



# Technical specification & labelling manual

For PET Plastic bottles, Aluminium  
and Steel drinks containers

**DRSI CLG**  
(Trading as Re-turn)

Version 2.2 | February 2024



## 1 | Introduction

This document describes the requirements for a package to be included in the deposit return system (DRS) operated by DRSI CLG, trading as Re-turn, in the Republic of Ireland.

The requirements outlined ensure that containers ranging from 150ml to 3 litres in size entering the deposit return system, are designed for high quality recycling. Optimal performance from container return through to collection, sorting and reprocessing back into new plastic or metal products is critical to the operation of the system.

For information on product types and containers that are included in the DRS, please refer to S.I. No. 599 of 2021 – Separate Collection (Deposit Return Scheme) Regulations 2021. You can also visit our website at [www.re-turn.ie](http://www.re-turn.ie)

Re-turn reserves the right to amend this technical specification document as may be required from time to time.

## 2 | Container Shape

The optimal package shape for RVM acceptance is cylindrical and stable. If a container is not cylindrical (square in shape) or is top heavy, it risks jamming the RVM equipment on return and causing damage.

Prior to product registration in August 2023, Re-turn will be in contact regarding any drinks containers that may require testing before being accepted into the DRS system.

In order to test your container's stability, place the container on a flat surface. If the upper part of the container touches the surface or balances on the shoulder as shown below it may not be possible to approve. Please contact Re-turn for evaluation of your containers.



### 3 | Container Dimensions

Container dimensions should be within the following ranges for both pack diameter and height: -

Dimension	Minimum	Maximum
Outer Diameter	50mm	120 mm
Height (with cap on)	100mm	360 mm

**Please note that the height dimension of the container must be a minimum of 1.4 times the diameter.**

### 4 | Material Thickness

Material thickness can cause challenges for Reverse Vending machines and can block and cause parts of the compaction equipment to fail. Material thickness will be evaluated by compression tests and samples will be required for this evaluation.

It must be possible to reduce the volume of a container by a minimum of 60% for PET and 75% for aluminium cans during compaction by RVM equipment.

### 5 | Barcoding

All individual containers within the deposit return system must contain a barcode in order to ensure that the product can be clearly identified in both Reverse Vending Machines and at Re-turn's counting and sorting facility.

According to the ISO 15420 Standard, the barcode must be of sufficient quality to achieve "Grade 1.5", as defined in ISO 15416, when read throughout the life of the package.

In the case of multipacks, each individual container within the multipack will require a barcode to ensure that it can be returned for a refund by your customers and so that all PET bottles and aluminium cans are readable by RVM equipment and counting centres.

**You should therefore plan to update multipack container artworks prior to scheme go live in the Republic of Ireland in February 2024.**

Please note that PET bottles must have tethered caps in place by 2024 under the requirements of the Single Use Plastics Directive.

## 5.1 | Barcode Format

**The barcode used can be of the type EAN-13, EAN-8, UPC-A or UPC-E. All barcodes used within the Deposit Return Scheme must be GS1 compliant and unique to the individual product. For more information please visit [www.gs1ie.org](http://www.gs1ie.org)**

### **National Barcode**

Beverage containers connected to the deposit return system should be sold or supplied with a new barcode that is unique to the Republic of Ireland (national barcode). National barcodes help to protect the scheme from cross border fraud as barcodes from outside the state are not registered with the scheme.

### **International Barcode**

Producers can retain an existing open / international barcode, subject to the payment of a surcharge, which is designed to cover the fraud risk.

**Producers and importers are directly responsible for procuring GS1 compliant barcodes specific to the product they place on the market.**

