



Activity Report 2022

The circular economy -
in full swing, and more
relevant than ever

The better we sort, the more we recycle

Fostplus

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Five dilemmas facing our Managing Director and our Chairman

Reuse or recycle? 2021 or 2022? Punish or reward? At home or out of home? We put our Managing Director and our Chairman to the test and confronted them with five contemporary dilemmas that characterise the circular economy. Curious about their response? Watch the video now!



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765.758

Tons of packaging
on the market



11.584.008

Belgian inhabitants



95 %

Recycling rate

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“In the coming years, we have a unique opportunity to further assume our social role and respond to real needs and concerns of Belgian citizens.”

Wim Geens - Managing Director Fost Plus



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Key figures



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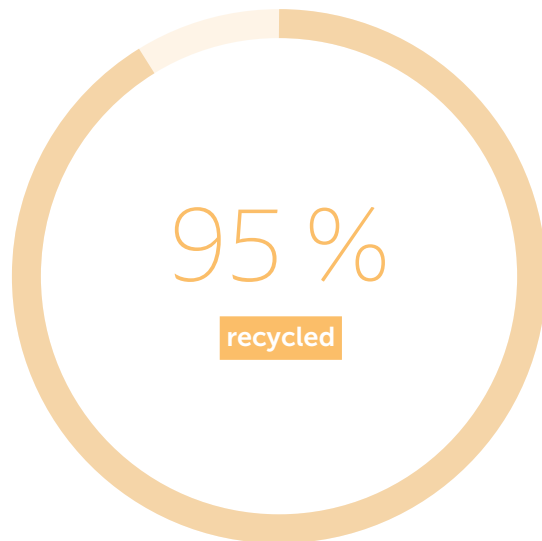
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Recycling household packaging in Belgium

Fost Plus recycled 95% of household packaging placed on the market by its members in 2022. This great result is mainly due to the increase in the share of plastic recycling. Overall, we recycled 15% more plastic packaging material than the previous year, while the share of single-use packaging on the market decreased slightly (by weight).



In 2022, our members marketed 765,758 tonnes of packaging, of which 725,816 tonnes were recycled, accounting for a 95% recycling rate.



11.584.008

Inhabitants



4.802

Members



765.758

Tons of packaging on the market

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Recycled quantities of packaging per inhabitant per year



