

**SDR  
PORTUGAL**



# **HORECA ESTABLISHMENT GUIDE DEPOSIT AND REFUND SYSTEM (DRS)**

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# Index

<b>1. <i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1. <i>Packaging accepted in the Deposit and Return System</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2. <i>Transition Period</i></b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2. <i>Deposit Value</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3. <i>Return of SDR Portugal packaging</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3.1. <i>Control of SDR Portugal packaging</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>3.2. <i>Return of packaging</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
3.2.1. Return of packaging to a Collection Point .....	5
3.2.2. Return of packaging to SDR Portugal kiosks .....	5
3.2.3. Direct collection from the HORECA establishment.....	6
3.2.3.1 Registration of HORECA establishments.....	6
3.2.3.2 Temporary suspension of packaging return activity.....	6
3.2.3.3 Cancellation of packaging return activity .....	6
3.2.3.4 Storage of packaging for collection.....	6
3.2.3.5 Registration of full bags.....	7
3.2.3.6 Collection of the bags with SDR Portugal packaging .....	7
3.2.3.7 Transport of bags with SDR Portugal packaging.....	8
3.2.3.8 Fraud prevention .....	8
3.2.3.9 Civil liability.....	9
3.2.3.10 Payment of deposit value.....	9
<b>4. <i>Audits</i></b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>5. <i>Communication materials</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>6. <i>References</i></b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>7. <i>Versions history</i></b> .....	<b>11</b>

## 1. Introduction

The Deposit and Return System (hereinafter referred to as DRS), defined in Decree-Law No. 152/2017, in its current wording, more specifically Article 23-C, is based on the efficient recovery of a set of previously approved beverage containers, with a view to maximising their return rate and recycling. The ambitious targets set, 90% by 2029, make the HORECA sector key to this process, given its very significant weight in the packaging placed on the market.

This HORECA Establishment Guide is a document that aims to support and provide practical guidance for the operation and return of packaging associated with the DRS. It is regularly reviewed and updated, and it is advisable to confirm that the version is up to date at [SDRPortugal.pt](http://SDRPortugal.pt).

For a better understanding of this Guide, we also recommend consulting the **SDR Glossary**, available at [SDRPortugal.pt](http://SDRPortugal.pt). It contains definitions of technical terms, as well as abbreviations and acronyms used throughout the text. SDR Portugal also provides answers to **Frequently Asked Questions about the HORECA sector**, on [SDRPortugal.pt](http://SDRPortugal.pt), in order to helping people understand how the DRS works and its processes, ensuring that it is regularly updated.

### 1.1. Packaging accepted in the Deposit and Return System

This legislation defines the scope of packaging accepted in the DRS as single-use plastic and metal beverage containers of up to 3 litres. The packaging covered must be registered in the DRS system. The identification of this packaging is ensured through the database provided by SDR Portugal, which gathers information on each product: GTIN/EAN code (represented by the barcode), product category, brand, responsible packager, format, material and capacity of each type of packaging.

All SDR packages must bear the “SDR Portugal” symbol so that it can be identified easily and immediately. This packaging is referred to in this Guide as **SDR Portugal packaging**.

The SDR Portugal symbol, a registered trademark of SDR Portugal, is strictly authorised for packagers participating in this system, under the established contractual terms, and is intended to confirm that they are responsible for collecting an amount, known as the **deposit value**, when placing their products on the market. This amount is set by law and must be itemised on receipts, invoices and price tags.

### 1.2. Transition Period

A transition period has been defined after the DRS becomes live, during which SDR Portugal packaging and ‘pre-SDR’ packaging may coexist on the market.

The coordination of deadlines for the placing of products on the market by the respective packers and their availability on the market during this transition period is extremely important in order to:

- ensure consumer confidence;

- achieve collection targets;
- prevent situations of disruption to the supply of products on the market;
- avoid losses of packaging materials and/or already packaged products;
- prevent situations of fraud that could financially compromise the system.

The guidelines for the transition period and the transition timetable are set out in the **SDR Transition Period Guide** available through the dedicated area **HORECA Establishment** at **SDRPortugal.pt**.

The DRS operation will commence on **10 April 2026**, with a maximum duration of 120 days for the transition period ending on 9 August 2026.

