

The Green Dot System: Promoting Recycling in the European Union

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The European Union (EU) has regulated packaging and packaging waste for more than 10 years through the European Commission's (EC) 1994 adoption of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) (Directive 94/62/EC). The purpose of this Directive is to harmonize national measures to prevent or reduce the impact of packaging and packaging waste on the environment. Moreover, the Directive requires EU Member States to adopt national measures to attain specific recovery and recycling targets for packaging waste. (These targets were discussed more specifically in the June 15 EuroWatch article titled "Demonstrating Compliance with the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.")

The PPWD requires EU Member States to take necessary measures to ensure that systems are set up to provide for the return and/or collection of used packaging and/or packaging waste from consumers, other final users, or from the waste stream to channel it to the most appropriate waste management alternative and for the reuse or recovery, including recycling, of the packaging waste collected. Furthermore, the most recent amendment to the Directive (Directive 2004/12/EC) makes clear that the operators in the packaging chain as a whole should share the responsibility to ensure that the environmental impact of packaging waste is reduced as much as possible. The mandates of the PPWD with respect to reaching specific recovery and recycling targets, and promoting "extended producer responsibility" principles, have led to the organization of national schemes, as well as alternative, voluntary schemes for the collection of packaging waste, such as Germany's "Green Dot" program, discussed below.

The Green Dot program was established in Germany by the Duales System Deutschland AG (DSD), founded in 1990. DSD is a private, non-profit company that organizes the collection and sorting of sales packaging bearing the Green Dot trademark in Germany. This trademark represents the closed-cycle economy. The Green Dot's imprint on a piece of packaging signals that the manufacturer of this packaging has paid a license fee for its

collection, sorting, and recycling. The Green Dot license fee finances the disposal services provided by DSD. The license fee is based on the packaging material, the weight of the item, and the recycling expense. The system thus gives industry an incentive to develop and produce packaging that is easily recycled and also to reduce the quantity of packaging and packaging material.

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The Green Dot trademark indicates to consumers that the collection and sorting of packaging waste is financed by producers and retailers. As noted, the Green Dot trademark is available to companies that have signed a license agreement with DSD to use the symbol on packaging. The symbol signifies that retailers and manufacturers who participate in the Green Dot program are discharged from their individual recovery and recycling targets as set forth in the PPWD.

DSD's guarantors for each material category (e.g., aluminum, paper, etc.) guarantee that the sorted materials actually are recycled. The guarantors ensure that used packaging is fed back into the materials cycle and processed into raw materials or recycled products, which helps to reduce the resources needed to manufacture many new products.

DSD coordinates its activities with the local authorities responsible for waste disposal when setting up recycling collection systems. Through curbside pick-up and drop-off centers, German consumers in 2002 consigned 6.32 million tons of used sales packaging to Green Dot collection containers, which is equivalent to 76.7 kilograms of packaging per person. Based on a 1998 survey, as many as 94 percent of all Germans separate their waste. This collection costs German consumers a

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mere 1.90 Euros each month. In fact, the costs for the Green Dot have been significantly reduced over recent years and, depending on the type of packaging and disposal method involved, further license fee reductions are expected.

DSD founded the Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe s.p.r.l. ("PRO EUROPE") in 1995 to avoid trade barriers in Europe.

DSD founded the Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe s.p.r.l. ("PRO EUROPE") in 1995 to avoid trade barriers in Europe. PRO EUROPE's task is to distribute the Green Dot trademark to national collection and recovery systems within the EU Member States and the European Economic Area member countries in accordance with uniform rules and regulations. At least 20

countries have adopted the Green Dot trademark to date, including Belgium, France, Hungary, Ireland, and Turkey. The Green Dot system is evidence that the principle of producer responsibility is achieving success throughout the EU.

Additional information on these programs may be found on the Green Dot website at www.greendot.com/THE_GREEN_DOT.50+B6Jkw9.0.html and on the PRO EUROPE website at www.pro-e.org/indexflash.htm. □

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