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## Introduction

In today's increasingly eco-conscious global marketplace, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) has emerged as a pivotal policy shaping how products are manufactured, marketed, and managed at end-of-life. EPR places the legal and financial responsibility for managing post-consumer waste squarely on the shoulders of producers, importers, and brand owners—holding them accountable for the environmental impacts of their products and packaging across the entire product lifecycle.

At its core, EPR compliance means that businesses must finance, organise, and oversee the collection, recycling, or safe disposal of their products once they become waste. This responsibility extends beyond domestic borders. Exporters are increasingly required to comply with **foreign EPR regulations** as a condition of market entry, or risk penalties, shipment rejections, or brand damage.

A prime example of this shift is the European Union's Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR 2025/40), which mandates that all packaging placed on the EU market must be fully recyclable by 2030. This regulation underscores a growing reality: EPR compliance is no longer optional—it is an enforceable legal requirement that is fast becoming a licence to operate in many jurisdictions.

In visual terms, think of stacks of compacted plastic bottles awaiting recycling—an everyday scene that epitomizes the mounting challenge of packaging waste. Under modern EPR schemes, the producers of those bottles—not local governments—must bear the costs of recycling or disposal. In the European Union, the original Packaging Waste Directive—now replaced by the more ambitious PPWR—already obliges producers to finance recycling systems and report packaging volumes placed on the market.

Exporters must now navigate a new landscape where “proof of EPR compliance” is essential to maintain market access. From electronics to cosmetics, packaging to plastics, businesses must proactively demonstrate that both products and packaging meet the environmental requirements of each target market. EPR compliance is not just about avoiding penalties—it is about safeguarding trade relationships, protecting brand reputation, and aligning with global sustainability goals.

## What is EPR Compliance?

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) compliance refers to meeting the specific legal, regulatory, and environmental obligations that assign the end-of-life responsibility of products to producers and brand owners. The purpose of EPR is twofold: to reduce environmental harm and to incentivise eco-friendly product design through legislative accountability.

In simple terms, EPR shifts the burden of waste management from **governments and taxpayers to the businesses that place products on the market**. Achieving EPR compliance requires organisations to fulfil a series of critical obligations that vary by jurisdiction but share common principles:

### 1. Upstream Responsibility: Environmental Stewardship from Design to Disposal

EPR introduces the concept of “**upstream responsibility**”, which means that producers are accountable not just for the sale of products, but also for their eventual disposal or recycling. This responsibility encourages producers to:

- Use **sustainable, recyclable, and less hazardous materials**.
- Design products that are easier to **reuse, dismantle, or recycle**.
- Minimise the overall **environmental footprint** of their product and packaging.

By taking ownership of the entire product lifecycle, producers are motivated to adopt **circular economy principles**, ensuring that materials remain in use longer and waste is minimised.

### 2. Financing Waste Management: Paying for the Lifecycle of Products

One of the cornerstones of EPR compliance is **financial responsibility**. Businesses must fund, and in some cases directly manage, the **collection, treatment, and recycling** of their products once they become waste. This is particularly evident in industries such as:

- **Electronics** (through Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment—**WEEE—Directives**)
- **Batteries** (through Battery Waste Regulations)
- **Packaging Waste** (under national or regional EPR schemes)

Failure to meet financial obligations can result in **fines, product bans, or customs delays**, making compliance both an environmental and a **commercial necessity**.

### 3. Collection and Recycling Targets: Achieving Quantifiable Results

Many jurisdictions, particularly within the **European Union**, have established **mandatory collection and recycling targets** under EPR laws. For example:

- The **EU WEEE Directive** mandates minimum recycling rates for different categories of electronic waste.
- The **Battery Directive** requires producers to meet specific collection and recycling percentages for spent batteries.

These targets are legally binding, and failure to meet them can expose businesses to **regulatory action and reputational risk**.

### 4. Eco-Design and Innovation: Reducing EPR Costs Through Sustainable Design

EPR compliance is not solely about waste management—it is also about **product innovation and design**. Many EPR schemes offer **financial incentives** for businesses that:



- Use **recyclable materials**
- Incorporate **recycled content**
- Reduce **packaging volume** or switch to **bio-based alternatives**

These measures not only reduce environmental impact but can also lower **compliance fees**, providing a competitive advantage in markets where **sustainability is a consumer expectation**.