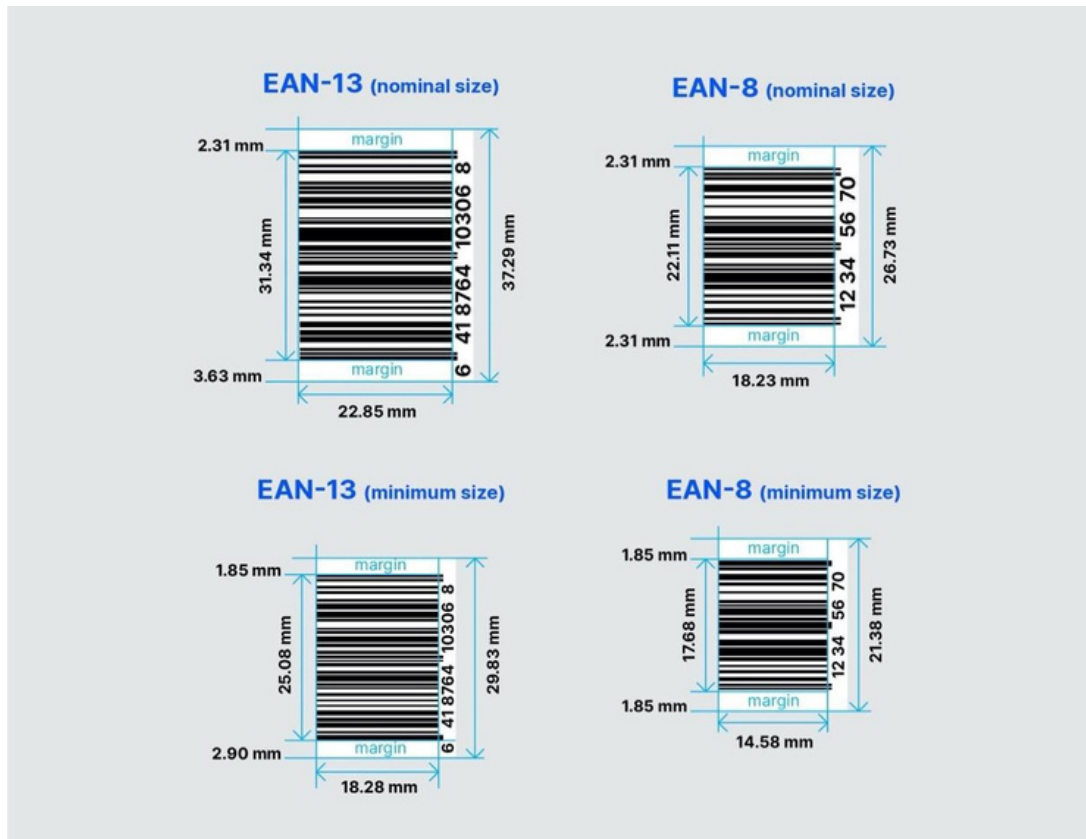
The nominal size of an EAN-13 bar code is 37.29 mm x 22.85 mm and the nominal size of an EAN-8 bar code is 26.73 mm x 18.23 mm. The minimum size of an EAN-13 bar code is 29.83 mm x 18.28 mm and that of an EAN-8 bar code is 21.38 mm x 14.58 mm.

A sufficiently wide clearance area must be left at the beginning and end of the bar code in the background colour.

Barcodes must be placed on the container vertically (in the ladder format) so that the bars are horizontal. Barcodes should be on the container's main label for PET bottles and not on a neck label. Barcodes must be at least 10 mm from the bottom of an aluminium can. Barcodes must never be placed on the top or bottom of a container.

In order for a product to be accepted as part of the return system, it must be compliant with the Re-turn Reverse Vending Machine Specification. The beverage manufacturer/importer is responsible for ensuring that the barcode of all product batches released for sale is identifiable by the machines.

If in any doubt please contact Re-turn to arrange testing.



UPC-A	UPC-E
Width x height (mm)	Width x height (mm)
29.8 x 20.7	21.4 x 17.0
37.3 x 25.9	26.7 x 21.3

## 5.2 | New Barcode Recommendation

### Key objectives for 'go live' are:

- Ensure a smooth but time limited transition period for Producers and Retailers to ensure that good saleable product left in the supply chain is not wasted.

- Ensure that there is differentiation between product that a producer and retailer has paid a deposit on and previous product that no deposit has been paid on.

- Ensure that financial risks to the scheme are minimised at go live.

It is therefore required that current national barcodes are phased out in preparation for scheme go live on the 1 February 2024. New national barcodes for products sold in the Republic of Ireland ONLY must replace the current national barcodes. These are the barcodes that must be used in the registration process. Should producers register products with current/existing national barcodes, these will be considered non-compliant and will not be registered in the Re-turn Barcode Masterfile.

Producers who choose to maintain existing international barcodes will be accommodated subject to the payment of an additional surcharge per container, to mitigate fraud risk to the scheme.

### **5.3 | Products for Export**

Products that are produced in Ireland but only sold outside of the Republic of Ireland should not include a barcode used in the deposit system or the deposit system logo.

### **5.4 | Deposit Logo**

The Re-turn deposit logo is required on all in scope products. This logo helps consumers, retailers and enforcement authorities to identify products that are part of Ireland's deposit return scheme and those that are not.

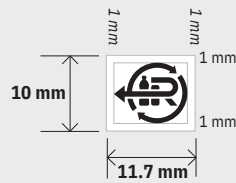
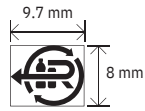
It is particularly important for retailers and return point operators that are accepting back containers manually (i.e. over the counter and not via a Reverse Vending Machine). It is only permitted for use by businesses that are part of the scheme and therefore compliant with the Separate Collection (Deposit Return Scheme) Regulations.

The smallest permissible size for the symbol is shown below. It's colouring can be adapted to the other colours of the container. Black text on a white background is recommended by Re-turn. Producers must adhere to the Re-turn brand guidelines provided.