17,4 kg

PMD



30,1 kg

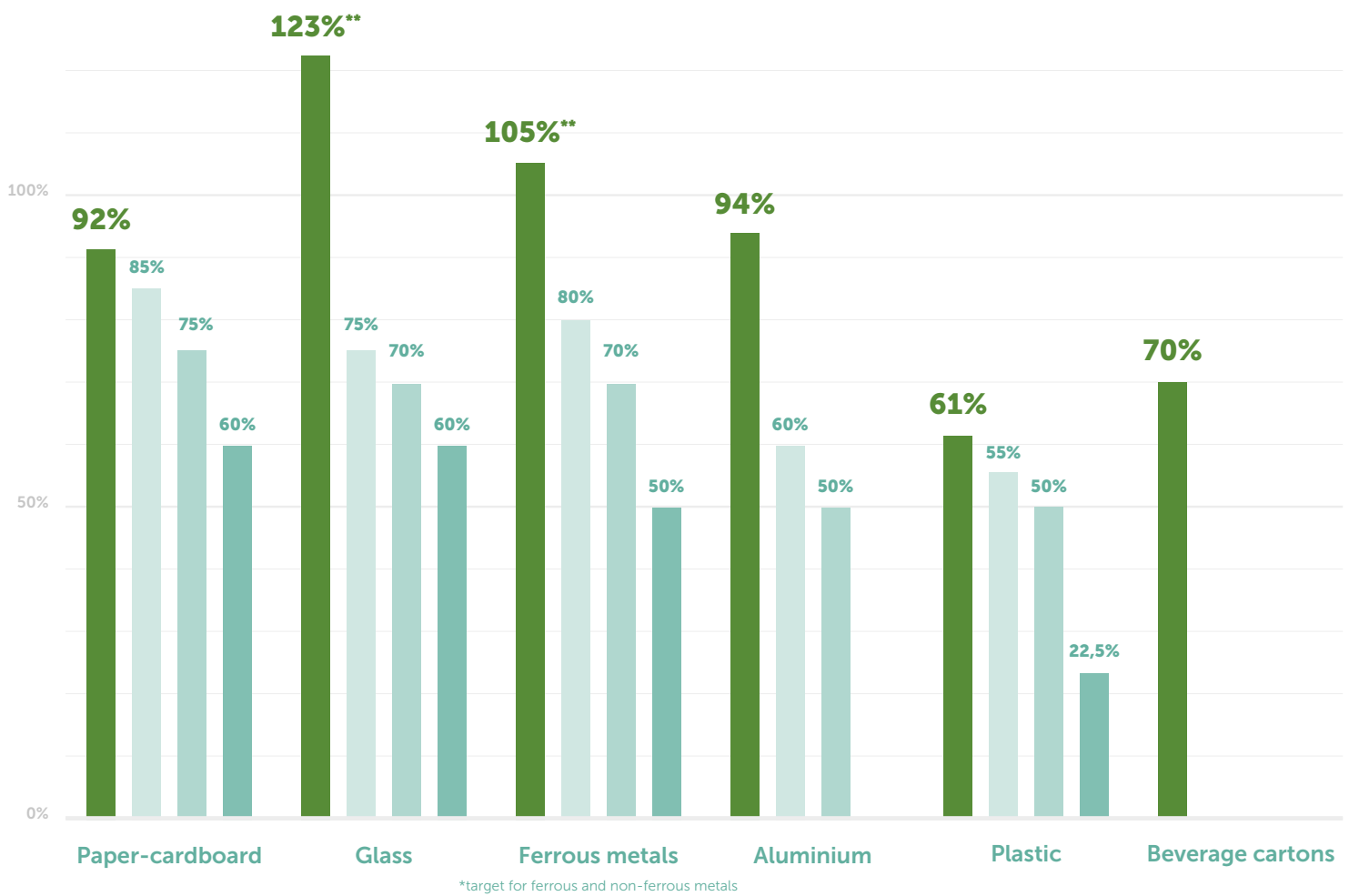
Glass



15,2 kg

Paper-cardboard

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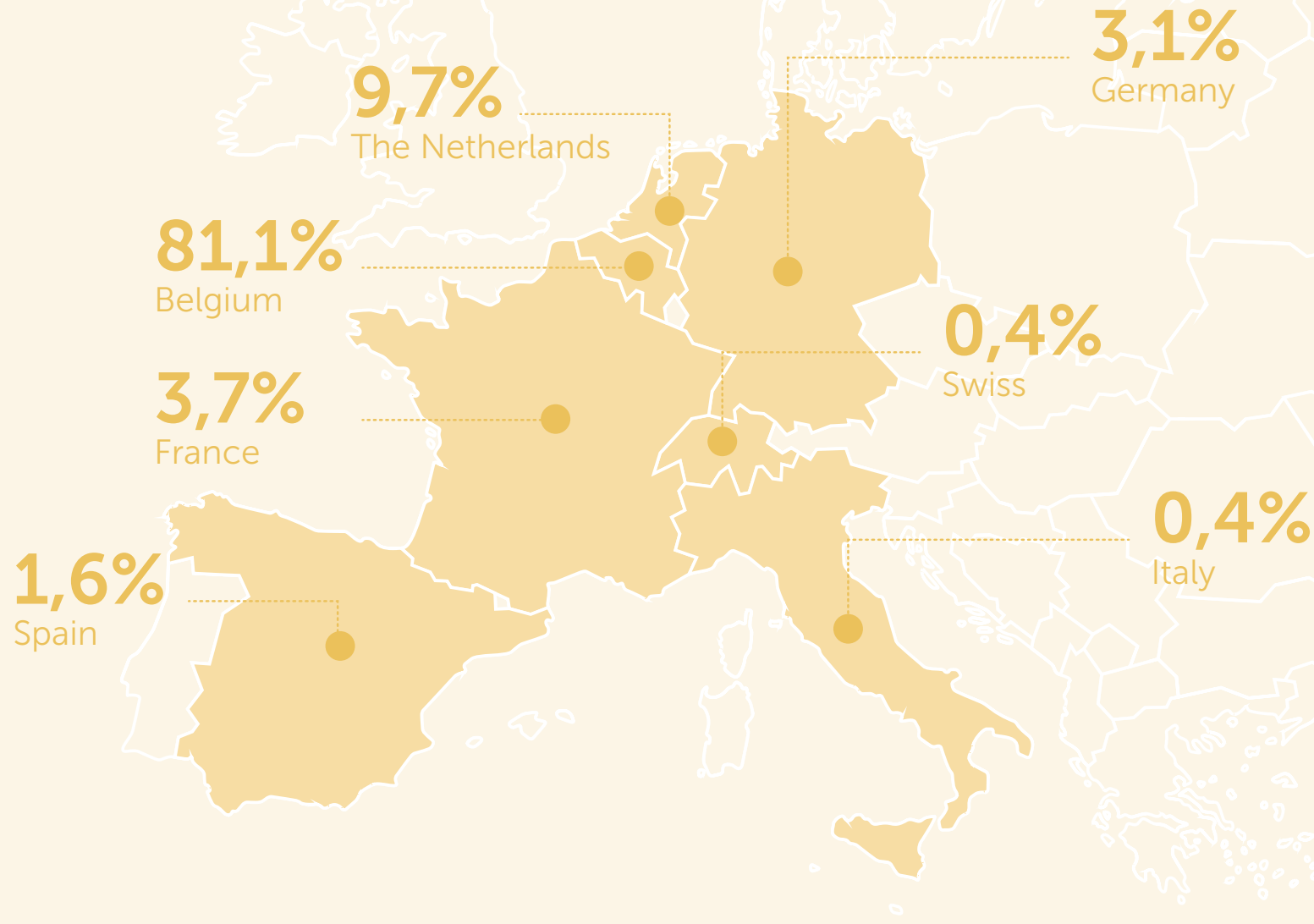
** These percentages are calculated based on the recycled quantities compared to the quantities put on the Belgian market by our members. This means that the recycled quantities also include collected packaging materials put on the Belgian market by non-members or purchased by consumers abroad (border purchases). These figures are still subject to minor changes, due to late declarations and additional checks.

The recycling percentage is being calculated since 2022 (for the year 2020) using a new methodology that is the same for all European countries. The aim is to accurately compare the recycling results of the different European member states with the respective targets. Since the introduction of the new methodology, the recycling percentage is being calculated when the recycling actually takes place. Therefore, after any impurities and unsuitable substances have been removed from the sorted materials in the recycling centres.

However, Belgian packaging companies have set themselves even more ambitious targets. To test our results against these targets as well, we will report to the Interregional Packaging Commission (IRPC), within the scope of the current accreditation, using both the earlier and current calculation methods. For the new accreditation, which will come into effect in 2024, the IRPC will determine the calculation method to be used from then on for the legally-defined targets set by the Belgian Interregional Cooperation Agreement.

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Where are the collected materials recycled?



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€285.062.361

Operating budget

In 2022, Fost Plus had an operating budget of EUR 285,062,361. This mainly covers the costs for the selective collection, sorting and recycling of household packaging. These costs are borne by the Fost Plus members, via the payment of the Green Dot rates.



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The New Blue Bag



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Cornerstone of the Belgian circular economy

Thanks to the New Blue Bag, we collected almost 23 kg of PMD per person per year in 2022. So PMD collection really is at cruising speed now. Behind the scenes, five new sorting centres are in operation and the first advanced recycling facilities are now running at full capacity.