## How EPR Compliance Works in Practice

For businesses, **EPR compliance is an ongoing process** that typically involves:

1. **Registering with local environmental authorities or Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs)** in each market.
2. **Submitting periodic reports** detailing the volume of products and packaging placed on the market.
3. **Paying compliance fees** based on product type, material composition, and market volumes.
4. **Obtaining necessary compliance certificates**, eco-labels, or declarations of conformity to satisfy regulators and customs authorities.

Unlike voluntary sustainability programs, **EPR obligations are legally binding**, with **substantial financial and operational implications** for non-compliance. As global regulators tighten environmental controls, especially on packaging and plastics, **non-compliance can lead to shipment rejection, import bans, or costly legal disputes**.

## Why EPR Compliance is Critical for Exporters

For exporters seeking to thrive in today's highly regulated and environmentally conscious global economy, **EPR compliance is no longer a choice—it is an essential business requirement**. Failing to meet **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** obligations can expose exporters to a range of risks that can directly impact profitability, market access, and brand value.

### 1. Legal Risks, Fines, and Product Bans

One of the most pressing reasons for exporters to prioritise EPR compliance is the threat of **legal penalties and enforcement actions** in destination markets. Non-compliance with EPR laws can result in **hefty fines, customs delays, shipment rejections, or even outright product bans**.

Take **Germany's VerpackG (Packaging Act)** as a case in point: businesses that fail to properly register packaging can face penalties of up to **€200,000**, alongside sales restrictions that can effectively block market entry. Similarly, the **European Union's WEEE Directive** is designed to prevent illegal exports of electronic waste; shipments lacking valid EPR registration risk being **seized at the border or returned to the sender**.



In India, EPR compliance is strictly enforced for the import of electronics and batteries. **Without an EPR certificate, import clearance is refused**—resulting in costly delays or even permanent loss of access to the Indian market. These examples illustrate how **EPR non-compliance has real and immediate commercial consequences**, making it a compliance priority for any business engaged in cross-border trade.

## 2. Market Access and Retailer Requirements

Increasingly, **EPR compliance has become a prerequisite for accessing global markets and digital retail platforms**. Major online marketplaces and leading retailers in Europe and beyond require proof of compliance before allowing sellers to list products.

In Germany and across the **EU**, platforms such as **Amazon, Zalando, and eBay** mandate that sellers provide valid **EPR registration numbers**, such as **LUCID IDs** for packaging or **WEEE registration numbers** for electronics. Sellers unable to furnish this documentation face **de-listing, loss of sales, and account suspensions**.

Large retailers, particularly those in **eco-sensitive markets**, are also setting higher environmental expectations for suppliers. Many refuse to stock products that lack **EPR certification, eco-labels, or recyclability credentials**. In effect, **EPR compliance has evolved into a key element of international export compliance**, on par with safety standards and labelling requirements.

## 3. Strengthening Sustainability Credentials and Brand Value

Beyond legal and commercial imperatives, **EPR compliance offers exporters a powerful tool to strengthen brand reputation and align with global sustainability trends**. Consumers worldwide are increasingly drawn to brands that can demonstrate genuine environmental responsibility.

Achieving and showcasing **EPR certification** allows exporters to highlight their commitment to **sustainable packaging, responsible sourcing, and circular economy principles**. In fact, the packaging industry itself has embraced EPR, with over **100 leading packaging manufacturers** publicly endorsing EPR as a solution to improve recycling rates and reduce environmental harm.

Exporters who proactively meet or exceed EPR requirements gain a **competitive edge** in markets where sustainability influences purchasing decisions. The ability to market products as **eco-friendly, recyclable, or compliant with stringent waste reduction laws** can be a valuable differentiator that opens new business opportunities and builds long-term brand equity.



# Global EPR Regulations Affecting Exporters: What You Need to Know

As environmental regulations tighten worldwide, **exporters must navigate an increasingly complex patchwork of EPR laws** that vary by country and product category. Below is a region-by-region overview of key **global EPR regulations** that exporters must understand to maintain compliance and market access.

## 1. European Union: Leading the Way on EPR Compliance

The **European Union (EU)** maintains some of the world's most comprehensive and stringent **EPR regulations** across multiple product categories:

- **Packaging:** The **Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (94/62/EC)**—now replaced by the more ambitious **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR 2025/40)**—requires that **all packaging placed on the EU market must meet recyclability and eco-design standards** by 2030. Producers must also finance collection, sorting, and recycling activities.
- **Electronics (WEEE):** The **Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive (2012/19/EU)** mandates that producers of electronics are responsible for the **collection, treatment, and recycling of e-waste**.
- **Batteries:** The **Batteries Directive (2006/66/EC)** sets **collection and recycling targets** for portable batteries, industrial batteries, and vehicle batteries.

