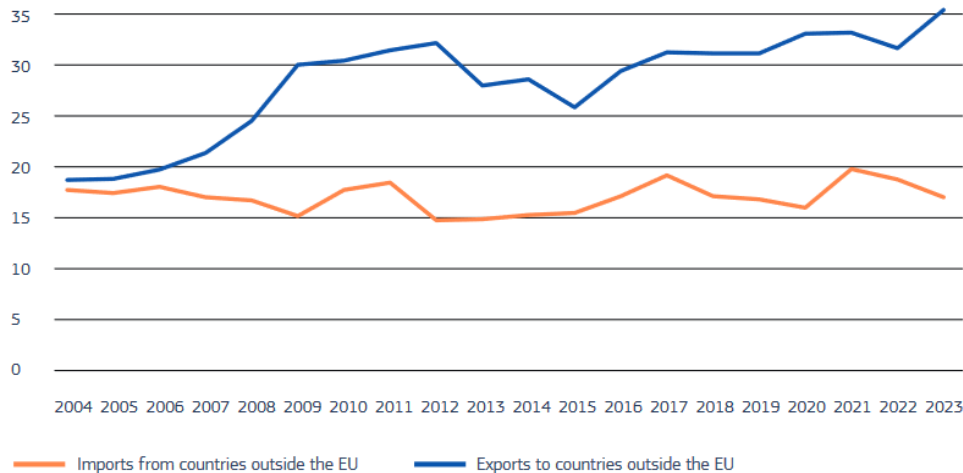


EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

EU Waste Shipments Regulation

EU Regulation on Waste Shipments EU rules on the shipment of waste within and beyond EU borders, to protect environment and public health.

The European Union's exports and imports of waste
(million tonnes)



Exports in 2023:
35.1 million tonnes
Value:
approx. € 18.5 billion



Imports in 2023:
17 million tonnes
Value:
approx. € 15.7 billion

Third country benefits...

Environmental

- Reduction of the amount of waste not managed in an environmentally sound manner.
- Greenhouse gases and other harmful emissions reduced due to a proper and environmentally sound management of waste.
- Promotion of waste recycling and its use as secondary material will also reduce other environmental emissions and contribute to energy savings and the protection of virgin resources.
- Industries relying on imported waste as feedstock shifting to domestic waste as a new source of production which may lead to better collection and treatment of such domestic waste.

Economic and social

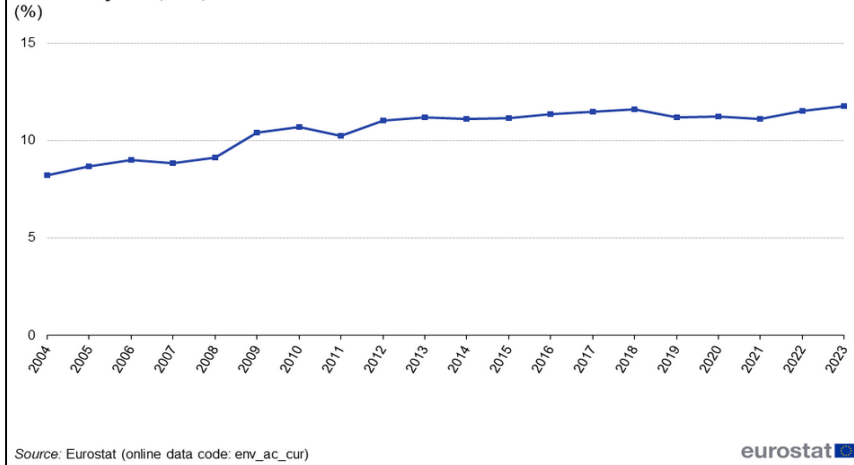
- New EU requirements for exports of waste incentives for the development and improvement of modern waste management systems and technologies, generating economic gains.
- EU requirements leading to more attention being paid to the collection and treatment of domestic waste which may replace imported waste.
- Positive impacts on the health of waste workers and communities.
- Possible decrease in import of certain waste streams from the EU, with consequences on industries processing them.



