

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002503/26
to the Commission
Olivier Chastel (Renew)
(17 June 2026)**

Subject: Impact of online returns

The development of online shopping has led to a significant increase in order returns, sometimes encouraged by free or very flexible return policies. While these practices make it easier to shop online, they also increase logistics flows, generate additional packaging and, in some cases, lead to new or usable products being devalued, resold at a loss or destroyed.

1. Has the Commission specifically assessed the environmental impact of online returns, particularly in terms of transport, packaging and the management of returned products?
2. Does it plan to take any measures to encourage online platforms and retailers to reduce the environmental footprint of returns, for example through better consumer information, reusable packaging or more sustainable logistics?

Submitted: 17.6.2026

**Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(28 August 2026)**

The Commission is aware of the environmental impacts associated with online sales and returns, including transport emissions linked to shipping products and the additional packaging associated with returns.

To reduce the amounts of single-use packaging and the growing quantities of packaging waste generated in the EU, Article 24(1) of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) ⁽¹⁾, establishes that by 1 January 2030 e-commerce packaging must be designed so that the maximum empty space ratio is reduced by 2030.

Furthermore, certain transport packaging formats, as specified in Article 29(1) of the PPWR, must be reusable when shipped within a Member State or between different sites where a company carries out its activities. In other situations, 40% of these packaging formats must be reusable.

Moreover, producers placing packaging on the market are subject to extended producer responsibility, which means that they must pay a fee to cover its end-of-life treatment.

Online platforms must ensure that the producer comply with this obligation. Providers of online platforms are also subject to other sector-specific laws on product requirements, with a view to protect EU consumers, and are subject to fines if they do not comply with those rules.

Lastly, as indicated in the 2030 Consumer Agenda ⁽²⁾, the Commission will explore the need for a recommendation on 'green by design' features in e-commerce to further tackle the environmental impact of this sector.

This could cover aspects such as the availability of sustainability filters, greener delivery options, and sustainable return-management policies.

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) 2025/40 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 on packaging and packaging waste, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and Directive (EU) 2019/904, and repealing Directive 94/62/EC, OJ L, 2025/40, 22.1.2025.
⁽²⁾ COM (2025) 848 final.