## 2. Deposit Value

As a HORECA establishment, the return of the deposit value must be considered taking into account the following two situations:

- a) In the cases where **payment is made prior to consumption**, the deposit value for the packaging purchased must be charged to the end consumer. Typically, in these cases, the packaging remains in the consumer's possession. The deposit value will only be paid to the consumer by the HORECA establishment upon return of the packaging in the proper condition (see point 3.1) and, if the establishment decides, upon presentation of the respective proof of purchase.;
- b) In situations **of payment after consumption**, the end consumer should not be charged the deposit value for the packaging purchased. Typically, in these cases, the packaging remains at the HORECA establishment after consumption. Therefore, the deposit should not be charged unless the label or packaging has been damaged by the end consumer, preventing the identification of the brands to which it refers. It should also be charged if the packaging remains in the consumers' possession, referring to the situation in point a).

Under these conditions, when the HORECA establishment is in possession of SDR Portugal packaging and returns it to the DRS circuit, it will be entitled to a return of the respective deposit value. On the contrary, in situations where the establishment does not return the empty packaging of the products it has purchased, no refund will be made..

## 3. Return of SDR Portugal packaging

HORECA establishments are only obliged to collect packaging from drinks purchased and consumed on their premises, although they may voluntarily accept other packaging.

Before accepting the return of the packaging, the HORECA establishment must validate its compliance.

### 3.1. Control of SDR Portugal packaging

For the return of SDR Portugal packaging, HORECA establishments ensure compliance with SDR Portugal's acceptance requirements. To this end, it is necessary to verify that each package:

- is completely empty;
- is intact and not deformed;
- has the cap on, where applicable;
- has a fully legible barcode;
- has the SDR Portugal symbol fully legible.

In addition to visually inspecting each package, the person responsible for the HORECA establishment can use an APP provided by SDR Portugal, with a *smartphone*, to confirm the barcode recognition and its correspondence to the product and type of packaging to be returned (as recorded in the SDR Portugal database).

If any of the above conditions are not met, the packaging cannot be returned under the DRS, and the deposit value will not be refunded.

Rejected packaging that cannot be returned must be sent for recycling via the municipal yellow recycling bins, and the deposit value is lost.

### 3.2. Return of packaging

There are three possible destinations for packaging returned manually at HORECA establishments.

#### 3.2.1.Return of packaging to a Collection Point

It will mainly operate in supermarkets, hypermarkets or wholesale outlets, but also in other duly identified public places. Returns are made to the unit or one by one.

#### 3.2.2.Return of packaging to SDR Portugal kiosks

These are collection points equipped with high-capacity processing machines, designed for returning larger quantities of packaging at once (rather than individually or one by one). They will be located in urban areas with a high density of HORECA establishments, with adapted opening hours, easy access and parking. They function as a complement to the previous option.

Therefore, whether at Collection Points or SDR Portugal Kiosks, the person responsible simply needs to go to one of these locations with the packaging that complies with acceptance requirements and follow the instructions provided. At both locations, there will be several return options available, either through vouchers or other forms of credit, whether through a mechanism such as *MBWay*, Contactless, or the app of the Collection Point Operator or SDR Portugal itself. You will be able to find the location of these Collection Points on our website.

### 3.2.3. Direct collection from the HORECA establishment

In this option, the HORECA establishment must register and comply with certain procedures and requirements, as detailed in this section of the document.

#### 3.2.3.1 Registration of HORECA establishments

Establishments interested in being SDR Portugal adherents must submit their registration application to SDR Portugal. If accepted, they must then register on the SDR Portugal Portal, accessible through the area dedicated to **HORECA Establishment** at **SDRPortugal.pt**. This registration must be completed at least 30 days before the establishment begins operating and is free of charge. Once this procedure has been fully approved, the HORECA Establishment contract for the DRS is formalised.

A detailed description of each phase is presented in the **Instructions for Registrations – User Support Guide – SDR Portugal Portal**. The **Draft of the Accession Agreement – HORECA Establishment**, to be established between each HORECA establishment and SDR Portugal will also soon be available through the area dedicated to **HORECA Establishment** at **SDRPortugal.pt**.

#### 3.2.3.2 Temporary suspension of packaging return activity

If an establishment is temporarily unable to operate, namely due to temporary closure or restrictions on operations that prevent compliance with the contractually agreed requirements, it must notify SDR Portugal.

