

Workshop Outcomes | Interim Report

Designing effective reuse policy

Background

The Global Plastic Policy Centre (GPPC) has been working with the New European Reuse Alliance (New ERA) to undertake a review of existing reuse-related national policy landscapes to explore how policy (including regulations and legislation) enables or constrains reuse systems. The findings will be used to identify what an effective regulatory landscape to facilitate reuse systems could look like and identify barriers and enablers of effective reuse policies.

Defining effectiveness

... the extent to which a policy achieves its intended objectives and delivers measurable, lasting outcomes including the capacity to address the problem it was designed to solve, while being efficient in resource use, adaptable to local contexts and equitable in its impacts across stakeholders.

An in-person workshop was held on the 1st April 2025 to bring actors and stakeholders involved in reuse systems together

- to develop a comprehensive understanding of effective reuse policies by mapping interventions across a reuse system lifecycle,
- validate findings from the pilot policy analyses, and
- gather expert inputs for a regulatory blueprint to support reuse at the national level.

The 50 participants included reuse businesses and related industry actors, policy makers, researchers, reuse-focused NGOs, PROs, and policy think tanks.

This outcomes document summarises the **key insights, discussions, and emerging considerations** from the workshop to inform the development of an effective reuse policy blueprint.

Breaking the ice

Participants were welcomed with a creative icebreaker centred on Tupperware, a widely recognised example of early reusable plastic packaging. Upon arrival, each participant received a mismatched container part (either a 'top' or a 'bottom') and was instructed to find its corresponding half among the group. This facilitated introductions while prompting reflection on the diversity of reusable packaging types. The activity helped establish a collaborative tone for the workshop and encouraged early interaction with the reuse items on display.

Outcomes

Session 1:

The current status of reuse policy and effectiveness research

Analysis of the first four pilot countries is currently underway, and persistent areas of diverging opinion or a lack of evidence have been identified. These are:

1. The relationship between EPR and reuse in policy
2. The role of Government in implementing reuse systems
3. Monitoring systems for policy effectiveness
4. Stakeholder engagement in policy formulation

The GPPC has extensive policy evaluation research and experience, which has identified the importance of these areas in designing effective policy. Therefore, understanding and addressing these persistent gaps is critical to facilitate recommendations for effective policy design and implementation.

Participants were invited to engage with a 'fishbowl' exercise, a dynamic discussion approach that prioritises equity and free-flowing conversation, supported by a facilitator. Attendees were split into groups of roughly ten, with three sitting in a small circle with an empty chair. The rest of the participants stood around the outside of the circle, listening to the discussion. When a participant from the outer circle joins the group to contribute to the conversation, a seated participant must leave. In this way, points are kept to those that are directly relevant to the discussion topic, and the conversation moves quickly as participants rotate in and out of the fishbowl.

*Please note the key discussion points reflect the inputs by participants and do not necessarily reflect our final results, due to the ongoing nature of this research. See the **'Opportunities to engage' section on Page X** in this document if you have further reflections you'd like us to consider in this process.*



Group 1: Relationship between EPR and reuse in policy

There is ongoing debate about how EPR and reuse should relate to one another within policy frameworks. Some stakeholders argue that EPR and reuse should function together, as EPR can incentivise product design for reuse and establish systems that facilitate the reuse of products at the end of their life cycle. Others believe that EPR and reuse should be treated as separate systems, with each addressing different aspects of resource efficiency and waste management. EPR could offer a valuable entry point for reuse in diverse country contexts, meaning that understanding potential barriers and opportunities is important to support later dialogue about what effective national policy landscapes for reuse could look like.

Guiding question:

How should EPR and reuse be integrated, or should they remain independent to avoid policy overlap and complexity?

Key discussion points:

1. There was a general agreement that reuse and EPR should be integrated but to facilitate this, EPR needs to be redesigned.
2. There was agreement amongst the group that reusable packaging users should only pay EPR fees once and the price should be based on the number of rotations of the packaging.
3. A significant challenge is that EPR has historically focused on waste management through recycling, not reuse. Therefore, it was felt that EPR has not driven real change in product design or packaging systems, which would be necessary to implement reuse systems.
4. A further challenge is that it was suggested that brands currently find EPR fees so low that they'd rather pay them than switch to reuse. A solution suggested was to create EPR reuse targets for producers and brand owners to drive the uptake of reuse.
5. There was significant discussion regarding who should manage and monitor EPR schemes for reuse. There's a risk that producers and brand owners will design reuse systems that still benefit them, rather than making real systemic changes. Therefore, people feel that there is a need to rethink who manages EPR schemes if reuse is to be integrated into EPR.
6. It was identified that currently, brand owners and producers run EPR schemes which has turned recycling into a business rather than a tool for real change and has even led to the inflation of the price of recycled materials.
7. An additional challenge is that if reuse and single-use packaging go through the same EPR system, we might just reinforce the single-use model instead of shifting towards reuse.
8. Eco-modulation was a contentious area, with many agreeing that EPR fees for reusable packaging should be adjusted based on how harmful or sustainable packaging is at the end of life.

