



## Packaging Act: Recycling rates will fall short of goals. Now what?

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The new Packaging Act (VerpackG) which went into effect on 1 January 2019 calls for higher recycling rates. This year the target for material recycling of plastic was increased from 36 to 58.5 percent. Starting in 2022, the rate will be 63 percent. That sounds good in theory, but it does not yet work in practice. In 2019 the targeted recycling rate will not be reached by a wide margin.



Today it is possible to put millions of plastic packaging units into a closed recycling loop. Proof has been provided by Reinhard Schneider (center) and his cooperation partners in the Recyclate Initiative.

### Nothing to change? Think again! Reinhard Schneider vents his anger

*"It's been proven that progress in recycling is not hindered by a lack of technical feasibility, that is, the ability, but rather by a lack of will. Even though functioning technologies for energy-conserving recycling now exist and Open Innovation makes them available to everyone, there are still powerful forces in industry that fundamentally reject these changes. In all likelihood*



*because new processes often involve investments that companies would prefer to put off for as long as possible rather than becoming a pioneer for issues of the future. Postponing changes saves money in the short term, but there are heavy prices to pay later when a company is technologically overtaken by others. Moreover, it becomes clear in public opinion that required reforms were intentionally delayed. Businesspeople with this attitude of refusal try hard to convince politicians and the media that their own reticence is inevitable, given the presumed technical constraints.*

*In Germany the situation in the circular economy for plastic is not unlike what transpired in e-mobility a few years ago. It has been obvious for almost one year that the recycling rate targets specified by the Packaging Act would not be met in 2019. Feigning surprise now in an attempt to get a more generous transition period because one is not yet technically equipped is a pitiable tactic. In the near future a lot of trust will be lost here just as it was in the automobile industry.*

*One remedy would be to take new laws seriously for a change and, when faced with a clear failure to meet minimum targets, not to squeeze both eyes shut. Apart from that, no one should be surprised when in Germany many good ideas get implemented too late or not at all and the younger generation understandably loses patience."*

*Reinhard Schneider, owner of Werner & Mertz GmbH  
German Environmental Award Winner 2019*

Reinhard Schneider and cooperation partners along the entire supply chain – like The Green Dot – established the Recyclate Initiative in 2012. Through the Initiative they advocate high-quality processing of used plastic from the Yellow Bag and make an important contribution to fulfilling the German recycling rates – and have done so since long before there was a law.

## The Green Dot also says failure to meet recycling targets should not be tolerated

The Green Dot (Dual System Deutschland) calls upon the authorities to put a stop to the "creative competition" practiced by its competitors. DSD Managing Partner Michael Wiener warns in a letter that other dual systems apparently are planning to tell the responsible authorities that a shortfall in the recycling rates for 2019 cannot be ruled out and therefore a transition period is required.

Wiener writes that they are appealing for understanding because the Packaging Act is new and complicated and the market environment is confusing. Furthermore, as a result of the extensive closure of recycling routes to Asia, secondary raw material recycling has become unexpectedly difficult and unprofitable. Given this challenging environment, they expect a "transition period" would be suspended until the current quotas required by the Packaging Act are achieved in full. Wiener asks the authorities to reject such suggestions. He says they should make it clear that the rates required by the Packaging Act apply to volume flow records for the entire year 2019 and that shortfalls will be punished with provisions outlined in the act.

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