Easy and accessible to everyone

There is no doubt that the blue bag lies behind the success of household packaging recycling in Belgium. Collecting PMD door to door makes the system easy and accessible for everyone and ensured that a maximum amount of packaging was recovered right from the start. By extending the contents to include all plastic packaging – and not just bottles and containers – we are now bringing almost 90,000 tonnes of extra packaging into the circular economy.

Target achieved

The New Blue Bag has now been fully operational for a whole year for the first time. The last intermunicipal company switched to the New Blue Bag at the end of 2021, so the 2022 collection results give us a clear view of the actual yield. And it is exactly in line with expectations. We achieved the targeted results in the first year, with an average of almost 23 kilos per person per year. We expect these results to improve still further in the coming years, as members of the public experience fewer doubts about sorting.

Setting our sights on more expansion

The excellent yield from the New Blue Bag does not, however, mean that we are resting on our laurels. The aim was always to further expand the contents of the blue bag as new sustainable recycling solutions are devised for certain products or packaging. Since the start of 2022, for example, all aerosols have been allowed, unless they fall into the Hazardous Household Waste category. On 1 January 2023, aluminium and plastic capsules for coffee and other drinks were added. We expect to be able to collect another 4,500 tonnes of extra material as a result. And the blue bag will remain open to further expansion in the years to come.



Capsules for coffee and other drinks now with PMD

Good news for all Belgian coffee lovers! As of 1 January 2023, all coffee capsules - and those holding other drinks - can be put in the PMD bag, as well. Together with three big companies of the sector - Nespresso, Nestlé and JDE Peet's -, Fost Plus has developed a sustainable recycling solution for these capsules and anticipates that this will lead to the collection of an additional 4,500 tonnes and more.

[Read the whole story](#) →



A boost for the Belgian circular economy

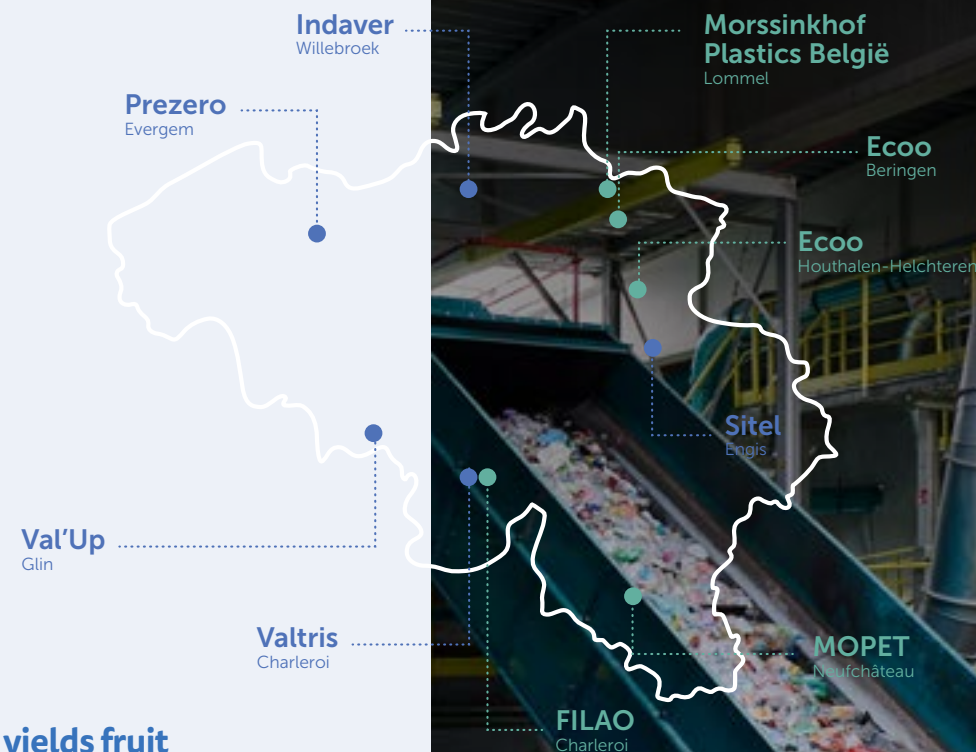
Expanding the blue bag has given the circular economy in this country an enormous boost. Funding was provided for five brand-new sorting centres, which are now all up and running. Plus we went in search of local recycling capacity. Successfully: in 2022 two advanced recycling facilities opened as well.

Last sorting centre operational

The contents of the blue bag are sorted in five new sorting centres scattered all over Belgium. This local processing, close to home, means that the PMD bags collected do not have to cover long distances. The sorting centres use state-of-the-art technologies to sort the packaging collected into sixteen uniform material flows. Four of the five sorting centres were already fully operational by the end of 2021: Indaver (Willebroek), Prezero (Evergem), Valtris (Couillet) and Val'Up (Ghlin). The fifth and final sorting centre, Sitel in Engis, came permanently on line in early 2023. Finally, we also have a structural cooperation arrangement with the Vanheede Environment Group sorting centre in Rumbeke to be able to sort additional volumes.

Built-in flexibility yields fruit

The necessary flexibility was built in when the sorting centres were designed so as to constantly further refine the sorting processes. This proved to be a good move. Initially, the contents of the blue bag were sorted into fourteen flows. Another two flows were added last year. Since the start of 2023, opaque PET packaging has been sorted as a separate flow, alongside colourless, blue and coloured PET bottles. For the drinks capsules – which have been allowed with PMD since the start of 2023 – an extra eddy current separator was implemented to pick up small aluminium packaging as well.



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New recycling capacity under construction

For further packaging recycling, we opt as much as possible for local processing capacity. A total of five new recycling facilities are to be built to recycle plastic material flows from the blue bag.

