

Brussels to review Essential Requirements rules

Josh Brooks, packagingnews.co.uk, 06 October 2010

The European Commission is to review the Essential Requirements in a bid to encourage more European countries to adopt the rules.

Just four countries of the 25 in the European Union - Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France and the UK - have directly implemented the rules, which are designed to stop unnecessary excessive packaging.

Speaking at Pira's Packaging Summit yesterday (5 October), Diana Oancea, policy officer for the packaging directive at the EC, said the review would examine how the Requirements should be enforced in the future.

"Enforcement is one issue. But we also have to see if industry is performing. If we see that the industry is complying because of other incentives rather than the push from legislation, such as cost reduction, then we will take that into account."

Oancea added that the UK was "one of the top runners" in the EU in terms of the essential requirements because it has implemented the rules.

The Essential Requirements have been thrown into the public eye in recent weeks after [Sainsbury's was threatened with court action for alleged over-packaging of meat](#).

However, the Essential Requirements have been criticised over the years because they have led to only a handful of prosecutions.

In particular, many believe that the requirements contain a get-out clause due to the exception it makes for packs, however heavy they may be, that are accepted by consumers.

Oancea also revealed that the EC was working on a new list of illustrative examples that will aim to clarify definitions of what counts as packaging. The new document is likely to be published before the end of the year.