## Minimum logo size

Logo size: 9.7 mm W x 8 mm H

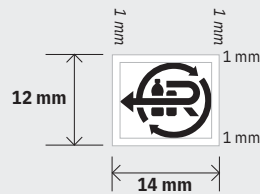
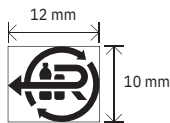
Clearance Zone: 1 mm of space all around the logo



## Maximum logo size

Logo size: 12 mm W x 10 mm H

Clearance Zone: 1 mm of space all around the logo



## 6 | Material Symbol

It is recommended that plastic bottles and/or their labels have symbols indicating the container material. The minimum size of the material symbol is 6 mm x 5 mm. Where the symbol is not present on the material itself e.g. in the case of an aluminium can, it is recommended that it be present.

## 7 | Material Specification

### 7.1| Permitted Materials

The Single Use Plastics Directive requires that 90% of plastic beverage bottles are separately collected by 2029.

In addition to this the Directive requires that all PET beverage bottles contain at least 25% recycled content by 2025 increasing to 30% by 2030 for plastic beverage bottles.

This will require producers to place the best possible quality PET material on the Irish market in order to ensure that it is suitable for bottle to bottle recycling for PET.

**Please refer to table 1 below for acceptable materials and those that producers should now commence phasing out with a view to completing this process ideally by the end of 2024 as this will inform fee modulation.**

Component	Accepted	To be Phased Out
Bottle material	PET	PLA, PVC, PS, PET-G, PEN, PEF
Colour	Clear and transparent coloured PET	Metallic colours, mineral additives, Titanium dioxide and carbon black.
Barrier	Monolayer	Multilayer*
Closure	PE, PP	Metal (unless fully removed e.g. crown cap)
Closure Liner	PE, EVA, TPE	
Label / Sleeve*	OPP, PP, PE, Paper, PET	PVC, Metal foil, OPS, PS, PLA
Inks	As per EuPIA guideline	Substances on EuPIA exclusion list.
Label Adhesives	Water or Alkali Soluble Hotmelt usage will be subject to testing	Non-Recyclable Hotmelt
Can	Aluminium & Steel	Mixed materials (plastic and aluminium or plastic and steel)
Labels / Sleeves	Most Plastic materials accepted	PVC

For labels / sleeves it is preferred that these are partial and cover no more than 50% of the container's surface area.

Please note that barriers and UV blockers must be approved by Re-turn prior to use. Where the container contains a barrier, this must be clearly stated in the material specification.



## 7.2 | Recycled Content

Producers must report the % of recycled content in PET bottles to Re-turn in order to show compliance with the Single Use Plastics Directive targets. Producers may be required to provide certification of recycled content when registering new products within the scheme.

Recycled plastic used in PET bottles must be produced using European Food Safety Authority approved recycling processes and comply with Regulation No. 282/2008 on recycled plastic materials and articles intended to come into contact with foods.

## 8 | Labelling of Containers with Self Adhesive Re-turn Logo Labels

Self-adhesive Re-turn logo labels are permitted to fulfil labelling requirements however they should be utilised by producers as a contingency measure only where direct printing on to the bottle label or can is not practical for the Irish market. **Use of self-adhesive Re-turn logo labels are subject to prior approval by Re-turn.**

Re-turn will supply the producer with these labels where approved and labeling must meet the criteria for Re-turn logo labelling as detailed.

**Under no circumstances is it permitted to meet this requirement through another third party label supplier.**

## 9 | Container Changes

Any changes to products already registered in the deposit return system must be approved by Re-turn before they can be introduced. Significant changes to shape and size may result in the container no longer being accepted by the reverse vending machines and will require review.

New sample product containers and material specifications must therefore be submitted to Re-turn for approval.

## 10 | New Product Registration

When Re-turn goes live on 1 February, 2024, the registration of a new product will need to be submitted to Re-turn for approval no later than six weeks before the product is placed on the market. All products need to be registered in the producer web portal which will be available at [www.re-turn.ie](http://www.re-turn.ie).

When registering drinks containers, specifications describing the material compositions of the bottle material, the label, the adhesive and the cap will need to be included. These specifications are usually available from the packaging manufacturer.

Once a product has been registered, a number of samples will need to be sent to Re-turn registered Reverse Vending Machine manufacturers for testing to ensure that they are compatible with approved Reverse Vending Machines and Counting and Sorting Centre equipment.

Samples should be sent to the following address: -

**Attn: Product Registration**  
**DRSI CLG,**  
**Red Cow Interchange Estate**  
**1 Ballymount Road**  
**Clondalkin, Dublin**  
**D22 HW67**

The packaging will then be checked against the requirements set out in this document. The shape of the container and the quality and readability of the barcode will be tested in a reverse vending machine as well as in ISO-certified control equipment.

The material thickness will be measured in compaction tests. If further evaluation is required, the new product will be sent to automation suppliers or material recovery facilities in consultation with the RVM supplier.

On successful completion of the testing process, the new product barcode will then be registered in Re-turn's product database. This Masterfile will be updated on a weekly basis.