In 2020, Ecoo in Houthalen-Helchteren invested in an extra recycling line for mixed plastics and mixed films. In June 2022, Ecoo Beringen opened an ultra-modern facility to recycle polyethylene film, with an annual capacity of 42,000 tonnes of packaging material. The recycled material is used to make new film and bags.

MOPET, a recycling plant in Neufchâteau built by the Dutch company Morssinkhof Rymoplast Group to process complex PET packaging, made an announcement at the beginning of 2022. By the end of 2024, it will be recycling 10,500 tonnes of PET trays and 17,500 tonnes of PET bottles per year, mainly to provide raw materials for new trays and bottles.

Inauguration Ecoo Beringen - Wim Van Den Bossche, CEO of Ecoo group, Ludo Kelchtermans, CEO og Nuhma; Koen Verhaert of Ecoo group; Wim Geens, Managing Director of Fost Plus

At the end of 2022, Filao in Charleroi started bottle-to-bottle recycling of PET bottles. This is a unique, fully circular project that involves recycling PET

bottles collected from Belgian families to make raw materials for new bottles which in turn are intended for the Belgian market. This facility is the result of a cooperation between the waste processing company Veolia and Sources ALMA, the Belgian market leader in bottled water. Once it is fully operational, the plant will recycle 40,000 tonnes of PET per year.

Lastly, at the start of 2023 the contract was awarded for the fifth and final recycling centre being built by Morssinkhof Rymoplast in Lommel which, among other things, is to recycle propylene and polyethylene packaging.



Inauguration Ecoo Beringen - Wim Van Den Bossche, CEO of Ecoo group, Ludo Kelchtermans, CEO og Nuhma; Koen Verhaert of Ecoo group; Wim Geens, Managing Director of Fost Plus

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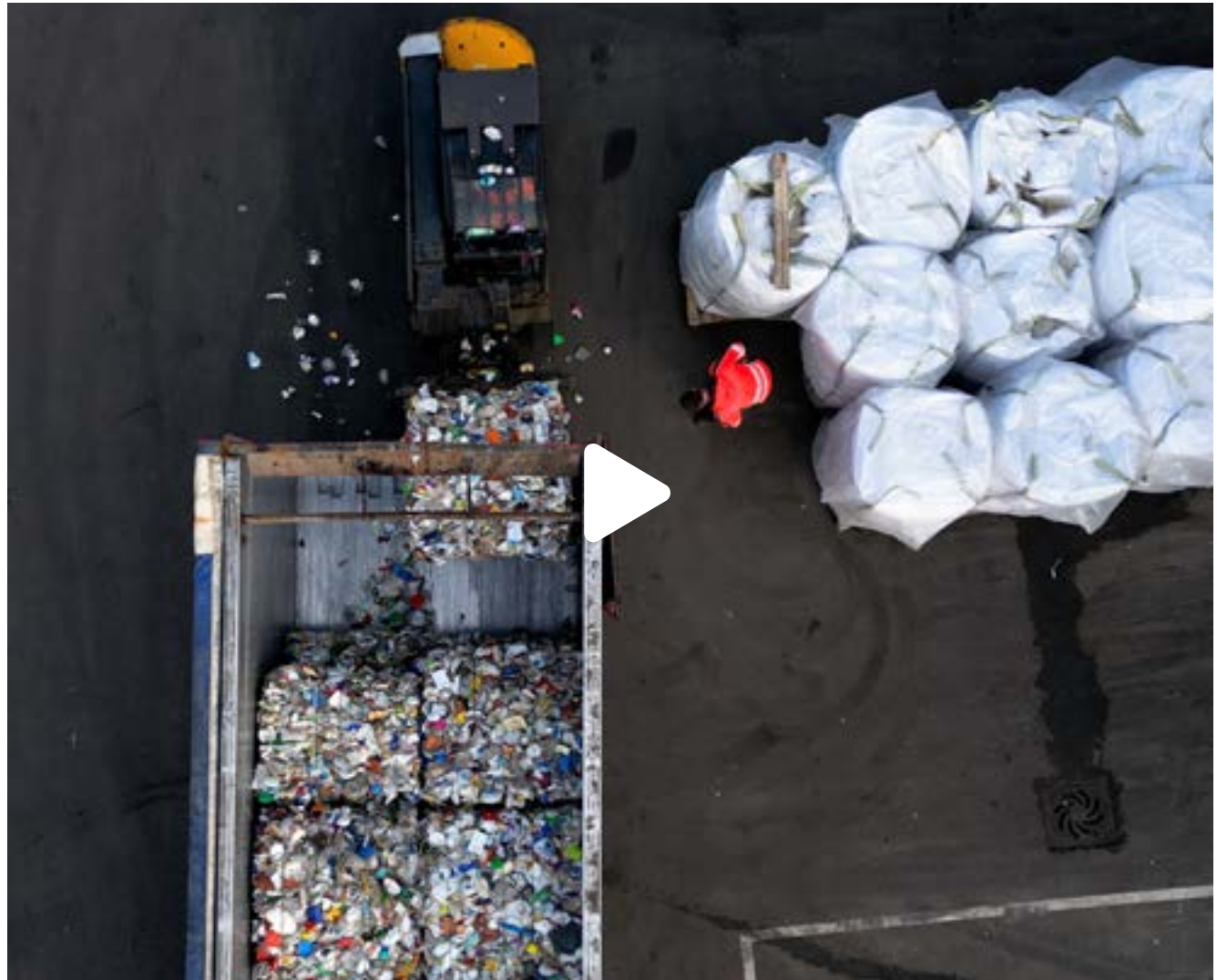
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We will soon be recycling butter tubs and shampoo bottles in Belgium, too

Morssinkhof Rymoplast is building a new recycling plant for plastic packaging from the blue bag in Lommel. The plant will be operational in October 2024 and among other things, will recycle polypropylene (PP) packaging (such as butter tubs and ready-meal trays) and polyethylene packaging (such as shampoo and milk bottles and flasks).

