WASTE POLICY IN GERMANY

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The political credo of modern waste policy is: Avoidance, recycling, environmentally sound disposal! The German government advocates an efficient and economical supervision of waste. The act for simplification of supervision under laws pertaining to waste management, which entered into force on 1 February 2007, was an important step to ease the bureaucratic burden on waste management administration and industry and to strengthen the efficiency of supervision under waste management law. German commitment against export of e-waste. Every year, tonnes of valuable raw materials such as copper or platinum are lost to the German raw materials cycle due to export of waste. The German government champions a clear European regulation under which exporters must prove that the appliances to be exported still function and are not waste. Exporters will be charged for the costs of monitoring. The objective of the German government's policy on waste is to achieve a recycling-based economy that conserves resources and the environment. The owners or generators of waste are in the first instance responsible for waste avoidance, recovery, and disposal; in order to promote this environmentally sound recycling-based economy, balance sheets for different substances and materials must be drawn up. In addition, the Federal government has issued a waste incineration ordinance based on the Federal Immission Control Act.

The economic agents affected (producers and distributors) have come together to set up a "Dual Disposal System", which operates alongside the existing public waste disposal arrangements. The Duales System Deutschland GmbH (DSD) organizes the curbside collection of waste packaging directly from private households, the sorting of this waste into material groups, and the recycling of these materials. Since the introduction of the Green Dot System in 1993, more than 20 million tons of used packaging have been brought to recycling and the consumption of packaging per year has been reduced by about 1.3 million tons compared to 1991 levels.

On 28-th May 2005 the 3rd amendment of the packaging ordinance came into force. It simplifies the deposit on drink cans. In December 2004 did the European Court of Justice confirm that the compulsory deposit is in principle compatible with EU law. Consumers especially profit from the simplified deposit on one-way packaging - but it is also an advantage for fillers, distributors and small and medium-sized companies, since they are presented with a clear framework for their investments. The new provisions were implemented in two steps. The first step has already started immediately after its coming into force on 28th May 2005: There is only one standard deposit of 25 cent. In the second step as of May 2006, the compulsory deposit has been extended to all ecologically unfriendly one-way packaging and the so called individual solutions were discontinued. Under the "individual solutions", discounters only had to take back one-way drink packaging sold by their own sales chain. Since May 2006, stores that sell drink cans, glass or plastic bottles are obligated to take back corresponding packaging from other drinks manufacturers. Empty one-way bottles and cans can be returned to any outlet where one-way packaging is sold. This is also done to promote the development of a uniform nationwide return system which is now being build up by the economic operators. As of May 2006 the deposit is compulsory for all ecologically unfriendly one-way packaging from 0.1 litres to 3 litres. This includes all packaging of beer, mineral water and carbonated soft drinks which had already been subject to deposit since January 2003. As of May 2006, a deposit must also be paid for non-carbonated soft drinks and alcoholic mixed drinks, especially the so called alcopops.

Waste Storage Ordinance into force since 1 June 2005. There is a new era of domestic waste management in Germany: since the 1 June 2005 wastes can no longer be landfilled in Germany without pretreatment. Domestic waste landfills became contaminated sites which result in costs for rehabilitation and after-care amounting to billions.

Since 1 June 2005 this has changed. Prior to storage, waste must be treated in such a way that it cannot degrade further or release pollutants. In future, recoverable substances will be separated in state-of-the-art installations and the energy from the wastes utilised. Only a small non-recoverable part of maximum 30% will still have to be stored in well-equipped landfills. Landfills with poor liners and a lack of technical monitoring will be gradually be closed down by 2009. For 12 years the industry, local authorities and environmental activists have been working towards 1 June 2005. Local authorities alone have invested €7.5 billion, especially over the past four years. 15,000 jobs have been created.

The Waste Storage Ordinance also implements the 1999 European Union Landfill Directive. Along with Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands, German waste management is thus assuming a pioneering role in the implementation of this EC directive.

Sustainable waste management that includes modern and efficient treatment technologies for waste helps to protect both resources and climate. The German government therefore advocates the further development of waste management at European and international level. Germany often takes on a pioneering role in shaping EU waste law. At national level the German government supports sustainable waste management concepts for obtaining raw materials or energy from wastes. German waste management has the highest waste recovery quotas worldwide, and thus already contributes significantly to sustainable management and climate protection.

The German government aims to achieve almost complete high-quality recovery, at least of municipal waste, by 2020. This will eliminate the need to landfill wastes, which has adverse effects on the climate. Resource and climate protection will be incorporated into waste management to a greater extent at European and international level over the next years, for example by minimising methane and CO2 emissions or substituting fossil fuels. Germany contributes know-how and innovative technology to reaching this target.