

Press Release

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Reuse at the heart of Single Use Plastic Bans

With groundswell support for and coverage of the EU proposal to ban single use plastics, it would have been easy to miss new measures quietly introduced in May that go to the very heart of the Circular Economy concept.

The revised Waste Framework Directive text, approved by the Council of EU Member States, introduced key measures that will go well beyond measures like product bans, by bringing in provisions to set targets for all types of reuse and increasing recycling targets to 65% for 2035 – compared with 41% in 2014 in Ireland.

The idea of reuse is to go beyond a single use for everything we own, extending the life of that item through passing it on, lending it, repairing it, upcycling it, or repurposing it. About 60% of our waste stream is made up of these everyday things, from clothing to electronics, furniture and other items (including many types of plastics) with the remainder made up of packaging. The Community Reuse Network (CRN) estimates that we currently reuse less than 5% of our municipal waste in Ireland, even though it is considered by the European Commission to be the best environmental and economic option for managing our valuable resources.

Claire Downey, Executive Officer for CRN said “these changes, alongside new obligations to separately collect textiles and paint, are very welcome and will require a greater focus on growing and supporting the reuse and recycling sector locally. This involves not just policy and fiscal supports but also engaging the community and businesses in prioritising repair, upcycling and the recirculation of our everyday things”.

Recognition of the role of social enterprise is also a new feature of the Directive. This is particularly important because social enterprises are key players and often first movers and innovators for the Circular Economy across Europe. They not only meet environmental objectives but also fulfil European goals of greater social inclusion by providing jobs and training opportunities for marginalised members of our society. On the Island of Ireland for example, there are four mattress recycling initiatives all of which are social enterprises.

The revised Waste Framework Directive text will enter into force shortly after publication in the Official Journal. This will be followed by a 2 year transposition period for Member States during which there is an opportunity for Ireland to show greater ambition for reuse and recycling as the central pillars to our circular economy.

There is much to do, but in the meantime these developments should at least encourage everyone to consider the everyday goods around them in a new light.

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For more information and press queries please contact Claire Downey Executive Officer on Email: info@crni.ie, Phone: 087 1735184

Note for Editors:

CRNI- Community Reuse Network Ireland

The Community Reuse Network Ireland is an all-island representative body for community based reuse, recycling and waste prevention organisations. Our vision is an Ireland where the word 'waste' doesn't exist and where our entire community benefits from the social, environmental and economic value of all reusable resources. The network is funded under the EPA's National Waste Prevention Programme. More information on our work and members is available at our website www.crni.ie.