[Read the whole story](#)



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Out of home

Every Packaging counts

We've been the best home sorters for decades, thanks to door-to-door PMD collection. But out of home, too much packaging still gets lost. It ends up with the residual waste or as litter. And that is a shame, because every piece of packaging counts.

Out-of-home sorting

Sorting in companies – close cooperation with everyone involved

At the moment, a lot of PMD still gets lost in the residual waste in companies, despite the obligation to sort. So there is lots of potential for additional recycling here. Fost Plus is taking action in various ways to be able to recover this packaging after all. Successfully, because in 2023 we again achieved our goals here with the collection of over 24,000 tonnes via PMD Companies.

Valipac, the organisation responsible for recycling commercial and industrial waste, is one of our most important partners here. In addition, we work closely with the waste companies responsible for collection in the field. We help them to improve the services

they provide for customers and optimise their logistics via a network of local transfer stations for the PMD collected. We also joined forces with Facilicom, one of Belgium's biggest facilities management companies – after all, cleaning teams are crucial for waste management in offices.

Finally, a great deal of attention is paid to inspection and enforcement. Together with OVAM, the Public Waste Agency of Flanders, we have assigned another two people to sorting inspections and enforcement in companies. They have carried out over 700 inspections since the end of 2021. Stubborn offenders risk fines that could reach thousands of euros.



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Target locations – new approach increases efficiency

During the coronavirus years 2020 and 2021, many of our out-of-home sorting projects had to be put on the back burner. We used this lull to assess our approach. In the past, the main focus was on providing the necessary infrastructure – such as waste bins or sorting islands – and supporting individual companies and organisations. We aim to carry on doing that in the future, but at the same time we also want to evolve towards a more scalable approach, tailored to certain sectors and in cooperation with everyone involved.

We put this new vision into practice for the first time in 2022 in the hospital sector. In addition to the standard PMD, a lot of packaging is found here that resembles household packaging. Examples are ointment jars or plastic film used to wrap sterilised utensils. But of course they also produce hazardous medical waste, such as used syringes, as well as a lot of masks and disposable gloves.

So it was important to provide clarity for the hospital staff and draw up specific sorting rules for the medical sector. We put together a panel of experts including representatives from the UZ Leuven and ZNA hospitals, the waste company Veolia, Valipac and OVAM (the Public Waste Agency of Flanders). The result was an approach that is practicable, takes account of the safety



requirements in the sector and ensures efficient and sustainable recycling. The approach and the sorting rules are now being rolled out in all Belgian hospitals. They are sure to prove useful in similar environments as well, such as doctor's practices and residential care centres.



New sorting rules tailored to the medical sector

Just like companies, hospitals have to sort properly. But sorting in the medical sector is complex, because account has to be taken of the medical environment which is, of course, very different from ordinary sectors.

[Read the whole story →](#)



Litter – bringing about a sustainable and lasting approach

Litter is and remains a thorn in the side of everyone concerned about public cleanliness and a better living environment. Despite the huge efforts that we all make to contain the problem, it is clear that we need to do more and better. Our members would like to see a bolder approach leading to a lasting change in behaviour.

More active role for business

During the course of 2022, a new European directive came into force, supplementing Extended Producer Responsibility. Among other things, the directive states that as of 1 January 2023, companies whose products and/or packaging end up as litter have to bear the clean-up costs.

The Belgian business world is seizing the opportunity provided by the new directive to play a more active role in the fight against litter. They want to contribute to a more efficient approach on the ground as well.

Fost Plus aims to take on a coordinating role here, just as we already do for the collection and recycling of packaging. This means we can be a central point of contact for the various governments and can create advantages of scale by sharing knowledge and best practices.

While awaiting decisions from the various governments, this coordinated approach is being tested on the ground in pilot projects.



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Digital deposit: work has started

Belgium's three governments agree that a deposit scheme is essential to spur on the fight against litter. Such a scheme has been proposed by the companies that put drinks on the market, the federations that represent them and Fost Plus. A series of tests and pilot projects are therefore getting underway.

[Read the whole story](#) →

Belgium as a pioneer – the digital deposit system

Belgium has always played a leading role when it comes to recycling packaging. Ever since the first PMD bags appeared on the streets in 1994, this country has set the tone for the whole of Europe. We are now continuing this pioneering spirit in our approach to litter. Technology and innovation will again play an important role in successfully dealing with the problem.

In 2022, a number of major drinks producers, the retail sector, their respective federations, Fevia and Comeos, and Fost Plus commissioned a study into the feasibility of a smart deposit system that builds further on the strengths of the blue bag. This involves putting a unique code on each piece of packaging. To reclaim the deposit, consumers do not need to return to the store with their used packaging. They can simply scan the code with their smartphone. This can be done at home when they sort the packaging in the PMD bag, or on the go when they throw the packaging in the correct litter bin.

The first pilot projects are to start in 2023 to test the system in practice and hone the technical modalities. The ultimate aim is to roll out the smart, digital deposit system across the country by 2025.

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Rewarding positive behaviour - we are making the Click together!

Litter is the consequence of an attitude problem among a relatively small minority of the population. Thorough enforcement remains essential to change the mindset of this stubborn and asocial minority. At the same time, we also want to create a positive incentive for the vast majority who do as they should.

With the Click, we offer an answer to this. The principle is very simple. People who pick up a piece of litter or throw their own waste in the correct bin when they are out and about should be rewarded for doing so. Via an app on their smartphone, participants can scan every item and in exchange, they receive points that they can exchange at local traders, the commune or another organisation. This small payment also strengthens the idea that there is value in used packaging and waste.

The initiative reached cruising speed in 2022. The number of users increased sixfold between January and December, reaching 60,000. Together they accounted for 350,000 clicks and as many pieces of litter avoided. By the start of May 2023, the number stood at 735,000 clicks. Nine communes, towns and cities have now joined in, along with a number of large companies including Jacobs Douwe Egberts and Coca-Cola. The initiative is also supported by organisations like the nature conservation association Natuurpunt and the app has been integrated into the KBC Mobile app. In other words, the Click is gradually developing into a real social movement.

