

Aluminium beverage can recycling reaches a new record

76.3% of Aluminium Beverage Cans Recycled as Industry Drives Toward 100% Circularity by 2050

Brussels, 17 February 2026 – The latest report by Metal Packaging Europe (MPE) and European Aluminium (EA) shows that the overall recycling rate for aluminium beverage cans in the European Union, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway and Iceland reached 76.3% in 2023.

The records for the year show that both volumes placed on the market and recycling tonnages increased year on year, by 4% and 7% respectively meaning that record volumes of aluminium recycled from cans were fed back into Europe’s circular economy. The recycled tonnage represents a total Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions saving of 5.7 million tonnes of CO₂eq (equivalent to the annual amount of GHG produced by a European city of more than half a million inhabitants like Lyon or Gdańsk¹.)

The continued increase in recycled aluminium volume reflects a general uplift in recycling performance, but one that is accentuated in countries with Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) for aluminium beverage cans. For example, in the reporting year (2023) Malta introduced a DRS sparking a rapid increase in aluminium beverage can recycling from 50 to 80%. Equally impressively both Latvia and the Slovak Republic experienced year-on-year double-digit growth in recycling rates in 2023 following implementation of DRS during 2022. (Latvia: +14% from 60 to 74% in 2023, Slovak Republic: +33% from 58 to 91% in 2023).

MPE and EA fully support EU decarbonization goals and the circular economy, through recycling of high-quality scrap in Europe. Recycling aluminium requires 95% less energy than primary production. With the successful implementation of DRS and an export duty on aluminium scrap, Europe will be able to advance on close loop can-to-can recycling.

MPE and EA remain resolved to increase the recycling rate at European level and support improved national collection infrastructure through Deposit Return Systems, so EU Member States can confidently attain a 90% recycling rate or more.

Director of the Packaging Group at European Aluminium, Andy Doran, commented, “*Year on year the evidence builds that well designed Deposit Return Schemes offer consumers the additional incentive to return high value aluminium beverage cans for high quality recycling, at the same time creating the opportunity to create closed product loop, circular economy solutions within Europe. Full Member State implementation is still needed of the Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation National requirements for DRS, so that all EU citizens can now experience this simple and effective collection solution*”.

“We are encouraged by the latest achievements and believe the industry is on the right long-term path. Aluminium is a permanent material and a circular source whose inherent properties do not change, regardless of the number of times it goes through a recycling process. By 2023, 12 Member States had implemented deposit return schemes (DRS) for aluminium beverage cans, with more Member States following. This growing momentum clearly demonstrates that the pathway towards fully circular, can-

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)

to-can recycling for aluminium beverage cans is taking shape across Europe.” said Krassimira Kazashka, CEO of Metal Packaging Europe.

Notes to the editor:

About Metal Packaging Europe:

Metal Packaging Europe (MPE) is the united voice of Europe’s rigid metal packaging industry (steel and aluminium), bringing together manufacturers, suppliers, and national associations (metalpackagingeurope.org). We position and support the positive attributes and image of metal packaging through joint advocacy, marketing, sustainability and technical initiatives. The European metal packaging industry produces over 200 billion units annually across 650 manufacturing sites, directly employs more than 60,000 people and plays a vital role in the Circular Economy, supporting numerous value chains and applications, including beverages, food, chemicals, aerosols and others. For further information: MPE Secretariat, T: +32 2 897 04 90, info@mpe-eu.com

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, roegies@european-aluminium.eu, M: +32 471 80 20 98

Annex:

The annex provides a detailed overview of aluminium beverage can recycling rates by country in 2023. Recycling rates have been calculated from numerous industry and Government sources. In particular EUROSTAT aluminium / metal packaging data only becomes available up to two years after the reporting year. This leads to a delay in overall reporting.

