

## UNESDA statement on the Council's General Approach on the proposal for an EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation

Despite Member States' efforts, more improvements are needed to really enable circular beverage packaging

**Brussels, 18 December 2023:** Today, the 27 EU Member States have adopted their General Approach on the proposal for an EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). These efforts fall short of fully addressing the critical elements that will help move circularity forward.

While UNESDA welcomes the support for the mandatory rollout of Deposit and Return System (DRS), our industry deeply regrets that Member States have lowered the collection threshold granting an exemption from this obligation. The text adopted by the Council lays down a 78% collection rate, as opposed to the 90% envisaged by the European Commission and the proposed 85% by the European Parliament. This is not the right approach to boost collection and recycling of beverage packaging. DRS have a key role to play in supporting Member States in achieving a circular economy for beverage packaging. The figures speak for themselves: European countries with long-established DRS, such as the Nordics, usually report collection rates up to 95% and countries that have recently implemented DRS, including Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Malta, already see high collection rates (up to 90%).

Nicholas Hodac, Director General of UNESDA, comments: *"Even though Member States secured the obligation for the mandatory rollout of DRS, lowering the collection threshold granting an exemption from the DRS obligation is clearly a step back in the efforts to improve the collection of beverage packaging in the EU."*

When it comes to reuse, UNESDA welcomes the support for systems enabling refill as one of the solutions to achieve the reuse and refill targets but deplores the lack of recognition of the complementarity of reuse and recycling. While reusable packaging should definitely be part of the solution to reduce packaging and packaging waste, it should complement the ongoing recycling efforts made by the industry. How to do that? By creating exemption mechanisms from the reuse and refill targets to ensure that reusable models are put in place where and when they bring more environmental benefits than their recyclable counterpart.

Reacting on Member States' position on reuse, Mr. Hodac states: *"It is truly disappointing to see that Member States missed the opportunity to acknowledge the complementarity of reuse and recycling by failing to support the creation of exemptions mechanisms. While reuse can help achieve a circular economy, it doesn't always bring positive environmental outcomes and that's why exemptions are needed."*

Finally, when it comes to the recycled content targets, Mr. Hodac notes regretfully: *“We are also disappointed by Member States’ lack of support for a mechanism that would enable closed-loop recycling whenever it makes sense. A priority access right to food-grade recyclates would provide beverage manufacturers with reliable access to recycled materials, enabling them to achieve the EU’s mandatory recycled content targets and their own voluntary commitments.”*

Triologue negotiations involving the three EU institutions – the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission – will start in January for the adoption of the PPWR. UNESDA stands ready to strengthen collaboration with all decision-makers to ensure the consolidation of the supported enablers and address the elements still causing concern.

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### **Note to Editors**

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### **About UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe**

Established in 1958, UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe is the Brussels-based trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverages sector. Its membership comprises 10 companies and 25 national associations from across Europe. UNESDA members are involved in the production and/or distribution of a wide variety of non-alcoholic beverages including still drinks, carbonated drinks, energy drinks, iced teas, flavoured waters and sports drinks.



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