

PRESS RELEASE

New minimum standard for recycling-friendly packaging now available – plastics debate makes implementation more difficult

Osnabrück, 1 September 2020

- **Minimum standard has been updated to dynamically reflect technological advancements and improve usability.**
- **Ms Gunda Rachut, Chair of the ZSVR, commented: *"The new minimum standard enables companies to determine the recyclability of their packaging even faster."***
- **Current debate about plastics brings new challenges: hard-to-recycle composite packaging made from paper and plastics is seeing a disproportionate rise.**

The Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister (Central Agency Packaging Register – ZSVR) has published the 2020 edition of the minimum standard for assessing the recyclability of packaging (pursuant to section 21 (3) VerpackG) in consultation with the German Environment Agency. Application of the minimum standard has become much simpler: a more detailed description of the determination procedure makes it even easier for companies to check the recyclability of their packaging. The new version of the minimum standard also reflects technical innovation that may not yet be available across the board. To this end, a three-tier system for reviewing the applicable existing recycling infrastructure has been included, making the new minimum standard even more dynamic. The underlying structure with its three standard criteria has proven successful in practice. By verifying the existence of a recovery infrastructure, checking sortability and separability of the packaging, and taking recycling incompatibilities into account, it is easy for users to determine whether a packaging can be recycled well.

Composite packaging made from paper and plastics is becoming more and more of a problem

Unfortunately, there is a current tendency towards the use of packaging that – in the best case – can only be partially recovered. The debate about plastics, the Single-Use Plastics Directive, and a European plastic tax are all pushing the waste hierarchy, which includes waste prevention and recovery, into the background. Instead, these discussions have given rise to a rapid increase in the use of fibre-based packaging with a plastics share. While the criticism of plastic packaging has led some companies to switch to paper packaging, it is composite packaging with a plastic coating that they are using. Ms Gunda Rachut, Chair of the ZSVR, emphasised: *"The trend towards composite packaging is at the expense of recycling. Even if packaging mainly consists of paper – as soon as a plastic coating is applied, recycling becomes limited. From an ecological point of view, there is a clear preference for recyclable packaging options made from monomaterials. Our work is dedicated to ecological aspects regaining the upper hand in this discussion."* In addition, recovery capacities and recovery products for fibre-based packaging with a plastics share are clearly limited.

Ms Rachut comments: *"The waste hierarchy, with waste prevention at the top, must be brought to the forefront again. From product protection to logistics, decisions should be based on the ecological aspects of a given packaging solution. With the minimum standard, which helps to determine recyclability, we hope to be able to contribute to bringing more objectivity to the discussions surrounding packaging."*

About the ZSVR

The Stiftung Zentrale Stelle Verpackungsregister (Foundation Central Agency Packaging Register – 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, the ZSVR maintains a register of all industrial and commercial companies under legal obligation, reconciles volumes between producers and systems, and provides for more recycling-friendly design by setting standards. Lawyer Gunda Rachut is the Chair of the Foundation.

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