EU Strategy & Policy for CE:

Where the EU stands

Circularity rate, EU, 2004-2023

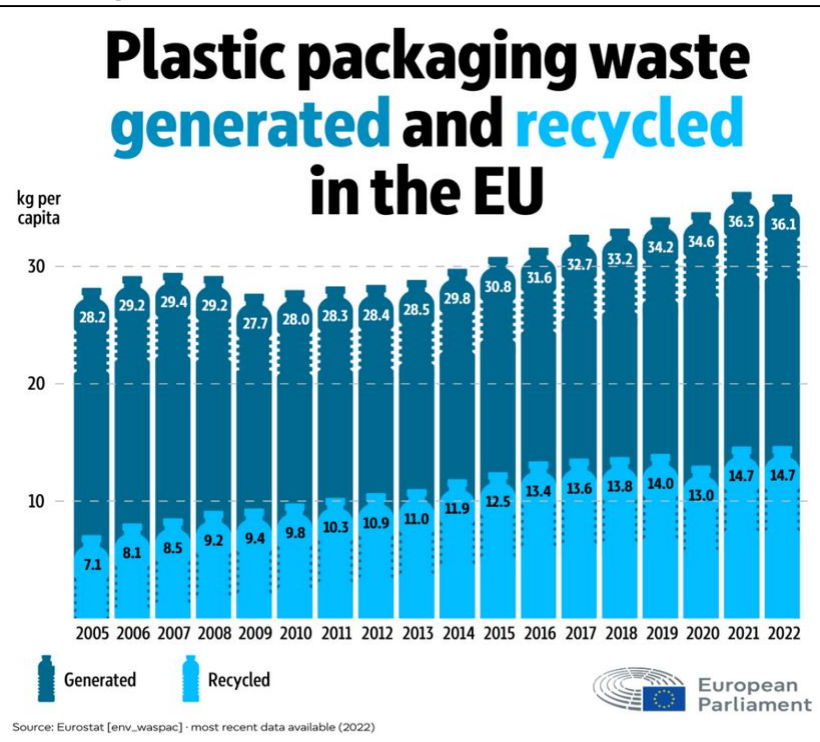


In 2022, the EU recycled 41% of all the generated plastic packaging waste,

Slight increase compared to 2012 when the rate stood at 38%.

EU indicator 'circular material use rate' contribution of recycled materials towards the overall use of materials.

In 2023, the EU's circularity rate was 11.8%, 3.6% up compared to 2004.





EU Green Diplomacy

- The EU is well aware of **global scale of challenges**
- The EU will always be **import-dependent**



Approach:

- **International leadership** in multilateral fora (COP, OECD, WTO etc.)
- **EU global financing and technical support programs**
- **Free Trade Agreements** (TSD chapters)
- **Bilateral Green Partnerships**



The EU-RoK Green Partnership



*“The EU and the Republic of Korea **share the ambition of a climate-neutral future**. The launch of our Green Partnership will help us towards that goal. We will now work on the **convergence in key areas**, and deepen cooperation on strategic, clean energy projects. Because it is **good for our supply chains, good for our competitiveness and good for the planet.**”*

- Implementation of Paris agreement
- Renewables and Energy Efficiency
- Clean and Just Transition
- Biodiversity & Forest
- Circular Economy and Pollution
- Joint Cooperation in third countries

► **Green Partnership is supported by a dedicated EU project (4 yrs)**

Budget / Duration

4 million euros
2024 - 2028

Target

Outreach KR Stakeholders
(youth, CSO, academia,
business, cities)

Objectives

- Strong Partnership
- Green Transition
- Public Diplomacy



Towards a legally binding global instrument



- Historic decision by the fifth meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly
- Negotiating committee successfully established
- Agreement should address **plastic pollution, including in marine environments, through a life-cycle approach**
- **Promote sustainable consumption and production, including through circular economy approaches**
- Critical to finally conclude negotiations at **INC-5.2 in August in Geneva.**

The background is a solid dark blue. Overlaid on this is a faint, light blue graphic. It features a globe in the center, with a network of thin lines radiating from it, suggesting a global or digital theme. To the right of the globe, there is a faint silhouette of a handshake, symbolizing agreement or partnership.

Thank you

**DELEGATION OF THE EU
TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA**