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glass loop

September 2025

Based on data submitted to Eurostat by 30/03/2026

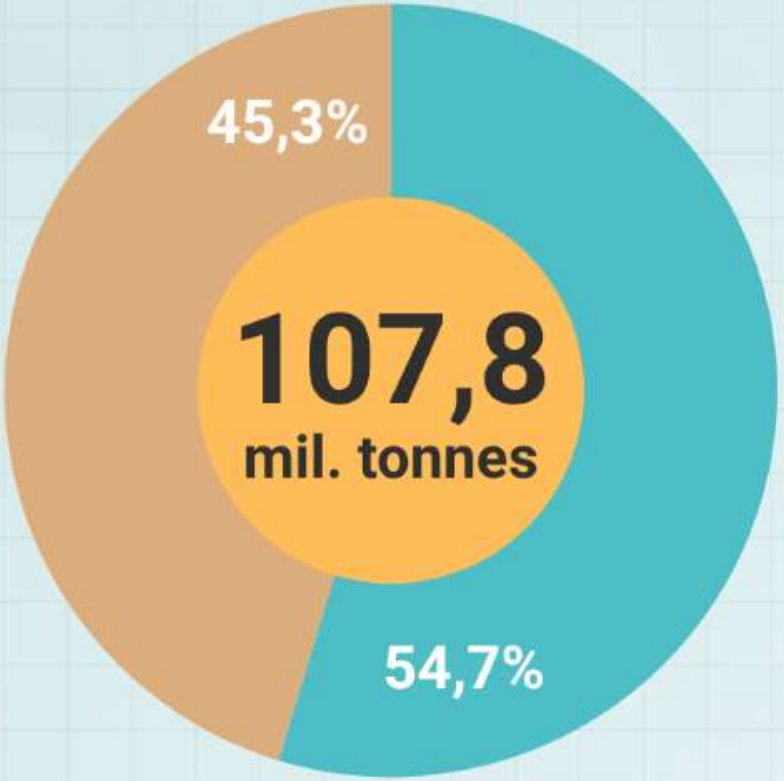
What happens to [unrecovered] glass in residual waste?



Website :
www.closetheglassloop.eu

Disposal of municipal waste in the EU

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In 2023, across the European Union, a total of

107,8 mil. tonnes

of municipal waste was disposed.

The majority of residual waste is sent to incineration.



In 2023, across the European Union, a total of

58,9 mil. tonnes

of municipal waste was incinerated.



