

SUSTAINABILITY

Reimagining packaging, minimizing waste

Designing packaging with circularity principles in mind

Packaging is a complex topic. While it is a critical environmental concern, we as an e-commerce company must also ensure that our products arrive with our customers safely and without damage.

We are making great efforts to tackle this challenge and are exploring more circular systems and designs with the intention to minimize packaging waste, switch to more sustainable materials and tackle the plastics challenge.

From talking to our customers, we know that they share our sustainability values. In 2019, eco-friendly packaging as well as the amount of plastic used were rated amongst the three sustainability drivers to boost the likelihood for customers to recommend Zalando.

Our Target

By 2023, we design our packaging to minimize waste and keep materials in use, specifically eliminating single-use plastics.

Solving the plastics challenge

We consider packaging as one of the most strategic topics in the e-commerce landscape and we recognize our leverage and responsibility in this space. An important piece of our target is to eliminate single-use plastics from our packaging by 2023. Replacing plastics with other materials such as recycled paper is one solution that we are exploring, but we want to take a more holistic approach to fulfill the principles of circularity. One easy example of how we can reduce the amount of plastic used for packaging is to fold products smaller, thus reducing the size of the polybag used. We have implemented this for some product types of our private labels. We will continue to tackle this industry-wide challenge by collaborating with our partners and scaling new solutions.





We continuously look at other more sustainable material options, and ways to make our packaging fit for circular systems.

Improving our packaging materials

In 2021, Zalando used 68,000 metric tons of packaging materials, 89 percent stemmed from recycled input and 99% was recyclable. We want to decouple our growth, and the increasing number of shipments, from our environmental footprint. Improving the sustainability of our packaging materials is an important part in this.

Shipping Boxes

Zalando boxes are produced from 100 percent recycled cardboard. Thanks to an integrated adhesive closure, around 80 percent of our boxes do not require any extra adhesive tape. For our branding, we use water-based ink.

Shipping Bags

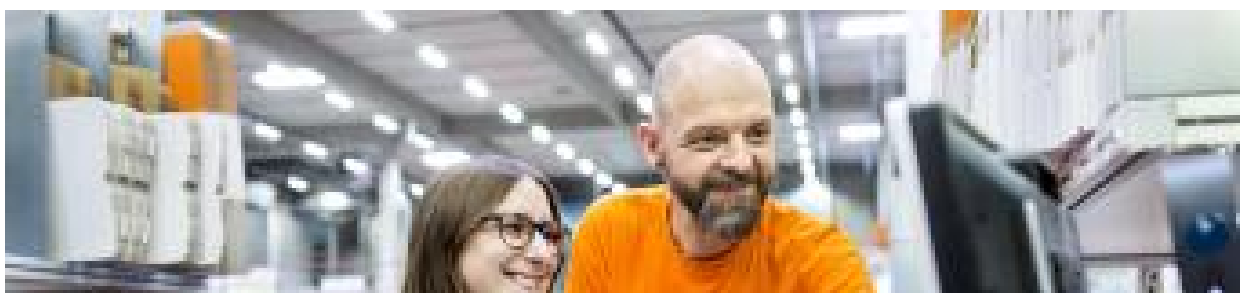
Previously, our shipping bags were made from 80 percent post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastic. We are in the process of switching to shipping bags made of 100% FSC[®]-certified (FSC[®] N003557) and recyclable paper.

Polybags

Polybags are the thin protective sleeves around our textiles that are needed to protect items against damage. Our polybags are made from over 90 percent recycled plastic.

Beauty Bags

Previously, cosmetic products were packed in a padded plastic bag and put into our Zalando box, as they can be very fragile. Now, we have converted our beauty bags from plastic to 100 percent recycled paper.





Our beauty bags are made from 100 percent recycled paper.

Exploring circular systems

Designing out waste and pollution and keeping materials and products in use are two principles of the circular economy. In order to reach our target we are running pilot projects to test more circular packaging systems. One such example is our reusable packaging pilot in the Nordics. In a first phase in October 2019, 20,000 customers in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark received their order in a reusable shipping bag by our pilot partner RePack. The reusable bags are made of durable and recycled materials and can be used again and again for shipping and returns. One key challenge was around customer engagement in returning the empty bags, which is vital to achieving the desired results of a circular reusable packaging system. In a next pilot phase that kicked off in September 2020, we applied our learnings to take a more customer-centric approach, with a focus on customer communication and better understanding customer perceptions on reusable packaging use and returns. The learnings around operational processes and customer engagement from this and other pilots are important for us to explore how we can make our packaging more circular and single-use plastic free.

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