

# THE GREEN DOT SYSTEM

Recycling has become an important issue to be followed throughout the European countries, not only due to obvious environmental factors but also legislation requirements. Recycling can redirect large percentages of waste material into beneficial secondary use. This is made through separation, collection and recovery of useful materials which can be turned into new products or raw materials. These materials cannot be directly reused and would otherwise be discarded as waste. In fact, most packaging is only used once, but this does not mean that it has automatically to become waste: **the valuable raw materials from which packaging is produced can be used to manufacture new products.**

The *European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC<sup>1</sup> on packaging and packaging waste* lays down, among others, the foundation for packaging recycling within the European Community. In order to comply with the objectives of this Directive, the Members States must take the necessary measures. As a result, the **Green Dot System** appears as the main Packaging Waste Management System implemented in many European countries.

Duales System Deutschland AG was the pioneer company who created the Green Dot System in Germany in 1991. The main objective of this company was developing schemes to co-ordinate the collection, sorting and recycling of used packaging within the German regions in order to comply with a new environmental regulation which required manufacturers to take back their packaging materials for recycling. As German's manufacturers could not achieved those objectives "Duales System" was established to take care of the whole recycling process<sup>2</sup>.

In 1995, Duales System Deutschland AG decided to extend the use of the Green Dot System in the form of a general licence to a European organisation and consequently founded the "Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe s.p.r.l. (PRO EUROPE), which is domiciled in Brussels. In this way the European countries can transfer their obligations to this organisation which develops integrated Packaging Management Systems to implement the recycling legislations in both national and European level.

Each country has a private or municipal waste management company which is in charge of running the Green Dot System. Then PRO EUROPE gives license to the European manufacturers for the use of the Green Dot Logotype: the manufacturers from each country establish contracts with the specific management enterprise which subsequently becomes in charge of collecting, sorting and recycling the packaging material.

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Figure 1: The Green Dot symbol

Then the Green Dot symbol (figure 1) which appears on the products packaging means that, for such packaging, a financial contribution has been paid to a national waste management company that has been set up in accordance with the principles defined in the European Directive 94/62/EC and its national law. The licence fee is governed by the number of packaging units put on to the market by each manufacturer and the weight of the applied materials.

The Green Dot System has achieved great success as a European model: 20 countries have adopted it as a system for collection, sorting and recycling<sup>2</sup> (see figure 2 and table 1). A total of 95,000 licensees use the Green Dot trade mark. More than 460 billion pieces of packaging marked with the Green Dot are on the market all over the world. This packaging is subsequently disposed of by more than 200 million people via the collection systems set up by the corresponding Green Dot organisations.



Figure 2: Countries which use the Green Dot System<sup>4</sup>

All European Green Dot systems have in common that those parties which have to fulfil the obligations of the national packaging laws (packaging manufacturers, fillers, retailers and importers) have jointly decided to found an organisation or system to which they can transfer their obligations. The task of these compliance schemes is to co-ordinate the collection, sorting and recycling of used packaging.

The Green Dot systems have to take into account the interests of all participants in addition to finding the best economic and ecological approach. They are non-profit organisations and use the Green Dot as their common financing symbol.

Table 1: Countries which use the Green Dot System<sup>3</sup>

European Community countries		EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries	Accession countries
Austria	Czech Republic	Norway	Turkey
Belgium	Hungary		
France	Latvia		
Germany	Lithuania		
Greece	Poland		
Ireland	Slovakia		
Luxembourg	Slovenia		
Portugal			
Spain			
Sweden			
United Kingdom*			

\*The use of the Green Dot System is licensed in the UK for those organisations wishing to display the emblem but is not obligatory in the UK.

Not all the Green Dot packaging should be disposed in the same bin. At first, this depends on the material and obviously on the collecting system of each country. It exists two forms of collecting: kerb site (bags placed outside of the houses) and drop-off (containers located in collection points). Generally, paper and glass packaging are collected in specific containers separately. For the so-called lightweight packaging made of aluminium, tinplate, plastic and composites, both collection systems are used depending on the country.

It exists separate recycling routes for the different fractions but they all run along the same lines: **the packaging is separated by type and returned to the respective industries for recycling**. This is shown in the figure 2, *the route to recycling*<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>European Parliament and Council Directive 94/62/EC of 20 December 1994 on packaging and packaging waste. Official Journal L 365 , 31/12/1994 P. 0010 - 0023 Finnish special edition: Chapter 15 Volume 13 P. 0266 Swedish special edition: Chapter 15 Volume 13 P. 0266.

<sup>2</sup>Kerstin Steinbrecher. DW-WORLD.DE Deutsche Welle. [www.dw-world.de](http://www.dw-world.de)

<sup>3</sup>PRO EUROPE Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe s.p.a. web site: <http://www.pro-e.org>

<sup>4</sup>The Green Dot web-site. <http://www.gruener-punkt.de>

**Anyone who buys packaging marked with the Green Dot and collects it separately for proper treatment is actively helping to save resources and protect the environment.**

Figure 2: The route of recycling<sup>4</sup>