9. There were questions on who should decide on how the eco modulation is done and who administers and manages this process. Currently, it is PROs who manage this, but people feel that external guidelines are needed to ensure the fairness of the process. There is a need for an independent body to monitor and allocate EPR funds for reuse with some suggesting an oversight committee to ensure transparency and effectiveness.
10. A percentage of EPR fees should be redirected from recycling to fund reuse systems. It was suggested that reuse should get a bigger share of the EPR fees but it is unclear how this would happen.
11. France's approach to implementing reuse was widely referenced, particularly how CITEO funds reuse initiatives. The Reuse Observatory was highlighted as an example of how tracking reuse data across Europe helps monitor progress.



Group 2: Role of Government in implementing reuse

There have been different opinions about the specific role the government should play in supporting reuse systems. For example, in one case study country, it was felt that by setting a policy target, the government had done enough to support reuse and that it was “up to industry to take over”. In other countries, there was more expectation of the government to provide seed funding for start-ups and support the scaling up of existing infrastructure. Businesses identified a need for a clear policy implementation pathway to be generated by government. In short, it is unclear how these different expectations are managed and how they can be communicated for an effective reuse policy system to be created.

Guiding question:

Where does the responsibility of government around the implementation of policy end, and industry start?

Key discussion points:

1. The government's role in enabling reuse is multifaceted, but its core responsibility is creating driving enabling policies that include rules and targets for reuse. This needs to be informed by experts and the convening of a natural evidence base that can guide policy formulation from the outset.
2. Proactive policy that is supported by a clear and ambitious vision is needed. The policy interventions themselves need to be informed by context - for example, levelling the playing field by single use and reuse, funding pilots and learning, and learning from existing sectors where reuse is often mainstream, such as the automotive industry.
3. Levelling the playing field for reuse includes standardization in hygiene practices to drive clarity for consumers.
4. The government needs to harmonize the policy landscape and unlock supporting policy areas for reuse, such as standardisation in hygiene and mainstreaming and supporting practical logistics for reuse for example through shared infrastructure.



Group 3: Monitoring systems for policy effectiveness

Across the countries assessed to date, there is a lack of systematic and independent monitoring to assess policy effectiveness, making it difficult to evaluate whether the policy has been implemented fully and the impacts it has across local and national systems.¹ The lack of monitoring is especially notable where a target has been created, with limited measures outlined to assess whether or not these targets have been reached. Integrating transparent monitoring criteria into policy design will support policy enforcement, as it supports compliance and can facilitate the adjustment of policies as needed. Despite this acknowledged need, there remain limited examples of this in practice and thus limited experiences to draw best practices.

Guiding questions:

What does building monitoring into the design of a reuse or related policies need to look like? What sort of metrics and evaluative criteria should be included?

Key discussion points:

1. Policy should be designed with clear, achievable monitoring requirements, recognising that policy targets and metrics are intertwined as a poor selection can lead to policy failure.
2. Existing reporting practices should be leveraged where possible. New reporting practices should be simplified to balance industry burden and policy effectiveness.
3. There is a possibility of creating standardised monitoring tools similar to existing tools such as IPCC tools for Net zero targets (UK gov) and ISO standards.
4. Identifying a clear vision for a policy that adopts a phased approach and identifies metrics to facilitate this. Establishing a phased approach recognises that reuse systems need time to develop. Metrics should evolve with the scale-up of reuse.
5. Baseline monitoring identifies a clear starting point, which is essential for the fair measurement of progress, and should compare existing business as usual practices. A baseline study should inform the selection of policy targets and metrics by predicting and modelling future projections for reuse system growth.
6. There is potential to establish a coordinating body or framework for uniform reporting and accountability.
7. Identifying potential metrics was challenging, but there was a need to identify high-level common metrics across sectors, recognising that the majority of metrics will need to be sectorally led, as there are different monitoring requirements for various reuse items (e.g., beverage sector vs. takeaway sector).
8. Key metrics, such as return rates, reuse rates, and consumer behaviour, need to have consistent definitions. A KPI approach was discussed, for example with container rotation numbers and distance travelled. Where possible, metrics should align with broader agendas, e.g. climate and health.

