

PRESS RELEASE

From single-use packaging to the circular economy

Osnabrück/Berlin, 18 November 2021

Grey paint pots, blue planters, 90 percent recycle content and fully recyclable – these are just two examples of the many instances that show the considerable progress that has been made regarding producer responsibility for packaging. The amended version of the Verpackungsgesetz (Packaging Act) now means that producers located outside of Germany and marketplaces share in this responsibility more fully. The conclusion of the Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister (Central Agency Packaging Register – ZSVR) is that there can no longer be any excuse for not making packaging a future resource.

Recycling and recycling-friendly design

Recycling volumes from the dual system once again increased by 8.4 percent in 2020. The statutory quotas were achieved on average by the systems owing to the considerable progress made in recycling-friendly packaging design. There is a wide range of fully recyclable packaging that do not compromise on product protection: all the different types, all the materials and a wide array of designs for marketing. It is clear that mono-material packaging has a leg up when it comes to recyclability. The minimum standard for determining the recyclability for packaging has inspired many different innovations.

‘Marketing has discovered ecological packaging. Looking at recycling-friendly mono-packaging that also saves material, the minimum standard has made an impact. If it’s a material composite that is tricky to recycle that only looks ‘eco’ because it’s brown, it is a dead-end when it comes to the circular economy,’ explained Gunda Rachut, Chair of the ZSVR, at the annual press conference with the German Environment Agency (UBA).

International producers, new registration requirement and marketplace requirements – greater transparency and low bureaucracy

The amended version of the Verpackungsgesetz shaped 2021. In the first implementation phase, a way for international producers to instruct an authorised representative in Germany was integrated into the LUCID Packaging Register. This was meant to guarantee that statutory obligations were met. Using the Electrical and Electronic Equipment Act (Elektrogesetz) as a model, the legislature hopes to substantially increase compliance amongst international producers.

From 1 July 2022, further new provisions will enter into force: full registration for all types of packaging and responsibility for marketplaces and fulfilment service providers. These changes make it clear that no one is allowed to place packaged goods on the German market if they are not registered. Marketplaces have to ensure that for their sellers.

‘The registration numbers increased considerably in 2021, especially from China. The expanded obligations are geared towards weaknesses that have been identified: international producers, marketplaces and free riders. By marshalling our resources, we were able to implement the first phase as planned by 3 July 2021. Right now we are working towards a lean implementation of the amended Act for 1 July 2022 so that producers can demonstrate that they are taking their producer responsibility seriously with as little bureaucracy as possible,’ Gunda Rachut said of the current challenges.

Conclusion and outlook

The next thing on the agenda is to shore up and expand the progress made under the Verpackungsgesetz. New packaging developments have to be integrated into the minimum standard assessment. The annual revision has proved to be valuable in correctly capturing the high degree of innovation. Further opportunities for development will arise as the Verpackungsgesetz is evaluated.

‘The direction is positive. The Verpackungsgesetz has incentivised the developments that were needed. There is no longer any excuse for not making packaging that cannot be avoided a future resource,’ summarised Gunda Rachut.

About the ZSVR

The ZSVR is headquartered in Osnabrück. The founders are the Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Ernährungsindustrie (Federation of German Food and Drink Industries – BVE), the Handelsverband Deutschland (German Retail Association – HDE), the IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen (German Plastics Association – IK), and the Markenverband (German Trade Mark Association). Since the Verpackungsgesetz (Packaging Act) entered into force on 1 January 2019, the ZSVR has served as an entrusted body to foster greater transparency and control in packaging recycling. To this end, it maintains a register of all industrial and commercial parties with producer responsibility and checks the dual systems and packaging recycling so as to promote fair competition among the parties involved. Lawyer Gunda Rachut is the Chair of the Foundation. Further information is available at www.verpackungsregister.org.

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