

RECYCLE

Recycling

Recycling and garbage disposal may not be the most exciting part of moving to a new country, but it's essential to know if you want to live in the Netherlands comfortably.

The majority of Dutchies sort and recycle their waste in one way or another – but what do you do with all the different types of waste?

Waste in the Netherlands is managed on a municipal level leading to local differences in the exact rules and regulations. You should get in touch with your municipality to find out:

- the details on how recycling and waste management work where you live
- all the important dates and schedules (usually published in a calendar)
- how to get rid of larger (*grof vuil*) or chemical (*chemisch afval*) and other types of waste.



Please note! Many Dutch cities will issue a considerable fine if you don't recycle correctly.

Sorting Waste

In the Netherlands, different kinds of waste need to be separated.



Besides larger (*grof vuil*) and chemical (*chemisch afval*) waste, most municipalities require you to dispose separately of:

- paper and cardboard waste,
- food and garden waste,
- plastic, metal and drink packaging,
- general waste, and
- glass.

Most people have a bin with several compartments in the home to sort the waste:

GREEN

The green waste or '*groenbak*' is for everything that is organic, compost and biodegradable. Fruits & vegetables, leftover cooked food, coffee filters and flowers or plants are some of the waste separated in these bins.

BLUE

The paper recycling containers are called '*papierbakken*' in Dutch and are used to recycle just that, anything that is considered paper. Only clean paper is to be included here; used kitchen paper, pizza boxes etc go into the residual waste bin. Keep in mind to discard anything that is plastic from the paper waste, such as the plastic windows on envelopes.

ORANGE

Plastic and metal packaging go in the PMD container along with food and drink cartons.

GREY

All residual waste is disposed of in the all-remaining waste containers, often black or grey in color and sometimes placed underground.

Some cities also have glass containers and textile containers.

Where do I dispose of my sorted waste?

There are two ways to dispose of your waste and recycling in the Netherlands. In most built-up areas, you must deposit your waste and recycling in shared (underground) containers. Municipalities usually have containers for residual waste, paper, glass, plastic / metal / drink packaging and sometimes textile. Some municipalities provide a personal waste card per household; with others, you can use any underground waste container.

If you live outside a city, your household may have been given two to four containers for waste and recycling. The municipality will usually come every other week to empty the containers.

Once your waste is sorted, the materials are usually recycled in the Netherlands or elsewhere in Europe.

Non-recyclable waste goes to an incinerator or a landfill. This is a little controversial for the Netherlands, especially since it's considered a green country. However, at least these incinerators produce electricity that is put back into the power grid for hundreds of thousands of Dutch homes.

Bulky waste (*grof vuil*) refers to items that do not fit in a garbage bag, such as a microwave, mattress, rug, or table. Many municipalities collect bulky waste free of charge on given days.

Outside the cities you can have this waste picked up by calling the municipality for an appointment or you can bring it to the municipality's waste disposal site (*milieuplein* or *afvalpunt*) yourself.

Looking ahead, the Netherlands aims to become a completely waste-free country by 2050. This means the Dutch governments aims to:

- reduce the number of raw materials used to make products,
- reuse as many raw materials as possible, and
- reduce waste from using products.

Hopefully, this will reduce the need for incinerators or landfills in the future!



Deposit on packaging

In the Netherlands there is a deposit on plastic bottles (both large and small) of soft drinks and water. The deposit is usually €0.15 to €0.25 and is paid automatically when purchasing a drink. The bottles can be returned to supermarkets who have a machine to this purpose somewhere in the shop. Do note that bottles containing a supermarkets own branded drinks can only be returned to that specific supermarket.

From 1 April 2023 onwards, a nationwide, consumer-friendly deposit system will be operational for all metal beverage containers with a capacity of 3 liters or less as well.

Sustainable living

Whether you're aiming for a zero waste lifestyle or simply to do your part for the environment, the below tips will help:

- Buy your fruit and vegetables from grocers in stores or (weekly) markets
- Use apps such as [Too Good to Go](#) or [ResQ](#)
- Buy your clothes secondhand through specialised stores or apps:
 - o *Kringloopwinkel* (thrift store)
 - o *Rommelmarkt* (second-hand market)
 - o *Tweedehandskledingwinkel* (second-hand clothing shop): for instance [Appel & Ei](#), who have stores in multiple cities
 - o [Vinted](#) (online)
 - o [Marktplaats](#) (online)
- Bring your own bag when going shopping. Added advantage is that this will save costs, as shops will charge you extra for a plastic bag
- Use reusable bottles and coffee cups
- Refill essential items at bulk stores
- Upcycle used items
- Use public transport, a shared-bicycle service such as [Swapfiets](#) or [NS fiets](#), a shared-scooter service such as [Felyx](#) and [Go Sharing](#) or a shared car with [Greenwheels](#) or [MyWheels](#)
- Recycle and separate your waste as much as possible
- Go paperless
- Shop local
- Make your own compost



Solar panels

After catching up considerably, the Netherlands is now among the European leaders when it comes to generating solar energy. Our country currently has over 1.5 million homes with solar panels, which means that one in five houses has panels on the roof. Rising energy prices are generating even more interest in solar panels, but the high demand has also reached the limit of what can be expanded in the short term.

There is no denying that the Netherlands is one of the 'greenest' countries. Most of this is owing to the strict laws and regulations surrounding waste management. The Dutch and their mentality are deeply geared towards protecting their environment and this is apparent in the amount of effort they put in separating their waste.