



Generalkonsulat
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
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Circular Economy in Germany

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Circular Economy Act (KrWG)

Regional concepts were already in place in the 1980s: away from waste disposal to holistic waste management in which avoidance, reuse and recycling have priority.

In Germany, the Circular Economy Act (KrWG) entered into force on June 1, 2012, with the aim of promoting the conservation of natural resources and ensuring the protection of people and the environment in the generation and management of waste.

Numerous ordinances supplement and substantiate the KrWG.

In October 2020 there was an amendment to the KrWG to implement the amended EU Waste Framework Directive that came into force on July 4, 2018, as part of the EU circular economy package.



Waste hierarchy

Rangfolge der neuen fünfstufigen Abfallhierarchie eingeführt (§ 6 KrWG)
Bild-Quelle: Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Umwelt und Verbraucherschutz

1. Avoidance

- plant-internal recycling of materials
- low-waste product design
- reuse of products
- extension of product life cycle
- consumer behaviour aimed at purchasing low-waste, low-impact products and using reusable packaging.

2. Preparation for reuse

Any process that aims to prepare products or components of products in a way that they can be reused for the same purpose that they have originally been produced for.

3. Recycling

Any process that aims to recycle waste, products, materials or substances either to be used for the original purpose or for other purposes. This includes the processing of organic materials, except of energy recovery and processing into materials that are intended for use as fuel or for backfilling.

4. Other recycling, especially energy recovery and backfilling

Any process, whose main objective is to bring the waste to a useful purpose within the facility or in the wider economy, either by replacing other materials that would otherwise have been used to perform a specific function, or by preparing the waste in such a way that it can be used to fulfill this function.

