

## ... the minimum standard for recycling-friendly packaging

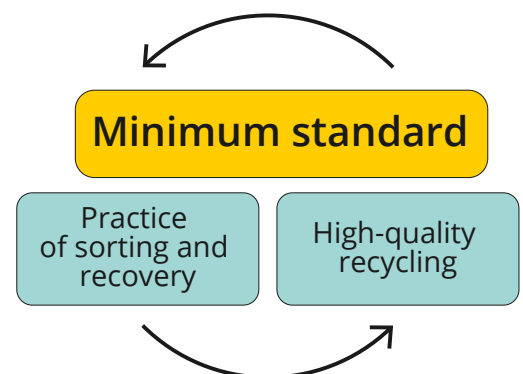
### Information about the fundamentals, provisions, revision cycle and the constitution of the Expert Committee

Section 21 VerpackG (Packaging Act) is the first legal provision to require that packaging with an environmentally-friendly design enjoy financially beneficial treatment. Systems have to create incentives for packaging that has been optimised for recycling. But what types of packaging have been optimised? The standards for packaging made of paper differ from those for plastic or glass packaging. To establish a consistent assessment framework, the Verpackungsgesetz provided for what is known as the 'minimum standard', which defines the criteria for determining if packaging is recycling-friendly. It is prepared on an annual basis by the Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister (Central Agency Packaging Register – ZSVR) and the German Environment Agency (UBA). The system operators are free to set additional criteria, but cannot fall short of the standard.

### The basis

Section 21 VerpackG contains two important provisions for the minimum standard:

- Sorting and recovery practices must be kept in mind to ensure that packaging is only treated favourably if it is actually transferred for recycling
- The reference scenario is high-quality recycling with the aim of high-quality circularity for packaging



## Implementing these provisions is not trivial:

Practice of sorting and recovery	High-quality recycling
<p><b>Implementation: UBA's annual stakeholder survey</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— All the sorting facilities are surveyed</li> <li>— All the recovery facilities in Germany and abroad are surveyed, for every material group</li> </ul> <p>The survey is used to determine the extent of the sorting and recovery infrastructure, if any, for each sorting group and the different types of packaging.</p> <p>Click here for the UBA's 'Packaging sorting and recovery practice' studies ↗ (only available in German).</p>	<p><b>Minimum standard definition:</b> For the purposes of this minimum standard, high-quality recycling means a process that leads to a recycle of a quality that allows it to be substituted for primary raw material of the same substance. To be classified as 'high-quality recycling', it is irrelevant whether the recycle is deployed in primary or secondary use cases. [...]</p> <p><b>Questions:</b> There is no statutory definition of high-quality recycling; recycle use is regulated only where it comes into contact with food. Other standards, e. g. for cosmetics packaging, have not been set, though demand has been expressed.</p>

The link to high-quality recycling is essential to developing the minimum standard, yet also problematic. Packaging can be reincarnated into new cosmetics packaging or even a bollard for road construction. Requirements on the recycle are much higher for cosmetics packaging and they cannot be met through the recycling process alone. The original packaging in the recycling loop has to be designed accordingly. The term 'high-quality recycling' as used in the Verpackungsgesetz is broadly defined. The minimum standard narrows this definition, requiring that a recycle be substituted for primary raw material of the same substance. A bollard used in road construction could also be made of wood or concrete, meaning it would not be considered to be a high-quality application for the purposes of the minimum standard. It will be interesting to see what definition the new EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive contains. Ideally greater precision will be provided for in terms of how packaging should be designed for high-quality circularity.