¹The lack of built-in monitoring systems is evident in all policy areas assessed by the Global Plastics Policy Centre, including in waste management regulations, EPR, bans, taxes, affirmative action (such as national plans or roadmaps), and other policy types related to plastics and waste. Of over 200 individual policies evaluated to date, over 75% have no time bound or quantitative objectives, nor mechanisms or responsibility identified for the monitoring of the impacts of the policy.

Group 4: Stakeholder engagement in policy formulation

Interviewees across the countries have given inconsistent or conflicting answers regarding stakeholder engagement in policy formulation. For example, in the same country, one interviewee said that extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken in policy formulation, and others identified that stakeholder engagement is never undertaken in policy formulation and never will be. It is generally difficult to evidence stakeholder engagement in policy formulation.

Guiding questions:

What does the ideal process for engaging stakeholders in the design of reuse and related policies need to look like, and how should this be reflected in the policies themselves?

Key discussion points:

1. Stakeholder engagement in informing policy needs to be transparent and equitable to facilitate the sharing of different perspectives and knowledge. This can be started by knowledge sharing and visits to each other's context to provide on-the-ground insight.
2. Stakeholder engagement is critical to determine barriers, opportunities or nuances in implementation that will be essential for policy success.
3. Stakeholder engagement needs to follow an iterative process to allow feedback multiple times in policy design and refinement.
4. Importance of industry in taking a leading role in pushing the reuse agenda.
5. Transparent stakeholder engagement was linked to preventing the influence of lobbying.
6. Specific engagement should be sought in identifying starting points for policy, such as identifying priority product categories and closed-loop opportunities.
7. Transparency in the policy-making process is often lacking, meaning that it is difficult to know how to engage. This is especially challenging for SMEs, leading to major disparities in the capacity to influence policy.
8. A cross-stakeholder committee was suggested, with a diverse range to develop a coherent enabling environment. The example of the European Circular Economy task force was referenced as an example, although this is currently only advisory and not part of the design.
9. The issue of trust in government institutions was raised, with an identified need to be more clear about the use of evidence in policymaking, and the importance of independent science.



Session 2:

Designing a comprehensive regulatory approach for effective reuse systems

Participants were invited to build their own optimal policy landscape that enabled effective reuse systems through mapping out different policy interventions and enablers onto printouts of 'washing', and then sequencing these by hanging them on a 'washing line'. The washing line exercise was a participatory research activity designed to generate discussion around what the core elements of a reuse policy landscape should entail and identify some of the key trade offs or considerations that come into play when designing policy. The objective of the session was deliberately not tied to a specific geographical context to allow for diverse perspectives to be included. A reuse roadmap, modelled after CITEO's high-level diagram, was used for reference.

Most groups adopted a logical and sequential approach to creating their policy landscapes, often beginning to structure their theoretical timeline of interventions that need to be undertaken. In most cases, these included 'pre-policy' starting points of bigger questions or principles that needed to be addressed before any interventions could take place, and a reflection of the enablers that needed to be in place to support effective policy. There is an emerging constellation of diverse policy types and locations within the policy landscape that drive reuse.

The following sections offer a summary of the different considerations identified by the groups, following the same structure. The detailed reflections and findings will be published in the final project report (see below for more details).

Starting points

Identifying and delineating responsibilities

There was broad agreement that policy needs to drive reuse and that regulation is needed. Yet, there was significant discussion about which agencies or authorities should be responsible for different parts of the reuse lifecycle. National governments have an obvious role to play, but the strategic importance of local authorities in supporting reuse, sorting and downstream efficiencies were also identified, especially when understanding how existing infrastructure can be leveraged or adapted for reuse. A regulator should be identified with responsibility for enforcing reuse regulations.

Creating a strong, clear and compelling reuse vision

Before reuse policy can be designed, a clear vision needs to be outlined, with some advocating for phased targets per sector. Such a vision would support coherent and strategic policy direction rather than fragmented changes.

Establishing a clear baseline of existing reuse culture and business

before a national vision can be set, including modelling future scenarios and pathways to reuse. A baseline analysis can identify early starting points (e.g., sectors and products) to build a phased pathway to mainstreaming reuse. An initial LCA is needed to evaluate different reuse scenarios and materials. Based on these analyses, early wins can be identified. The baseline analyses should also evaluate opportunities in the existing policy landscape for reuse synergies.

Developing a business case for reuse

was also identified as a policy prerequisite to drive investment and business development.

Ensuring a just reuse transition

was identified as critical, for example, by ensuring costs for reuse are not borne disproportionately by consumers and ensuring that traditional waste industry workers aren't left behind. Justice and equity need to be considered throughout policy design.