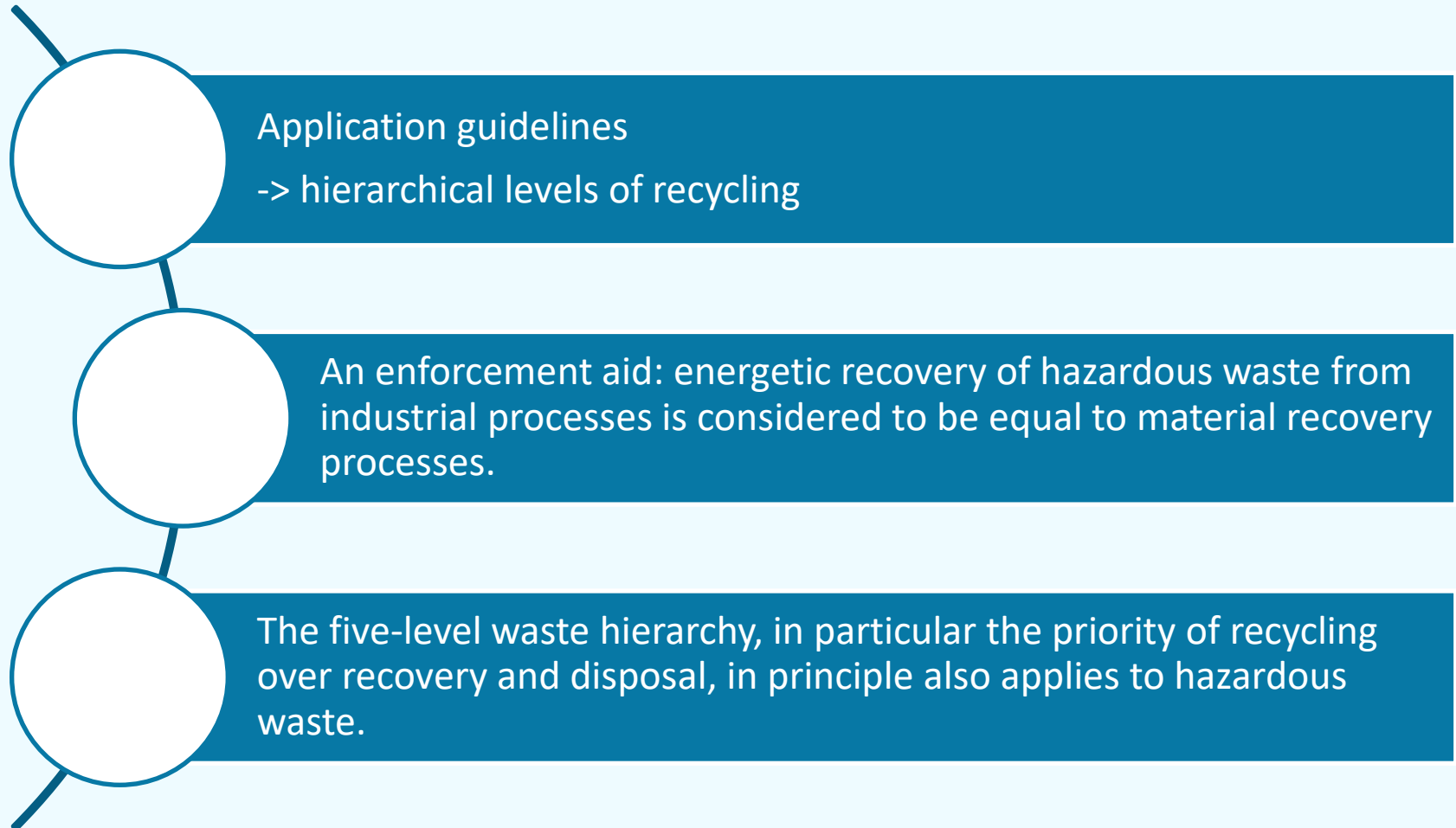


5. Disposal:

Any process that is not a recycling process, even if the operation has the secondary effect of recovering materials or energy.

Waste hierarchy in practical use

The Federal Ministry of the Environment has published the following information – agreed upon with the federal states - on how to implement and apply the waste hierarchy rules imposed by the Circular Economy Act (KrWG):



A typical waste bin in Germany

every German generates 455 kg of waste per year



information in kilograms

Life cycle of single-use products



plastic bottle
approx.
450
years



to-go cup
approx.
50
years



plastic bag
approx.
10-20
years



cigarette butt
approx.
10-15
years

Five rules against the throwaway culture

The Federal Government committed itself to avoid waste and use resources more efficiently. Therefore, it is no longer allowed to destroy functional goods. The law implementing the EU Waste Framework Directive came into force on October 29, 2020.

1. Avoid destruction of returned goods

In order to avoid storage costs, some retailers tend to destroy new, functional goods in large quantities instead of putting them back to the market. To fight against this throwaway culture, the new law foresees that in future retailers will have to make sure that returned goods can still be used and will not end up in the waste bin. The law thus extends the scope of product responsibility that producers and retailers have for the products they manufacture and sell.

2. Giving priority to recycled products

In the context of public procurement, federal institutions will henceforth be obliged to give preference to ecologically advantageous products-

3. Retailers will have to bear cleaning costs.

Disposable products such as to-go cups or cigarettes are often carelessly thrown away. So far, the cleaning costs have been borne by the citizens alone. With the new law, those who manufacture or sell single-use products must also contribute to the cleaning costs of parks and streets.

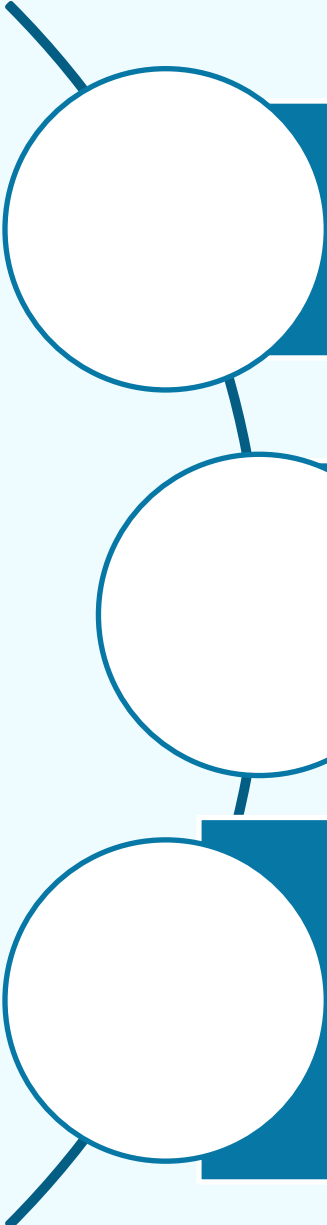
4. Stricter rules for recycling

The new regulation tightens the requirements for the recycling of paper, metal, plastic, glass and household waste. The new regulation stipulates a recycling rate of at least 50 percent for 2020. The quota will gradually increase from 2025 onwards.

5. Separate collection of waste paper, plastic, metal or glass

The new regulation tightens the obligation to collect wastes separately from each other. According to the new law, public waste disposal companies are compelled to collect organic waste, plastics, metal, paper, glass, textiles, bulky waste and hazardous waste coming from private households separately from each other. The obligation to collect textile waste separately will apply from 2025.

Measures for the future



Since 3 July 2021, disposable cutlery and dishes made of plastic, drinking straws, stirring sticks, cotton swabs and balloon sticks made of plastic may no longer be produced in the EU. The same applies to to-go beverage cups, fast food packaging and disposable food containers made of Styrofoam.

As of January 2022, there will be a ban on lightweight plastic carrier bags in Germany. The amendment to the German Packaging Act is another measure taken by the federal government to protect the environment from plastic waste.

Very lightweight plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness below 15 microns are excluded from this amendment since they are required for hygiene purposes or provided as primary packaging for loose food and thus help to prevent food wastages. In addition, a ban on these bags could motivate manufacturers to package more products in plastic as a standard.

Thank you for your attention

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