



Could this new EU-funded project boost refillable packaging in Europe?

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A new EU-funded scheme is aiming to scale up reusable packaging across Europe by working with organisations across the value chain to identify bottlenecks and design practical solutions that can work across different countries. To learn more about the objectives of this project, we caught up with Emmy Van Daele, Project Manager for INTERPOOL and Reuse Coordinator at Fair Resource Foundation.

Could you give us a brief overview of this project?

INTERPOOL is a cross-border collaboration between 14 partners from France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. The project unites frontrunners to lay the groundwork for scaling up cross-border reusable packaging systems.

Over the coming years, we will map existing reuse systems and identify technical, logistical and policy bottlenecks. We will work with retailers, producers, logistics providers and policymakers to design practical solutions for interoperability across borders. We aim to deliver a shared action plan that scales up reusable glass packaging systems to function efficiently within integrated European supply chains.

Reusable glass is one of the most promising pathways to reach the waste reducing target of the EU Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), but only if systems work across borders. INTERPOOL offers a historic opportunity to harmonise solutions, strengthen European collaboration, and accelerate industry-wide transition to reuse.

What inspired the creation of this project, and what makes the development of cross-border reusable packaging systems such a pressing issue?

The idea grew out of years of practical work on circular systems, where one recurring insight kept surfacing: reuse cannot not scale if it stops at national borders.

While products move freely across Europe every day, reusable packaging systems remain fragmented. Current systems are isolated by different formats, deposit schemes, washing infrastructures and governance models. These existing packaging systems can benefit from cross border knowledge sharing and alignment, to tackle inefficiencies and bottlenecks.

The timing of the project is no coincidence. The new targets set by the European Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation require a 5% national reduction in the total weight of packaging waste per inhabitant by 2030.

At the same time, 40% of transport packaging between EU member states and 10% of drinks packaging must be reusable by the same deadline. Fragmented legislation and inconsistencies between countries currently hamper the development of an efficient system that also works across borders.

What are the core objectives of the project, and what are the biggest barriers that will need to be overcome?

INTERPOOL has four core objectives:

- Map and compare existing reuse systems across the four participating countries.
- Identify technical, economic and regulatory barriers to scale up.
- Implement transnational solutions to these barriers.
- Develop a shared policy strategy and scale-up action plan for cross-border reusable glass systems.

How do you think the pooling system might work in practice?

At this stage, we are deliberately keeping the exact system design undefined. Rather than imposing a predefined model, we aim to co-create a solution that responds to operational realities.

We draw inspiration from strong examples in cross-border pooling in other packaging systems, beyond primary packaging. These prove that interoperability across markets is achievable when standards, governance and incentives are aligned.

Whether INTERPOOL results in a fully shared pooling model or a different form of interoperable system is currently being shaped together with the value chain. The focus is therefore on identifying what the chain truly needs, and removing the structural barriers that currently prevent reuse from scaling across Europe.

People working at companies across the entire packaging value chain read Packaging Europe. What message would you give to them if you wanted them to get involved with INTERPOOL?

INTERPOOL is an opportunity for the sector to shape the future of reusable glass, rather than reacting to it later. We are actively looking to validate assumptions and close critical data gaps to ensure this system will work. To do that, we would welcome your insights on:

- Barriers: what is holding you back today from switching to reusable glass packaging?
- Risks: where do you see the most significant operational or financial hurdles?
- Opportunities: how could a transnational system become an opportunity rather than a burden?
- Scalability: which product categories hold the highest potential for reuse at scale?

The system will only succeed if it is built with those that will actually use it. For companies, this means an opportunity to gain early insight into what truly works across borders and which meaningful steps to take towards 2030.

If you are a producer, retailer, distributor or solution provider looking to test an idea, share data, or explore pilots, we invite you to reach out.

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