



Advisory Group on a ‘Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy’

Meeting 8 April 2020

Discussion Note - Deposit Return Schemes (DRS)

The topic for discussion at this meeting, which will take place on-line using the Zoom application, will be Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) for single-use beverage containers as a means of reducing waste, reducing littering and supporting the circular economy. The structure of the meeting will be two presentations on the topic- one proposing the introduction of a national scheme and the other opposing- followed by a group discussion. For technical reasons the meeting will be limited to forty minutes. Ms. Mindy O’Brien from Voice Ireland will propose the introduction of a scheme while Mr. Conor Walsh from the Irish Waste Management Association will oppose.

Background

A DRS for beverage containers involves the application of a refundable deposit to incentivise consumers to return their beverage containers for recycling. While the primary function of a DRS is to increase recycling rates and support the circular economy, in some countries they have also been shown to assist in the reduction of littering of beverage containers. A DRS can be voluntary (e.g. industry-led) or statutory (mandated by legislation).

While a number of Member States do so, there is no EU obligation to operate DRS. Article 9 of the Single Use Plastic Directive (2019/904) sets out the targets which Member States must achieve in this area and outlines the measures they may consider:

1. Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure the separate collection for recycling:
 - a. by 2025, of an amount of waste single-use plastic products listed in Part F of the Annex equal to 77 % of such single use plastic products placed on the market in a given year by weight;
 - b. by 2029, of an amount of waste single-use plastic products listed in Part F of the Annex equal to 90 % of such single use plastic products placed on the market in a given year by weight.

In order to achieve that objective, Member States may inter alia:

- establish deposit-refund schemes;
- establish separate collection targets for relevant extended producer responsibility schemes.

In Ireland, the main route through which plastic bottles and aluminium drinks cans are currently captured is kerbside collection. Most households (approx. 80%) in Ireland are served with kerbside collections in either a two-bin or three-bin service – one bin for mixed dry recycling (MDR), one for mixed residual waste (MRW) and in many areas also a food/organics bin (the provision of food/organics bins to households in every town with 500 or more residents is now mandatory). Beverage containers are therefore collected in the MDR bin alongside other household packaging, paper and card.

Complementing kerbside collection, there is a network of 1,848 locations where beverage containers can be brought for recycling. In addition to providing a convenient drop-off location for some households, these are likely to capture a small proportion of beverage containers consumed and disposed 'on-the-go'.

Some questions to consider:

- In principle, would you support the introduction of a DRS as part of Ireland's approach to meeting our targets under the SUP Directive?
- If so, do you have a preference for a voluntary or statutory DRS?
- Can the targets set by the EU be achieved without the introduction of a DRS - are there alternatives to DRS to achieve the targets?

- Research suggests significant up-front capital cost for the introduction of a DRS. How should this be funded?