In 2023, across the European Union, a total of

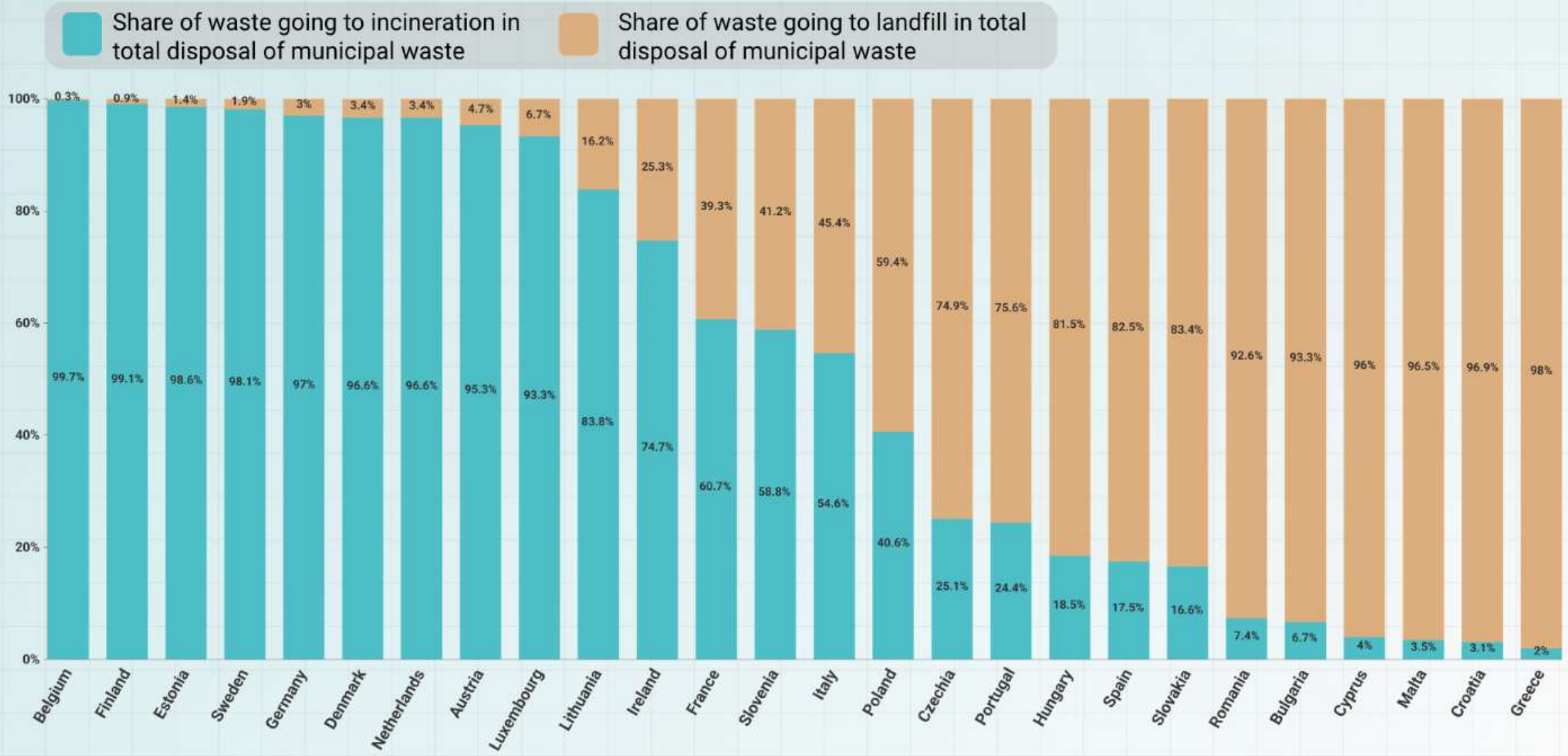
48,8 mil. tonnes

of municipal waste was disposed on landfills.



National strategies to manage the disposal of municipal waste

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Unrecovered glass

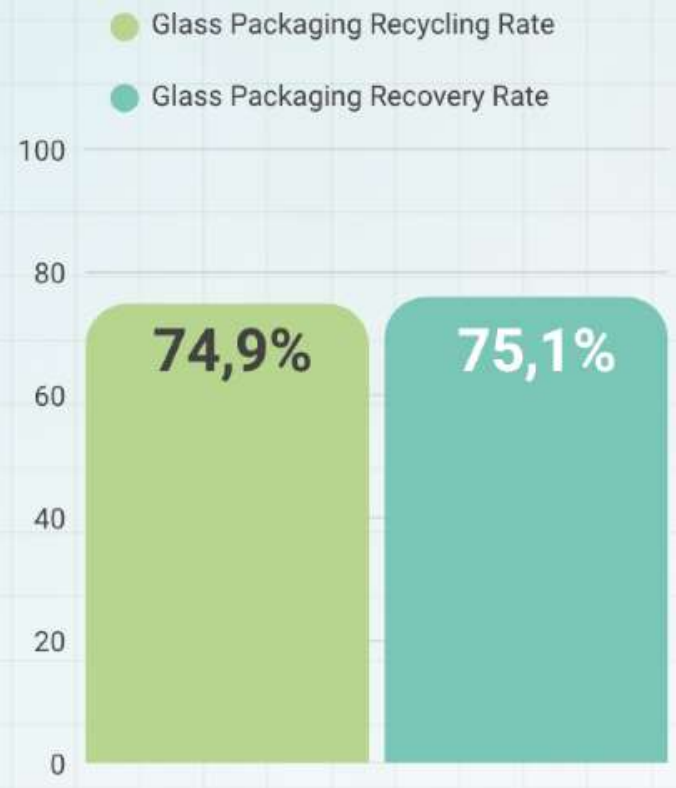
The difference between glass packaging waste generated and glass packaging recovered amounts to **3,75 million tonnes** of unrecovered glass packaging.