Blankenberge

De Haan

Middelkerke

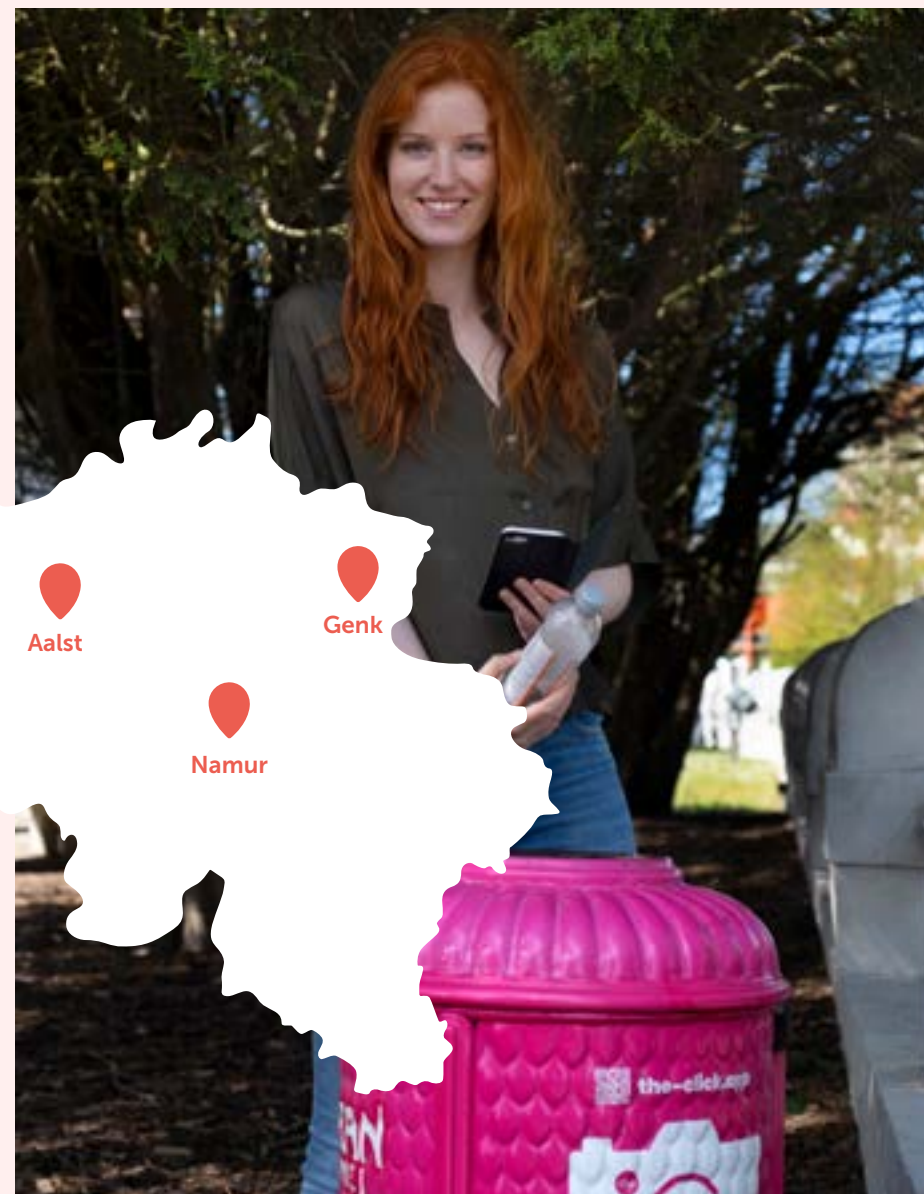
Torhout

Tournai

Aalst

Genk

Namur





Changing behaviour in the fight against litter

The Click, the Fost Plus project designed to combat litter, reached cruising speed in 2022. The number of users increased sixfold between January and December. In addition, more and more companies are doing their bit by integrating the Click into their Corporate Social Responsibility strategy.

[Read the whole story](#) →



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Design for Recycling

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Heading for 100% recyclable packaging together with our members

Sustainable packaging stands high on our members' agenda. Together with the sector federations, they have proposed ambitious goals: by the end of 2025, all non-recyclable packaging must be removed from the assortment. Fost Plus is helping its members to achieve these ambitions.

By 2025, only recyclable packaging will be allowed on the Belgian market

Belgian companies are firmly committed to making their packaging more sustainable. They aim to put only recyclable, reusable, compostable or biodegradable packaging on the Belgian market by 2025. The share of non-recyclable packaging was estimated at around 2% of the total volume in 2019. The three sector federations – Comeos, Detic and Fevia – are well ahead of the European legislation, which does not require 100% recyclability until 2030.

Meanwhile, our members are working hard to screen their assortment and systematically replace non-recyclable packaging. Introducing new packaging often takes a lot of effort. In many cases, far-reaching changes are needed in the production and logistics processes. In addition, the alternative packaging has to meet all the technical requirements, including as regards food safety and quality.

Fost Plus is helping its members to achieve these ambitions. For example, we share the available knowledge and expertise via seminars, webinars and platforms such as Pack-It-Better, an initiative that we have set up with Valipac. We also offer them advice and practical support, among other things by testing new packaging in the sorting centres.

No more obstructive packaging!

In 2022, the *Obstructive Packaging* category was introduced in the Fost Plus declaration. This category was added at the request of the Interregional Packaging Commission. As the name indicates, it involves packaging that not only cannot be recycled, but that even hampers the collection, sorting and recycling processes. The packaging was given a dissuasive Green Dot rate, which is double the highest rate for recyclable fractions. This financial incentive is intended to encourage companies to avoid such packaging and remove it from their assortment.

