

UNESDA submission to the European Commission Roadmap on Education for environmental sustainability

Overview of UNESDA

UNESDA - Soft Drinks Europe is the Brussels-based trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverages sector, representing European producers of soft drinks including carbonates, still drinks (e.g. ice teas), energy drinks and fruit-based drinks.

The membership of UNESDA comprises 24 national beverages associations and 9 companies with operations in several member states.

The EU soft drinks sector is rooted in the European economy and society throughout its €185 billion value chain - employing 1.7 million people throughout its value chain, and with 424 soft drinks production and bottling plants.

In the Roadmap on Education for environmental sustainability, the Commission makes the link between the implementation of the EU Green Deal and the need to boost education training to support the move towards a more sustainable and resource-efficient society.

UNESDA supports fully the objectives of the EU Green Deal as well as the EU Circular Economy Action Plan. We believe that we have a shared responsibility to create a greener and more sustainable planet for our children.

Future generations deserve to live in a world where all packaging is collected, sorted and recycled. Real progress has been made across Europe in creating more efficient and user-friendly collection and recycling infrastructures. Information on the packaging and recycling bags now clearly explains how to sort and what is recyclable. The deposit-refund schemes that you find in many countries make it easier to bring back beverage bottles.

The EU has a target of collecting 90% of plastic beverage bottles by 2029. Several countries have already reached those targets thanks to well-designed Deposit Return Schemes. The concept of giving a value to a bottle has led to real participation from the younger generation in collecting and recycling. The European soft drinks industry is investing considerable resources in making sure that none of its packaging ends up as litter. We are committed to making all possible effort to achieve full circularity and therefore recently presented its [Circular Packaging Vision 2030](#)¹ with the objective of accelerating the transition to a circular economy.

To achieve our Vision we need consumers to understand what is recyclable and how it needs to be collected. We are making it easy by making sure that all our packaging will be 100% recyclable, that way even the youngest consumer does not need to doubt. We are also aiming to collect 90% for all our packaging, again making it easy for youngest consumers to understand that every beverage packaging has value. Thanks to improved understanding and education we will get more packaging back which will then give us enough material to meet our target of using 100% recycled and/or renewable content by 2030.

This is also why we believe setting up clear EU rules on environmental labelling will be crucial to help consumers understand how and when to recycle packaging.

Recycling awareness and education is a joint effort: from parents, from educators – and from schools in particular, from society. There needs to be a joint and common effort to develop a greener future for future

¹ UNESDA announced that by 2025, beverage packaging (plastic, metal, glass) will be 100% recyclable and all soft drinks PET bottles will contain a minimum average of 50% rPET. And by 2030 our sector ambitions for 90% collection of all beverage packaging including via wide introduction of deposit return schemes ; for PET bottles to be made from 100% recycled and/or renewable material ; to reduce packaging footprint and increase the use of refillables.

generations, by teaching them the importance of collecting, sorting and recycling.

We also believe it would be essential for a dedicated budget under Horizon Europe or any other relevant EU funds to be allocated for environmental education.

With this in mind, UNESDA members are putting in place educational initiatives aiming at making younger generations more conscious of the need to collect and recycle beverage packaging because it is a resource that should never become waste. Here are a couple of examples:

- PepsiCo Foundation and PepsiCo Poland joined forces with [Rekopol](#), the Polish waste packaging recovery organisation, to launch [Rekologia](#). This is an educational project-based programme on recycling and waste segregation for primary school students in Poland
- Suntory Beverage and Food Europe in the UK has created the #LoveYourForest [anti-litter campaign](#) around the Forest of Dean where its factory is based. The aim is to promote activities that teach children about the importance of protecting the environment by reducing litter and boosting recycling.
- Coca-Cola Iberia and The Coca-Cola Foundation launched the initiative [Circular Seas](#) in collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders in Spain and Portugal, a programme of online and off-line training for youngsters and adults. Since 2018 the initiative has trained more than 55,000 people on the importance of recycling and circular economy. Circular Seas also promotes scientific knowledge and start-ups that look for solutions to the marine litter on the basis of circular economy.

UNESDA believes that education on recycling is an integral element of the soft drinks industry's efforts to drive full circularity. To this respect, UNESDA also decided to run a [recycling and collection social media campaign](#) during Easter holidays with the aim of encouraging parents to educate children on the importance of collecting, sorting and recycling.



UNESDA fully supports additional actions from EU authorities to integrate environmental education schemes in pupils' curricula, and in using Sustainable Development Goals as a compass for funding awareness and education campaigns towards EU children.