Unlike other materials, there is only a 0.2 percentage point gap between the EU glass recycling rate (74.9%) and recovery rate (75.1%), representing a difference of just 29,844 tonnes. This shows that whether glass goes to landfill or incineration, it will not be recovered.

For the purpose of this study, we consider that all unrecovered glass packaging ends up in residual municipal waste. This may not necessarily be the case, as some glass packaging simply remains within households and does not get accounted for in the waste stream.

In 2023,
3.75 million tonnes
of glass packaging
were not recovered.





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Unrecovered glass in residual municipal waste

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To estimate the share of unrecovered glass in municipal residual waste, we divide the total tonnage of unrecovered glass by the combined tonnage of all municipal waste that is either landfilled or incinerated.



Glass represents 3,5% of residual municipal waste in the EU.

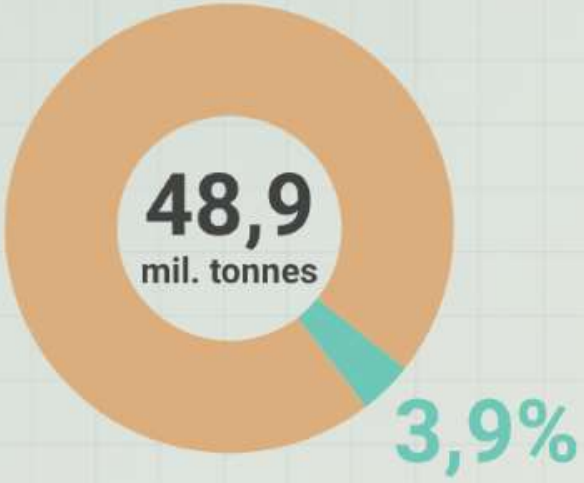
Share of unrecovered glass

Total disposal of municipal waste

Estimating the presence of unrecovered glass in landfill and incineration

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Share of unrecovered glass packaging in total residual waste sent to landfill



Share of unrecovered glass packaging in total residual waste sent for incineration



- Total residual waste sent to landfill
- Total residual waste sent for incineration
- Share of unrecovered glass packaging

To estimate the share of glass in total residual municipal waste sent to either landfill or incineration, we apply the national shares of residual municipal waste going to either landfill or incineration to unrecovered glass packaging in each EU Member State. This proxy assumes that once unrecovered glass is in residual waste, there is no sorting mechanism to divert it towards landfill or incineration. Its end destination therefore depends on national disposal strategies.

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While the EU relies on incineration for the disposal of municipal waste, unrecovered glass packaging relies primarily on landfill