This notification must be submitted 15 days in advance, except in accidental or unforeseen circumstances, which must be reported as soon as possible. The notification must be sent to [recolha@sdrportugal.pt](mailto:recolha@sdrportugal.pt).

#### 3.2.3.3 Cancellation of packaging return activity

The cancellation of a HORECA establishment's activity must be communicated to SDR Portugal 15 days in advance, except in accidental or unforeseen situations, which must be communicated as soon as possible.

#### 3.2.3.4 Storage of packaging for collection

SDR Portugal packaging, plastic bottles and beverage cans covered by this scheme that remain in the possession of HORECA establishments must be stored in a safe, clean place until they are collected by a carrier contracted for this purpose.

These packages may only be packed in 240 litre bags, equivalent to 200 packages, and with tamper-proof seals (security closures), supplied free of charge by SDR Portugal upon request, using a billing mechanism with subsequent credit, after accounting them at the Counting and Sorting Centres.

HORECA establishments are responsible for managing bags and security seals, including stock control and placing orders through the SDR Portugal Portal.

The tamper-proof seals are printed with a unique, sequential numbering code, which, when read, will uniquely associate the bag with the HORECA establishment where it is used.

Please note:

- bags must be filled to the maximum filling level printed on them;
- once filled, the bags must be immediately sealed with a safety closure, which guarantees their inviolability to prevent loss or theft of packaging;
- no more than two full 240 litre bags, equivalent to 200 packages, should be stacked during storage to prevent tearing or crushing.

### 3.2.3.5 Registration of full bags

Subsequently, the HORECA establishment operator must register the full bags so that they become part of the stock of bags available for collection. To do this, they must log in to the dedicated app provided by SDR Portugal using any smartphone and scan the barcode on the tamper-proof seal of each full bag, automatically identifying the registered establishment and linking it to the location where the bags will be collected. Alternatively, the HORECA establishment operator can manually enter the number associated with the barcode on each seal in the field provided in the app to register the identification of the bags to be collected.

### 3.2.3.6 Collection of the bags with SDR Portugal packaging

Bags with SDR Portugal packaging are collected from HORECA establishments by a carrier contracted by SDR Portugal. **Collection is scheduled by SDR Portugal whenever there is a minimum quantity of 4 full bags, closed and correctly read and registered in the APP.** This limit is set in order to ensure the economic reasonableness of this operation. Under these conditions, transport is free of charge for the HORECA establishment.

For quantities **less than 4 bags**, collection will have to be assessed by SDR Portugal, at the request of the HORECA establishment manager, on the SDR Portugal APP. A service level of over 98% is our objective for the collection period between the time the request is registered on the APP and the collection of the bags. In other words, a request placed by 12:00 noon on day D will be fulfilled on day D+1 (where D is a working day).

The carriers hired for this purpose are also registered on the SDR Portugal Portal, through the signing of a logistics service agreement. Drivers are registered as users of the APP provided by SDR Portugal for the collection and reading/registration of bags delivered by HORECA establishments. When collecting the bags, the driver carries out a visual inspection of the bags to verify that:

- the bags are filled to the fill line printed on them;
- the tamper-proof seals are properly affixed and show no signs of tampering;
- the bags are not torn;

**SDR Portugal**

HORECA Establishment Guide – Deposit and Refund System

Version 1(22/01/2026)

- the bags show no signs of liquid leakage inside;
- the bags are clean on the outside;
- the bags do not contain any deformed packaging;
- the bags only contain SDR Portugal packaging (e.g. they cannot contain glass bottles, tins, etc.).

Once the tamper-proof seals on the bags have been read and automatically recorded in the SDR Portugal information system, the name of the person responsible for the HORECA establishment is recorded in the driver's APP and a signature is required in the APP itself.

If any non-compliance or incident is detected during the collection process, this is also recorded in the driver's app and confirmed via signature in the APP by the person responsible for the HORECA establishment. Similarly, the SDR Portugal support service can be contacted for clarification via the dedicated area at **HORECA Establishment** at **SDRPortugal.pt**.

### 3.2.3.7 Transport of bags with SDR Portugal packaging

Full bags collected from HORECA establishments can be transported in two ways:

- a) via reverse logistics, whenever the return is processed by a carrier/distributor, at the same time as a delivery, i.e. one that already visits the establishment regularly;
- b) via dedicated logistics, when a carrier is hired to travel specifically to the location to collect the bags with SDR Portugal packaging.