Additionally, from **2024**, the EU introduced restrictions on the **export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries**, reinforcing its commitment to tackling global waste pollution.

Exporters to the EU must not only ensure that products and packaging are **recyclable** but also **register with local compliance schemes**, such as **Germany's LUCID packaging register** or **national WEEE schemes**.

## 2. United States: A Patchwork of State-Level EPR Laws

While the **United States** lacks a federal EPR framework, **many individual states have introduced their own EPR programs** targeting specific products:

- **Packaging:** States including **Maine, Oregon, Colorado, Washington, Minnesota, and Maryland** have passed packaging EPR legislation requiring producers to fund recycling and submit product data. For example, under **Oregon's Recycling Modernization Act**, unregistered producers will face **market bans starting July 2025**.
- **Electronics, Paint, and Batteries:** Numerous states have long-standing EPR rules covering **electronics waste, paint, carpet, batteries, and pharmaceuticals**.

Exporters to the US must carefully review **state-specific requirements** and understand that **major retailers often enforce EPR compliance policies** even in the absence of national mandates.

### 3. Asia: Rapid EPR Expansion in Key Export Markets

Across **Asia**, EPR is being actively implemented in major economies:

- **India:** EPR is embedded in multiple regulations, including the **Plastic Waste Management Rules (2016, amended 2021)** and the **E-Waste (Management) Rules (2022)**. Both sets of rules mandate that **producers, importers, and brand owners must register with CPCB** and meet specified recycling targets. Without a valid **EPR certificate**, electronics and plastic packaging cannot clear Indian customs.
- **China:** The Chinese government's **EPR Action Plan (2016)** covers products such as **electronics, vehicles, batteries, and packaging**, placing the onus on manufacturers to implement recycling programs and eco-design.
- **South Korea, Japan, Vietnam:** These countries operate established **EPR frameworks**, particularly for **packaging, electronic waste, and batteries**, and require **producer registration** with national recycling schemes.

Exporters to these markets must **register with local Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs)** and ensure that products comply with material restrictions, labelling, and recycling requirements.

### 4. Emerging Markets: Expanding EPR in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East

**EPR frameworks** are also gaining ground in **emerging economies**, making it critical for exporters to stay informed of new developments:

- **Brazil:** The **National Solid Waste Policy (2010)** imposes **mandatory reverse logistics** for packaging waste and other product categories.
- **Canada:** Several provinces have implemented or are developing **EPR programs for packaging, electronics, and hazardous waste**.
- **Africa:** Countries like **Egypt** (with a 2025 EPR law on plastic bags) and **Kenya** (under the **Sustainable Waste Management Act 2025**) have introduced EPR mandates requiring producers to **finance recycling and recovery systems**.

These evolving regulations highlight the importance of **continuous monitoring of EPR developments worldwide**. For exporters, **future contracts and market opportunities** may increasingly hinge on demonstrating full EPR compliance.





## Steps to Achieve EPR Compliance: A Practical Roadmap for Exporters

Successfully navigating **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) compliance** requires exporters to adopt a structured approach that ensures full alignment with both **domestic and international environmental regulations**. Below is a practical **four-step roadmap** designed to help businesses achieve and maintain **EPR compliance** across global markets.

### Step 1: Identify Applicable EPR Regulations in Target Markets

The first and most crucial step is to **map out the specific EPR regulations** that apply in each of your export destinations. Since **EPR requirements differ widely across jurisdictions**, exporters must analyse:

- **Regional directives** such as the **EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)**, **WEEE Directive**, and **Battery Directive**.
- **National laws** such as **India's Plastic Waste Management Rules**, **China's EPR Action Plan**, and **Brazil's National Solid Waste Policy**.
- **Sub-national legislation**, including state-level EPR laws in the **United States** (e.g., Oregon, Maine, Colorado).
- **Retailer and marketplace mandates**, such as **Amazon's EPR requirements** in the EU and Germany's **LUCID registration**.

Each product category—whether **packaging, electronics, batteries, cosmetics, or textiles**—may fall under different rules, making this step vital to avoid non-compliance and shipment delays.