## Revision cycle of the minimum standard

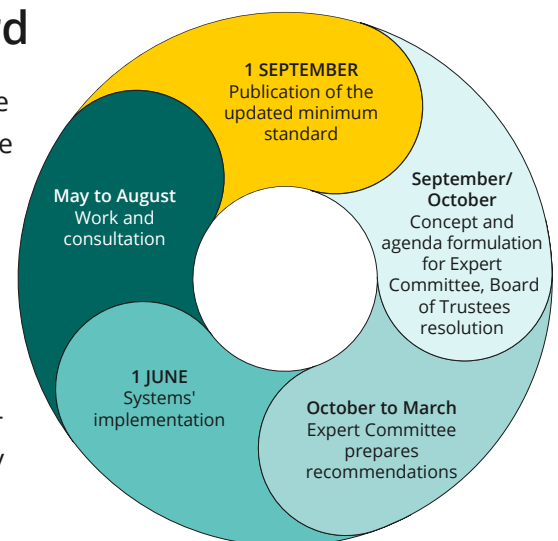
**Step 1 (September to October):** The Expert Committee compiles the findings from the previous cycle and any remaining questions. These set the agenda for updating the standard. The Board of Trustees adopts a resolution on the concept, the agenda and appointment of the Expert Committee.

**Step 2 (October to March):** The questions are addressed and a draft for a new minimum standard is prepared.

**Step 3:** By 1 June, the systems submit their report on the implementation of section 21 VerpackG. The ZSVR assesses these reports. Any findings are used to revise the minimum standard.

**Step 4 (May to August):** The ZSVR and the UBA review the Expert Committee's draft and the results from the systems' reports before another draft is prepared. This further draft then goes to consultation. All submissions are reviewed and evaluated.

**Step 5:** The final version of the minimum standard is prepared before publication on 1 September.



## The Expert Committee

The first draft of a new minimum standard is prepared by an Expert Committee comprising more than 30 experts from every stage in the value creation chain and representing all material types. The first step is indispensable because

- packaging types, composition, ink colours, labels and further potential packaging components are heavily innovation-driven, meaning very rapid change cycles;
- negative changes become apparent very quickly in sorting and recovery.

Getting experts involved early on ensures that the draft reflects the latest developments (positive and negative) to a high technical standard. Antitrust regulations, as published on the ZSVR's website, govern the constitution of the Expert Committee. Appointments are made by the ZSVR's Board of Trustees. UBA representatives are present at the meetings as permanent guests.

The Expert Committee has formed four working groups to ensure that it works efficiently: glass, plastics, fibre-based packaging and emptiability. The following table shows the different institutions with delegate experts. It shows that proper consideration of the different technical aspects for each material type is clearly ensured.

## Constitution of the Expert Committee

Producers/distributors (designating institutions)	Sorting/recovery/systems/research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Markenverband e. V. (German Trade Mark Association)</li> <li>- Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Ernährungsindustrie e. V. (Federation of German Food and Drink Industries – BVE)</li> <li>- Handelsverband Deutschland e. V. (German Retail Association)</li> <li>- Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e. V. (German Association for Plastics Packaging and Films)</li> <li>- Papierindustrie e. V. (German Paper Industry)</li> <li>- Industrieverband Papier- und Folienverpackungen e. V. (German Association for Paper and Film Packaging)</li> <li>- Wirtschaftsverband Papierverarbeitung e. V. (German Trade Association for Paper Processing)</li> <li>- Verband Metallverpackungen e. V. (German Metal Packaging Association)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Industrieverband Klebstoffe e. V. (German Adhesives Association)</li> <li>- Aluminium Deutschland e. V. (German Aluminium Association)</li> <li>- Fachverband für Getränkekartonverpackungen e. V. (German Beverage Carton Packaging Trade Association)</li> <li>- Bundesverband Glasindustrie e. V. (German Glass Industry Association)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gemeinsame Stelle dualer Systeme Deutschlands GmbH, the clearing house for Germany's systems</li> <li>- Bundesverband der Deutschen Entsorgungs-, Wasser- und Rohstoffwirtschaft e. V. (Federal Association of the German Waste, Water and Raw Materials Management Industry) and Bundesverband Sekundärrohstoffe und Entsorgung e. V. (German Association for Secondary Raw Materials and Waste Management) with representatives for the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sorting</li> <li>- Glass recycling</li> <li>- Plastics recycling</li> <li>- Tinplate recycling</li> <li>- Paper recycling and fibre-based composite recycling</li> </ul> </li> <li>- TU Darmstadt (academic research on paper and process technology)</li> <li>- Papiertechnische Stiftung (Paper Technology Foundation)</li> </ul>