Many members decided to phase out obstructive packaging as quickly as possible and replace it by recyclable alternatives. For some members, this involves a relatively small proportion of the assortment, but for others, it concerns very well-known packaging used for popular products. In many cases, this is multilayer packaging composed of a combination of paper, aluminium and plastic, where the different materials cannot be separated from one another. We expect a considerable proportion of obstructive packaging to disappear from store shelves during the course of 2023.

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Pringles – Iconic packaging is now recyclable

The Pringles potato chips tube is probably one of the most recognisable packaging items on the market. But unfortunately, until now it was on the list of obstructive – and therefore not recyclable – packaging. That is set to change soon, because Pringles has developed a totally new version.

[Read the whole story](#) →



ACT FOR FOOD – Carrefour optimises fruit and vegetables packaging

In 2022, supermarket chain Carrefour tackled the issue of its fruit and vegetables packaging. Quite a challenge, because above all, consumers expect products like these to stay fresh. So it is crucial to find a balance between sustainability goals and the essential function of packaging.

[Read the whole story](#) →

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Reliable data for a sustainable packaging policy

The data from the members' declarations provide us with an insight into the main trends and developments, enabling us to adapt our future policy accordingly. But our members can also use this valuable data to make their packaging more sustainable.

At the start of 2022, we launched a totally revamped declaration system for our members, called MyFost. Our members use this system for their mandatory annual packaging declaration. For each type of packaging, they indicate what material it consists of, how much material is used and how many items they put on the market. The declaration involves a great deal of administration, but at the same time it yields particularly valuable information that is necessary to be able to fulfil all the take-back and reporting obligations.

Future scenarios

The declaration gives us a good idea of the packaging put on the market. This means we are better able to respond to trends and developments and to adjust our collection scenarios and sorting processes where necessary. Coffee capsules are a good example of this. Their increasing popularity among consumers prompted us to look for a good recycling solution and make the necessary modifications in our sorting centres.

At a glance

The new *MyFost* declaration system contains many features that help members with the management of their packaging. The so-called sanity checks allow members to verify the data in their declaration and detect any errors more easily. The system notices unusual combinations, glaring rises or falls and other discrepancies immediately. They all appear in a handy

overview, enabling users to get down to work straight away. In addition, the dashboard gives members an insight into the development of the recyclability of and the proportion of recycled material in their packaging. So they can see at a glance where they can do better in the future.



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Vision of the future

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Heading for broader social responsibility

As the facilitator of the circular economy, we help the public, companies and authorities to deal with materials more sustainably. Together with our members, we fulfil an important social role. All the signs are that this role will broaden in the coming years. Cooperation will be crucial here. Only by involving all parties in the ecosystem and allowing them to play their role to the full can we further perpetuate the success of the circular economy in Belgium.

This social role is nothing new. When Fost Plus was set up in 1994, the Belgian business world took the lead in recycling packaging waste. This was prompted directly by the introduction of producer responsibility, when companies became responsible by law for the sustainable processing of the packaging that they put on the market.

“Our activities are more socially relevant than ever. With every piece of packaging that we recycle, we save CO₂ and avoid the need to extract new raw materials.”

However, it soon became clear that Belgian companies wanted to do more than simply fulfil their legal obligations. Thanks to the blue PMD bag, Belgium even became an example for the recycling of household packaging, with outstanding recycling figures and high public participation.

Beyond our duty

Since then, together with our members we have proved several times that we are not afraid to assume our responsibility. Our field of operation had broadened substantially in the past few years, for instance, from door-to-door collection to selective collection in companies, at events and in other out-of-home environments. With the aim of achieving maximum packaging collection and recycling.

And we didn't shy away from our responsibility in the fight against litter, either. Through cooperation with Mooimakers, Be WaPP and the Brussels Region, we have undertaken many fine projects which continue to contribute towards bringing about a lasting change in behaviour. One example is the Grand Nettoyage (Great Clean-up) in Wallonia. With the Click, we reward members of the public who do the right thing and offer towns, cities and communes an extra tool in their litter policy.

Owing to the recent expansion of producer responsibility, our members are now responsible for the clean-up costs incurred by litter caused by their packaging. Here too, we plan to assume our producer responsibility role to the full by playing an active part on the ground alongside everyone involved to ensure a cleaner public environment.

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Every Packaging Counts

In 2022, Fost Plus introduced the Every Piece of Packaging Counts action plan. This plan implements our vision of the approach to litter in Belgium in five concrete pillars, which together are intended to bring about a situation in which not a single piece of packaging is lost.

[Discover our Every Piece of Packaging Counts action plan](#) →

More than just recycling

Meanwhile the world is moving on. Sustainability is higher on the agenda than ever and the fight against global warming is without any doubt the biggest challenge facing us today. The public and governments expect businesses to assume their responsibility as well – and rightly so.

Fost Plus plays an important role here. With every piece of packaging that we collect and recycle, we save CO₂ and avoid the need to extract ever-scarcer raw materials. Recent geopolitical developments have increased the importance of the circular economy still further, now that Europe wants to reduce its dependence in terms of energy and raw materials.

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European Commission Proposes Revision of Packaging and Packaging Waste Legislation

On 30 November, the European Commission published an update to the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD). By doing so, the Commission aims to further harmonise packaging and packaging waste management in the EU.

[Read the whole story](#) →

Recycling is, of course, just one aspect of the circular story. That appears to be the direction indicated by the European Commission, too, with its new proposal for the *Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)*. The emphasis here is shifting from recycling to prevention and reuse. The proposal also contains concrete and ambitious goals in this field that pose huge challenges for our members – as well as many other sectors, including hospitality.

We are convinced that with Fost Plus we can play a pioneering role here, too. For example, there is a need for large-scale, economically feasible collection systems for reusable packaging. And let us not forget that even reusable packaging still has to be recycled when it reaches the end of its life cycle. Just as we did thirty years ago, we aim to help companies achieve their objectives and ensure that their activities are sustainable.