### Step 2: Register with Local Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) or Government Portals

Once the applicable regulations are identified, the next step is to **formally register as a producer** with the designated local authority or **Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO)**. This registration process is mandatory in most countries and typically involves:

- Submitting **company information, product details, and estimated volumes** of products or packaging to be placed on the market.
- Obtaining a **registration number or certificate** (such as the **LUCID ID** in Germany or **CPCB EPR certificate** in India).
- Paying **compliance fees** based on product type, packaging weight, and material composition.

In many cases, exporters may need to appoint a **local authorised representative or agent** to manage registration, especially in markets like the EU where local presence is often required.

**Example:** In Germany, any company placing packaging on the market must register with the **Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister (ZSVR)** through the **LUCID portal** to obtain a unique producer ID.

### Step 3: Conduct Waste Audits and Submit Compliance Reports

Ongoing **data collection and reporting** are core components of EPR compliance. Exporters must regularly:

- **Audit and track** the quantities of materials sold—this could include the **weight of packaging, number of electronic units, or volume of batteries**.
- Submit **periodic reports** to local authorities or PROs, detailing sales volumes and materials used.
- Ensure that reported data supports the achievement of **recycling or recovery targets** mandated by law.

For example, under Germany's VerpackG, producers must file an annual **“Vollständigkeitserklärung”** confirming the amount of packaging placed on the market and the corresponding recycling efforts.

### Step 4: Obtain EPR Certification and Communicate Compliance Transparently

Once registration and reporting are complete, exporters receive **official documentation** confirming their compliance—this may include:

- **EPR certificates**
- **Producer registration numbers** (WEEE ID, LUCID ID, PRO membership ID)
- **Eco-labels or sustainability marks** (where applicable)

Exporters should ensure that these compliance details are:

- **Clearly displayed on product packaging or shipping documents** (where required by law).
- **Submitted to online marketplaces and retail partners** to maintain sales eligibility.
- **Communicated in marketing materials** to showcase **sustainability leadership**.

**Note:** In the EU, failure to provide EPR registration numbers to platforms like **Amazon or eBay** can lead to **product deactivation or sales bans**.

## Challenges of EPR Compliance—And How to Overcome Them

While the benefits of EPR compliance are clear, exporters often face real-world challenges when implementing EPR systems. Here are two common obstacles—and strategic solutions to help overcome them.

### Challenge 1: Navigating Complex, Fragmented EPR Regulations

With each country—and sometimes each **state or province**—adopting **unique EPR rules, forms, deadlines, and definitions**, compliance can quickly become overwhelming, especially for exporters managing **multi-market operations**.

#### Solution:

- Implement **EPR management software** that centralises regulatory updates, deadlines, and reporting across multiple jurisdictions.
- Partner with **compliance consultants** or **Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs)** that offer end-to-end compliance services, including legal monitoring, data aggregation, and audit support.
- Maintain a **dedicated in-house EPR coordinator or sustainability officer** to oversee compliance consistency.

By digitising and outsourcing where possible, companies can reduce administrative burden and avoid costly errors.

### Challenge 2: Managing EPR Compliance Costs

Complying with EPR schemes often incurs costs—such as **registration fees, recycling levies, reporting expenses, and compliance management overheads**. These costs can increase the **total landed cost** of products, impacting competitiveness.

#### Solution:

- View EPR as an **investment in sustainability** that can open new markets, attract eco-conscious customers, and build brand value.
- Take advantage of **eco-design incentives** offered by many EPR programs. For example, using **recyclable materials** or **reducing packaging weight** can result in **lower EPR fees**.
- Explore **material recovery opportunities**—in sectors like electronics, valuable metals and components can be retrieved from recycling systems, turning waste into revenue streams.
- Leverage EPR compliance in **marketing and CSR communications** to differentiate the brand and justify price premiums where appropriate.



In many cases, initial compliance costs can be offset by **operational efficiencies, customer loyalty, and improved sustainability credentials.**

### Key Takeaways for Exporters

- **EPR compliance is essential** for exporters targeting regulated markets including the EU, US, India, and beyond.
- A structured approach—**regulation identification, registration, reporting, and certification**—is key to achieving compliance.
- Strategic use of **technology, expert partners, and eco-design** can help overcome common challenges and reduce costs.
- **EPR compliance is not just about legal obligation—it's a pathway to stronger market access, sustainability leadership, and brand resilience.**

### The Future of EPR for Exporters: What Lies Ahead

The landscape of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) compliance** is rapidly evolving, and exporters must stay ahead of emerging trends to maintain market access, reduce risk, and align with the global shift toward sustainability. The **future of EPR** is one of greater scrutiny, stricter regulations, and deeper integration with **eco-design and circular economy principles.**