Consistent enablers identified

Tracking, transparency and data requirements

The need for 'real' numbers and statistics was identified across the reuse lifecycle. The added benefit of this approach was accountability through public reporting. There were different perspectives regarding who should collect the data. Some suggested that data should be collected locally. Others suggested establishing a reuse observatory that is accountable for system reporting, setting rates, and data recovery through independent tracking agencies and engagement with public authorities. The observatory could have responsibility for monitoring effectiveness and success through tracking and standardising trackability.

Strong public awareness needs to be established, with awareness-raising campaigns

needing to be undertaken throughout policy development and formulation to support the growth of reuse culture and habits amongst consumers. There were differing ideas of who would be responsible for this, with some suggesting governments and others suggesting businesses.

An environment that values and fosters innovation

is essential for reuse as it drives the development of new business models, materials, and system design. Encouraging experimentation and scaling successful pilots will help accelerate the mainstreaming of reuse across sectors.

Developing consistent financial support and mechanisms

to underpin development, scaling, and long-term viability of reuse systems. Targeted funding and incentives help de-risk innovation, attract private investment, and ensure equitable access to reuse infrastructure.

Building coalitions of support and expertise

is important for ensuring that policy is realistic and achievable, and that design is based on the best available evidence. Fostering and supporting early collaborative networks will support the scaling up of reuse systems, promoting the pooling of resources and the sharing of innovative solutions. The early policy design phase was identified as a catalyst to convene a multi-stakeholder community, to define and start to design the system and the regulations needed.

Types of policy interventions

A roadmap for developing reuse was often identified, with a constellation of supporting policies around the side that either need to be created or amended to support reuse. There was general agreement that policy interventions needed to be sequenced across all components of the reuse lifecycle to ensure coherence and mitigate unintended consequences. The roadmap should include a clear, phased plan to achieve reuse at scale, with multiple targets that increase over time to facilitate the scaling up of reuse across different sectors and scenarios.

In addition, several different types of policy interventions were identified:

Category	Type of intervention identified
Product level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandating standardised packaging at a regional level to make it easier to scale reuse. • Banning and restricting unnecessary and problematic plastics • Reuse labelling should be introduced in mid-stage policy implementation to influence consumer behaviour (overlaps with the consumer level) • Mandating take-back obligations in different sectors and scenarios (e.g., closed loop)
Consumer level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandating that design and accessibility are at the forefront of consumer products to enable behaviour change • Ensuring that convenience and cost are not barriers to consumers
Economic instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxing unnecessary single-use packaging and using those funds to support reuse. • Subsidising reuse businesses to create a level playing field with single-use products • Create mandatory targets and price parity mechanisms to create enabling conditions for reuse to compete with single-use products
Reuse-specific interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulations /guidance on standards for washing, hygiene & health • Standardisation of product design for consistent collection and sorting, and system interoperability • Creating phased, sector-specific targets that increase over time
Support for businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to support business transitions (particularly small start-ups that have already been operating but will require changes due to policy implementation)

Opportunities to engage

This research is expected to continue until at least July, with a final report and a series of policy briefs intended as the primary outputs, alongside dissemination webinars and events. There are a number of ways in which you can engage in this research.

As a reviewer/collaborator:

We will be looking for reviewers who understand the regulatory landscape for each country case study, as well as for the final report. If you would like to be a collaborator in this way, please send us an email.

Connecting us with actors for interviews:

The countries we are examining as an evidence base are **Germany, France, Spain, Latvia, Colombia, Chile, Argentina, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia**, with two further countries under identification. If you have connections to policymakers or actors in the reuse landscape for any of these countries that you think would be beneficial to get their insights, please do connect us.

Taking part in online workshops:

We will be hosting an online workshop for each of the regions under assessment (**Europe, South America, Southeast Asia**) to validate and discuss our findings before publication. If you would like to join one of these that are relevant to you, please get in touch so we can be sure to invite you.

The published reports and briefs will be shared via our networks and on our website:

<https://plasticspolicy.port.ac.uk/research/>



About the Global Plastics Policy Centre

Based at the University of Portsmouth, the Global Plastics Policy Centre is an independent knowledge broker that facilitates effective plastics policy-making in government and the private sector. The Centre provides evidence-based guidance at the interface of government, businesses, citizens, and researchers, including supporting the process to develop a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. Reuse and the circular economy form part of the Centre's core areas of research, and the team regularly advises on reuse systems, their implementation, and evaluation to support the transition to more sustainable economic models.

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