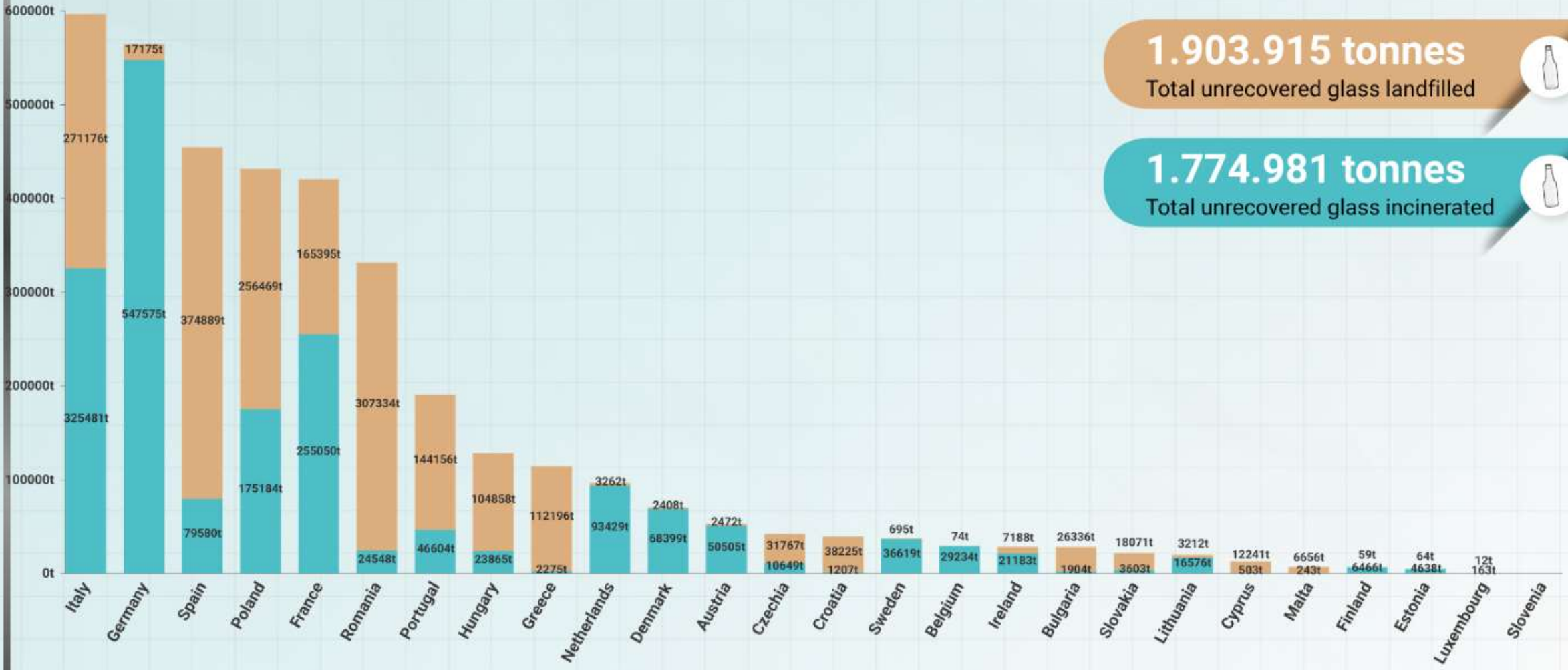
Estimates for glass packaging are based on the national shares of municipal waste going to landfill and incineration, on the basis that there is no sorting of glass packaging in residual municipal waste.

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Estimated tonnages of unrecovered glass going to landfill and incineration by country