Here are key developments shaping the future of **EPR compliance for exporters:**

#### Rise of Digital Product Passports: The Next Frontier of Supply Chain Transparency

The **European Union (EU)** is at the forefront of a transformative shift in environmental regulation through the introduction of **Digital Product Passports (DPPs)**. Set to become mandatory for a wide range of products under the **Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR)** by **2026**, DPPs will serve as **comprehensive digital records of a product's environmental characteristics.**

Each **Digital Product Passport** will include vital information such as:

- **Material composition** (including recycled content)
- **Recyclability and repairability ratings**
- **Environmental performance and EPR registration data**
- **Compliance certificates and supply chain disclosures**

For exporters targeting the **EU market**, this means a fundamental shift: companies will need to **digitally document and disclose the environmental attributes of their products across the entire value chain.** These passports aim to:

- Enable **regulators, consumers, and retailers** to verify environmental claims easily.



- Enhance the **enforcement of EPR obligations** by making compliance data transparent and accessible.
- Drive **eco-design innovation** by making environmental impact a visible part of the purchasing decision.

### Stricter Global Enforcement and Expanding Regulatory Scope

Globally, EPR enforcement is becoming **more robust and far-reaching**. Many countries are:

- **Closing legal loopholes** that previously allowed non-compliant products to enter markets unnoticed.
- **Expanding the scope** of EPR to cover additional product categories such as textiles, cosmetics, tyres, and chemicals.

For example:

- The EU's updated **Waste Shipment Regulation (2024)** now **bans exports of most plastic waste** to non-OECD countries, aiming to prevent environmental dumping.
- In **Africa**, countries like **Kenya** and **Egypt** have introduced **new EPR laws in 2025**, signalling a regional shift toward sustainable waste management. Kenya's **Sustainable Waste Management Act** and Egypt's **plastic bag EPR scheme** are among the first of many likely to follow.

In Asia, nations such as **India, China, Vietnam, and Indonesia** continue to strengthen their **producer responsibility frameworks**, extending obligations not only to packaging and electronics but also to new sectors as environmental pressures mount.

### The Circular Economy Imperative: EPR as a Catalyst for Sustainable Design

The future of EPR is moving beyond **end-of-life waste management** towards actively driving **circular economy practices** that minimise waste generation from the outset. Key trends include:

- **Mandatory recycled content quotas:** The EU and several US states are introducing rules that require certain percentages of packaging or product components to be made from recycled materials.
- **Landfill taxes and disposal bans:** Increasing waste disposal costs will incentivise exporters to design products that are **reusable, recyclable, or compostable**.
- **Eco-modulated EPR fees:** Many EPR schemes are adopting **differentiated fee structures**—rewarding producers who adopt sustainable packaging and penalising those that use non-recyclable or hazardous materials.

Countries such as **Australia, Canada, South Korea, and the EU bloc** are embedding **circular economy principles** into their legislative frameworks, with EPR serving as the enforcement backbone.



## Conclusion: EPR Compliance—An Essential Pillar of Global Trade Success

In the modern global economy, **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** has transitioned from a niche sustainability initiative to a **core compliance requirement** that no exporter can afford to overlook. The accelerating shift toward **environmental accountability** means that **EPR compliance is now integral to international trade**, shaping both **market access** and **consumer trust**.

To succeed in this new regulatory environment, exporters and manufacturers must:

- **Understand and monitor EPR regulations** in every export destination.
- **Register with the appropriate authorities or Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs).**
- **Track product and packaging flows**, submit accurate reports, and obtain necessary **EPR certifications.**
- **Invest in eco-friendly design and sustainable materials** to minimise environmental impact and reduce compliance costs.

Failure to comply can result in **severe penalties, shipment rejections, marketplace bans, and reputational damage.** Conversely, proactive EPR compliance offers:

- ✓ **Enhanced brand reputation** in sustainability-conscious markets
- ✓ **Access to premium retail channels** and online marketplaces
- ✓ **Opportunities to innovate** through circular economy strategies

In an era where environmental performance is rapidly becoming a competitive differentiator, **EPR compliance is not just about avoiding fines—it is about future-proofing your business.**

Consult an **EPR compliance expert** to assess your products, markets, and supply chain readiness. Early action today can prevent costly **supply chain disruptions** tomorrow.

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