

Aluminium beverage can recycling in 2020 remains high at 73% despite the impact of the new EU recycling reporting rules

Aluminium beverage can recycling achieved a record level of 510,000 tonnes, saving 4,2 million tonnes CO_{2eq}

Brussels, 14 December 2022 – The latest report by Metal Packaging Europe and European Aluminium shows that the overall recycling rate for aluminium beverage cans in the European Union, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland remained high in 2020 at 73% (72.8%). With a 3% points drop compared to 2019 and a growth of 9% cans consumed, the total amount of aluminium recycled from cans reached a record level of 510,000 tonnes, an increase of more than 20,000 tonnes since the previous year. This represents a total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions saving of 4,2 million tonnes of CO_{2eq} (equivalent to the amount of GHG emissions produced by a European town of nearly half a million inhabitants like Toulouse or Gdansk¹).

Can manufacturers (members of Metal Packaging Europe) and their aluminium suppliers (members of European Aluminium) welcomed the new result and stressed that despite the introduction of the new EU recycling reporting rules and the spectacular growth in cans consumed, the total tonnage of recycled aluminium cans has increased. Most EU Member States now report at the point of entrance of a recycling facility, instead of the collection phase. This has resulted in a recycling drop for most packaging materials.

“We are fully supportive of the new EU recycling reporting rules as these measure ‘real’ recycling and we are pleased to notice that this has resulted in only a very minor and likely only temporary drop in the can recycling rate. The aluminium beverage can already meets the highest recyclability performance grade of 95% as proposed in the new draft for a Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation” said Léonie Knox-Peebles, CEO of Metal Packaging Europe. *As aluminium beverage cans are fully circular and can be recycled endlessly without losing the aluminium’s inherent properties, we are confident that even in a growing market we will be able to meet our 100% beverage can recycling ambition by 2030”.*

“With more and more countries turning to Deposit Return Systems (DRS) we will be able to recycle more cans via a can-to-can remelting solution, generating maximum environmental benefits and we are calling upon those countries with classic EPR systems to invest more into the collection and sorting of the whole aluminium packaging fraction in order to fully close the material loop” Maarten Labberton, Director Packaging Group at European Aluminium, commented. *“Although we are surprised by the unfounded high reuse targets in the new EU proposal, we welcome the obligation to collect 90% or more of metal and plastic beverage containers for recycling, preferably via DRS. A Deposit Return System should be balanced, which means that it should be run by an independent operator, have variable deposit fees and no cross subsidies between the materials concerned.”*

¹ If a yearly GHG emission of 9,2 tonnes is assumed per EU citizen as used in the Product Environmental Footprint methodology, see Normalisation method and data for Environmental Footprints – Deliverable 2 of the AA Environmental Footprint and Material Efficiency Support for Product Policy (No. 70307/2012/ENV.C.1/635340)

Notes to the editor:

About Metal Packaging Europe:

Metal Packaging Europe gives Europe's rigid metal packaging industry a unified voice, by bringing together manufacturers, suppliers, and national associations. We proactively position and support the positive attributes and image of metal packaging through joint marketing, environmental and technical initiatives. We represent the industry's views and voice opinions so that stakeholders understand how metal packaging contributes to the Circular Economy. For further information: MPE Secretariat, T: +32.2.897.04.93, info@metalpackagingeurope.org

About European Aluminium:

European Aluminium, founded in 1981 and based in Brussels, is the voice of the aluminium industry in Europe. We actively engage with decision makers and the wider stakeholder community to promote the outstanding properties of aluminium, secure growth and optimise the contribution our metal can make to meeting Europe's sustainability challenges. Our 100+ members include primary aluminium producers; downstream manufacturers of extruded, rolled and cast aluminium; producers of recycled aluminium and national aluminium associations, representing more than 600 plants in 30 European countries. Aluminium products are used in a wide range of markets, including automotive, transport, high-tech engineering, building, construction and packaging. For media requests: Kelly Roegies, Senior Manager Communications, M: +32 471 80 20 98, roegies@european-aluminium.eu

Annex:

The annex provides a detailed overview of aluminium beverage can recycling rates by country in 2020. Recycling rates have been calculated on the basis of the new EU reporting rules, insofar available.