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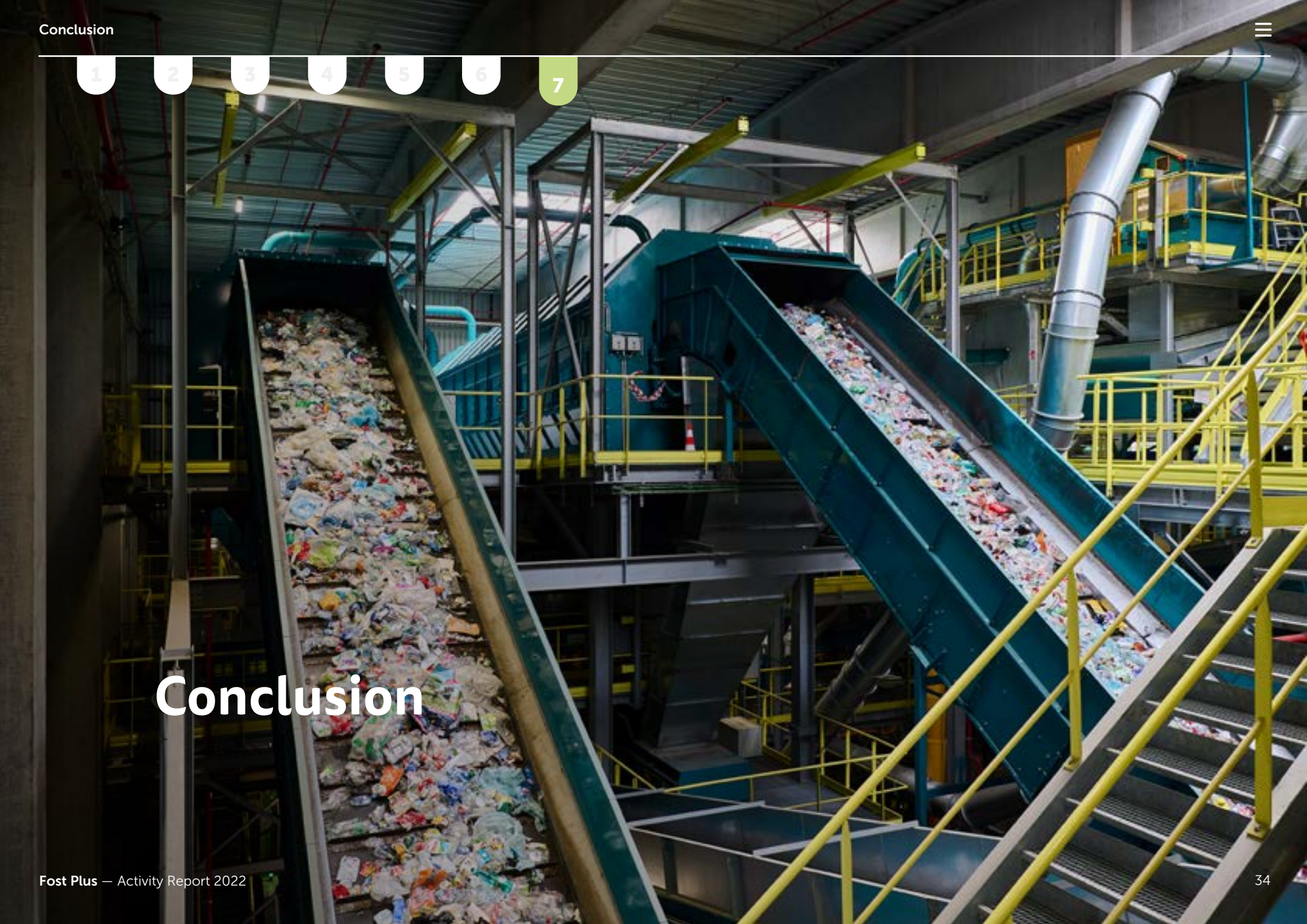
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Conclusion



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Conclusion



In 2022, we again took some important steps along the path towards building a circular packaging economy for Belgium. But together with our members, we are already looking forward to a further expansion of our social role.

In total, we recycled over 725,000 tonnes of packaging in 2022, accounting for 95% of all packaging put on the market. Thanks to the New Blue Bag, which was fully operational for a whole year for the first time in 2022, the quantity of PMD collected rose to almost 23 kilos per person.

Further proof that the blue bag remains an essential factor for the successful collection and recycling of packaging waste. After all, door-to-door collection means that everyone can take part in the system effortlessly. The further expansion of the contents – drinks capsules were added at the start of 2023 – will further increase the volumes in the coming years.

While in the home environment we are gradually working towards maximum recovery, out of home a great deal of packaging still gets lost. We increased

our efforts even further in 2022, in close cooperation with our sister organisation Valipac and with the companies that are responsible on the ground for the collection of industrial waste. In-company collection reached cruising speed in the autumn. We again achieved our interim objective (24,000 tonnes).

Moreover, part of our packaging still ends up as litter. As of 2023, together with our members we will bear responsibility for the cost of cleaning up this packaging. However, we are looking beyond the purely financial aspect and want to make an active contribution to a bold litter policy. We also turn to innovation and technology. Together with a number of drinks companies, retailers and sector federations such as Fevia and Comeos, in 2022 we started to develop a digital deposit scheme.

If we want to recycle all packaging, then of course it needs to actually be recyclable. So Design for Recycling remains an important focal point. Our members have undertaken to put only recyclable packaging on the market by 2025. And we see that in practice, too. Many companies have a clear roadmap to permanently phase out their non-recyclable packaging or that which is difficult to recycle.

The circular economy is clearly in full swing and there are a great many challenges in store, which we plan to tackle together with our members. So 2023 is set to be a pivotal year for Fost Plus – not only the last year of our current accreditation, but also the year when we lay the foundations for our future.