When defining the collection option, **reverse logistics will be prioritised** as it is more efficient, involves less road wear, lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, less urban entropy and, in HORECA establishments, minimises visits to them and, last but not least, allows for the continuous freeing up of limited storage space.

Once collected, the bags are transported to their destination – the nearest Counting and Sorting Centre (CCT), which is managed by SDR Portugal. Upon arrival, before being opened, the unique barcode on the tamper-proof seal of each bag is scanned. This is followed by the individual reading of each package on automatic counting equipment, which ensures that these records are transmitted and stored in SDR Portugal's central information system, guaranteeing the traceability of each bag and each package at every stage. This database is also essential for internal control and to support/document the subsequent return of the deposit value to the HORECA establishment associated with each returned bag.

### 3.2.3.8 Fraud prevention

Beverage container DRSs are frequently subject to various attempts at fraud, and it is important that HORECA establishments be vigilant in order to avoid and prevent these situations. The most common types of fraud in the manual collection process consist of sticking a label from a packaging that is part of the DRS, or simply a label with its barcode, on packages that are not

DRSs packages or other objects that are similar in shape and weight. Any suspicion of fraud should be reported immediately to SDR Portugal.

### 3.2.3.9 Civil liability

SDR Portugal assumes the risk from the moment the logistics partner (carrier) collects the packaging with deposit, on behalf of SDR Portugal, at the HORECA establishment until its delivery to a Counting and Sorting Centre. Transport traceability is ensured by reading the tamper-proof seal on each bag at each stage of transport.

### 3.2.3.10 Payment of deposit value

The mechanics of the DRS are based on a deposit value, set by law, which is passed on in each transaction throughout the entire distribution chain, from placing the product on the market to the end consumer.

Payments will be made monthly based on a self-billing process, the steps of which will be explained in detail in the contract to be signed between the HORECA establishment and SDR Portugal, shortly in the area dedicated to **HORECA Establishment** at **SDRPortugal.pt**.

The HORECA establishment will be paid the deposit value corresponding to the number of SDR Portugal packaging units collected and counted at the Counting and Sorting Centres during the period to be settled:

- a single amount is assigned per package, regardless of the material (PET or tin) and volume
- the deposit value is applicable to all GTIN/EAN codes valid for SDR Portugal packaging;
- the SDR Portugal information system assigns the deposit value to each GTIN/EAN code;
- the SDR Portugal information system aggregates the number of valid units counted and multiplies them by the deposit amount.

Payments must be made within a maximum of 30 calendar days from the date of the respective invoice.

## 4. Audits

SDR Portugal, either directly or through an independent entity, may carry out audits and inspections at HORECA establishments, through the annual plan of scheduled audits or, when justified, on an exceptional basis at any time and without prior notice, in order to verify that the storage conditions of the bags are the most appropriate to ensure their counting and security. These will be carried out during normal operating hours and in such a way as to cause as little disruption as possible to the activities of the HORECA establishment (e.g. avoiding mealtimes).

If the inspection or test reveals that the respective requirements are not met, the corresponding corrections, including proof of their implementation, must be made within a reasonable period

of time, to be assessed by SDR Portugal on a case-by-case basis. SDR Portugal will provide the HORECA establishment with a report on the inspection or test.

## 5. Communication materials

SDR Portugal ensures the development and adoption of a communication strategy that guarantees a harmonised experience for the consumer.

It is the responsibility of HORECA establishments to answer any questions consumers may have. In this regard, it is crucial not only that the teams operating each HORECA establishment have full knowledge of how the system works, but also that there is clear communication to help consumers find answers to their main questions.

SDR Portugal will have standardised communication, which will help end consumers understand DRS processes, including those resulting from interactions with HORECA establishments.

SDR Portugal will ensure the training of HORECA establishment operators in order to clarify all operational requirements, but also to enable them to clarify SDR to their customers.

## 6. References

Decree-Law No. 152-D/2017, in its current wording, available for consultation in the *Diário da República* at <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/legislacao-consolidada/decreto-lei/2017-114350681>.



## 7. Versions history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1	22/01/2026	Preparation and general review.