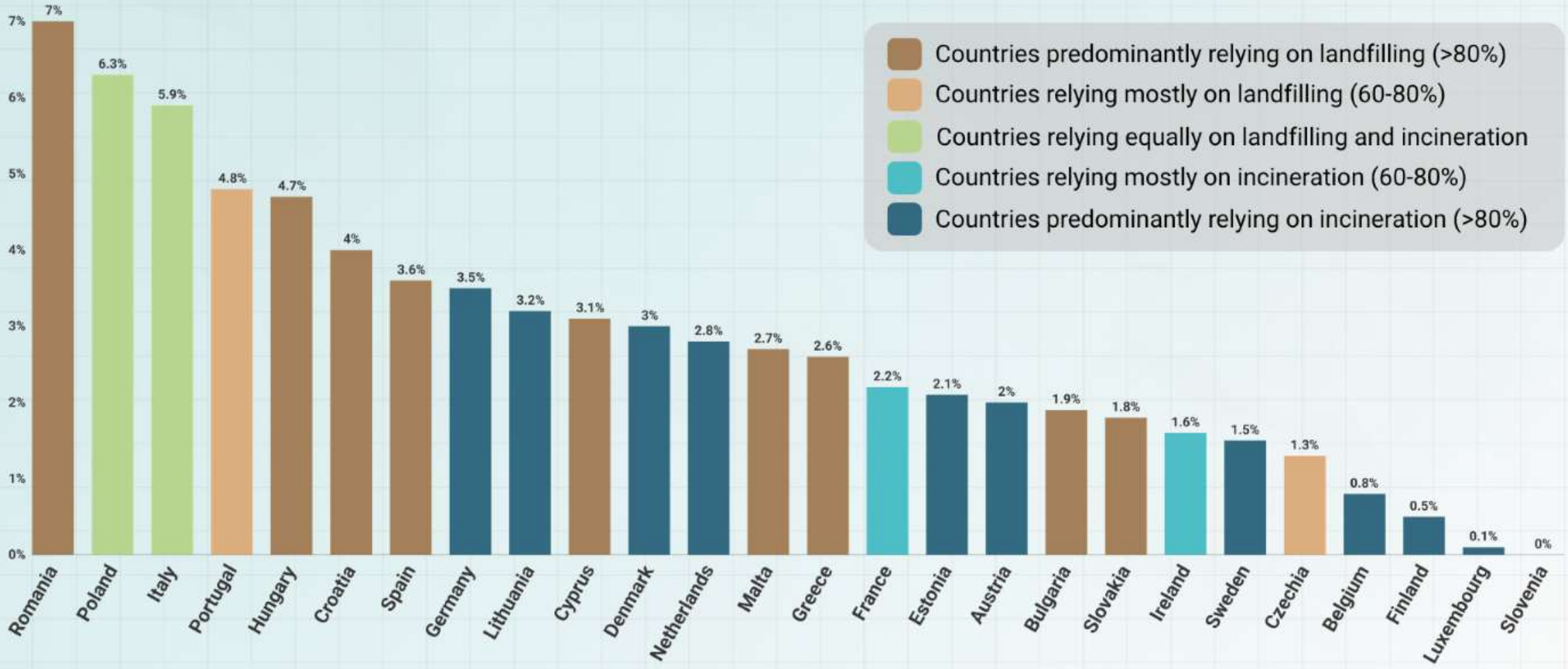
1.903.915 tonnes
Total unrecovered glass landfilled

