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Simple, data-efficient, fair:

ZSVR and UBA publish the 2026 edition of the minimum standard

In agreement with the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt – UBA), the Central Agency Packaging Register (Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister – ZSVR) has published the new edition of the minimum standard for determining packaging design for recyclability. The minimum standard makes it easy for users to determine a packaging unit's recyclability. Only a few details are required, and all materials are assessed according to the same rules. The result of the calculation is a percentage. The minimum standard is becoming increasingly important in light of the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and the German Packaging Law Implementation Act (VerpackDG).

The key factor in determining a packaging unit's recyclability is not what appears to be recyclable in theory, but rather what share of valuable material can actually be recovered during the recycling process. It is precisely this share that the minimum standard makes measurable. The 2026 edition refines the tried-and-tested methodology and provides an even clearer basis for determining recyclability.

Simple: actual recyclability expressed as a percentage

The minimum standard helps users to calculate what share of a packaging unit (by weight) can be recovered as valuable material during recycling, after deducting design-related losses. The result is a specific percentage. The same calculation method applies to all material types and to each packaging component that is to be determined separately. The minimum standard classifies certain packaging design parameters as incompatible if, during the recycling process, they prevent the separation of materials or limit the downstream uses of the recycled materials – which would jeopardise successful recycling. A simple yes-or-no question helps to clarify this matter: if the answer is 'yes', the recyclability is always zero percent. Ms Gunda Rachut, Chair of the ZSVR, explains: "Sorting and recycling plants can only recover separable packaging components. That is why the minimum standard only takes into account what actually ends up being recycled. Users applying the minimum standard for determining recyclability today already know if their packaging exceeds or falls short of the European 70 percent threshold – subject to the European provisions that are still to be issued. This gives businesses time to adapt."

Data-efficient: limited details, targeted evidence

The minimum standard does not require any complex analyses. Users only need a few details to determine whether a packaging unit is recyclable: the material, the design parameters (e.g. material combinations or barrier coatings) and their weights. The minimum standard only identifies a few parameters as requiring examination. These must be examined separately. But that is the exception, not the rule.

Fair: the same rules for all materials

The minimum standard assesses all packaging materials using the same methodology.

The key factor is the share of valuable material by weight that can actually be recovered during the recycling process. The methodology avoids all flat-rate additions or deductions that favour particular materials or packaging designs. At the same time, it remains open to innovation: companies can have new materials or material formulations recognised as valuable materials if they can provide the necessary evidence.

Detailed in content, simple to use

Users determining the recyclability of a packaging unit can easily follow the relevant instructions instead of having to work out the classification themselves. Taking into account requests from many stakeholders, the minimum standard covers all relevant packaging categories and their most common design parameters. The new 2026 edition, published by the ZSVR in agreement with the UBA, specifies the requirements in accordance with the principle: as simple as possible, as detailed as necessary. The authors have added design parameters, distinguished between them more precisely, or grouped them together where different approaches lead to the same result. This makes it easier and quicker for companies to correctly assess their packaging. The methodology itself remains unchanged.

Minimum standard gaining in importance

The PPWR makes recyclability of packaging a prerequisite for its marketability. From 2030, packaging may only be placed on the market if it is at least 70 per cent recyclable. Until the relevant European requirements become applicable, all secondary legislation to be issued under section 26a VerpackDG for the ecological design of participation fees has to be based on the minimum standard for determining recyclability. This means that, for the transitional period, the minimum standard will assume a key regulatory role. Packaging that achieves a high level of recyclability under the minimum standard is best positioned to meet the future European requirements.

The ZSVR

Since 2019, the ZSVR has served as an entrusted body to foster transparency and control in packaging recycling. From 12 August 2026, the Verpackungsrecht-Durchführungsgesetz (Packaging Law Implementation Act – VerpackDG), in conjunction with the European Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), has provided the applicable legal framework. The ZSVR maintains the LUCID Packaging Register for industrial and commercial companies under legal obligation, reconciles volumes between producers and systems, and provides for more recycling-friendly packaging design by setting standards. The Foundation's Executive Board comprises the lawyers Gunda Rachut (Chair) and Dr Alexander Dröge.

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