1.774.981 tonnes
Total unrecovered glass incinerated



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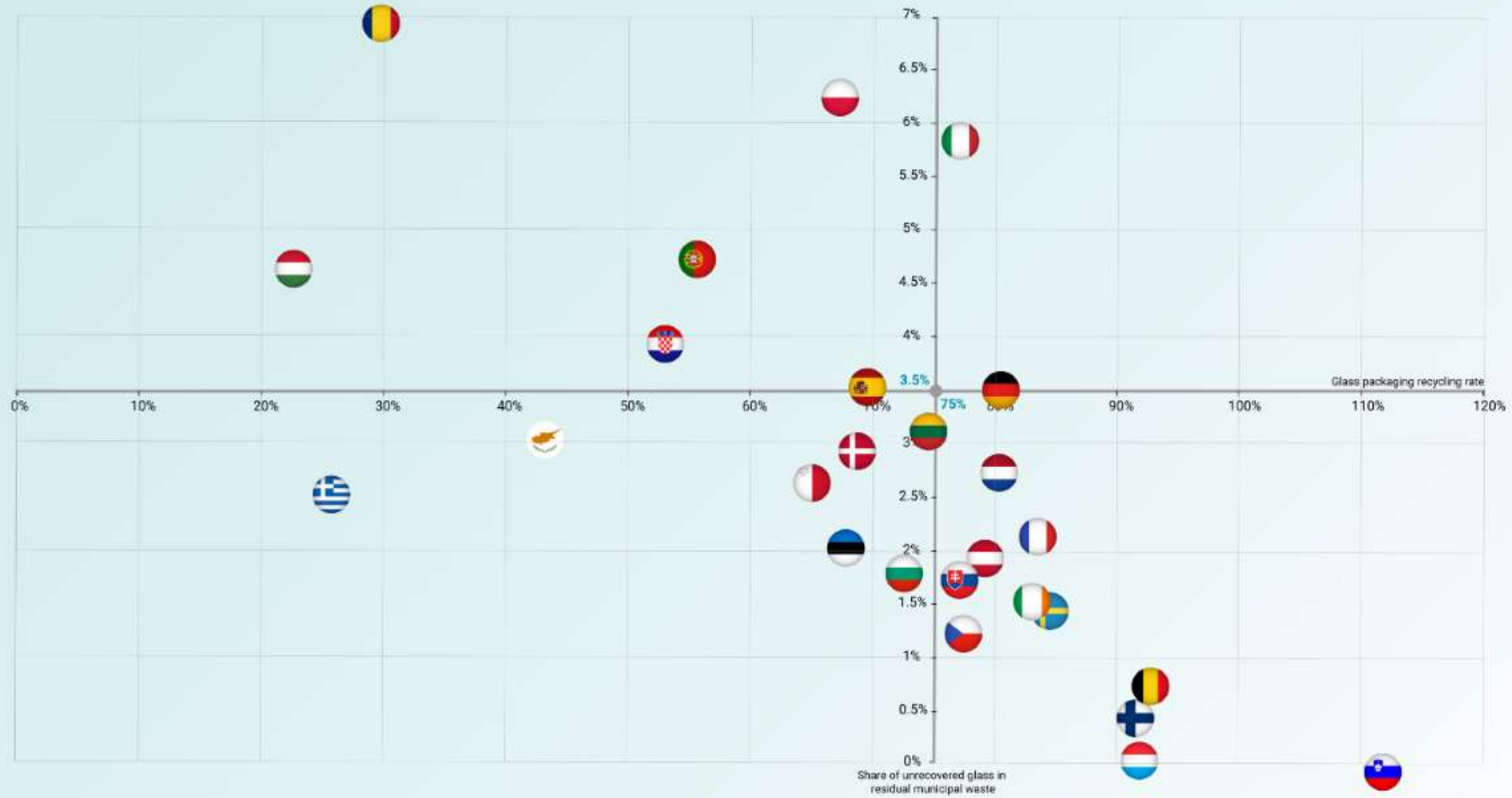
Countries that rely predominantly on landfilling tend to have more unrecovered glass in residual municipal waste



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How countries relate to EU averages:

a clear correlation between glass recycling performance and minimising glass in residual waste - with some exceptions



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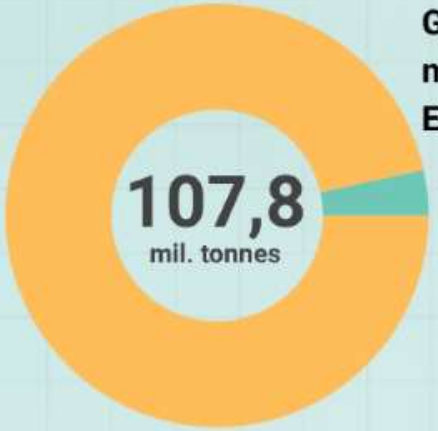
Unrecovered glass packaging in residual municipal waste: key figures

3,7
Million tonnes of unrecovered glass packaging



51,8% (1,9 mil tonnes)
estimated share of all unrecovered glass that ends up in landfill

48,2% (1,8 mil tonnes)
estimated share of all unrecovered glass that gets incinerated



Glass represents an estimated 3,5% of all municipal waste sent to disposal in the EU.

3,5% (3,7 mil tonnes)
unrecovered glass packaging in total municipal waste sent for disposal

Total disposal of municipal waste



Estimated EU average of unrecovered glass packaging in total residual waste sent to landfills



Estimated EU average of unrecovered glass packaging in total residual waste sent for incineration