



Study by GVM: Little relevance of plastic carrier bags to waste

Frankfurt/Bad Homburg, February 24th - Consumption of plastic bags in Germany is low in comparison with the rest of Europe. Moreover, bags are often used again and disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. This has been confirmed in a study by GVM, the German Society for Packaging Market Research, on occasion of today's congress of the Federal environment agency UBA. The study was commissioned by IK (German Association for Plastic Packaging and Films), BKV (Platform for Plastics and Recovery), and HDE (German Retail Association).

In 2012, six billion plastic carrier bags were put in circulation in Germany. This corresponds to a total volume of 86 kilotons or a consumption of 76 carrier bags per inhabitant per year. According to the experts, these values are significantly lower than the average throughout Europe where consumption reaches 198 pieces per inhabitant per year.

The study demonstrates that carrier bags make up a share of three per cent in the consumption of plastic packaging, or 0.17 per cent in the composition of municipal waste. In the view of GVM, the relevance of carrier bags to waste in Germany can therefore be considered limited. Furthermore, they argue, plastic bags in Germany are predominantly handled in a highly responsible manner. The study shows that 48 per cent of all carrier bags are reusable and that 72 per cent of end consumers use carrier bags a number of times. Only eleven per cent of food and chemist's products (FMCG) sold by retail are taken home by end consumers in plastic carrier bags that are used for the first time. Kai Falk, Director of HDE, said in this context: "The food trade made a point some decades ago already through its commitment to hand out carrier bags to end consumers against a fee only." Moreover, many

retailers offer their customers alternatives to plastic bags, such as carrier bags made of cotton or non-woven plastic material.

According to the GVM study, interventions suggested by the EU, such as prohibiting plastic carrier bags with a film thickness below 50µm, which include many carrier bags that are perfectly suitable for reuse, are not necessary and would not be constructive either. The experts fear customers would then simply move to carrier bags with a higher wall thickness. Also, plastic bags do not really have an impact on the pollution of landscapes or watercourses: in Germany, 99 per cent of these are recycled. IK General Manager Dr. Jürgen Bruder: "The German system to collect and recycle packaging ensures that plastic carrier bags do not end up in the landscape but are sorted for mechanical recycling and energy recovery. Due to these perfectly functioning waste management structures, there is no need for action in Germany."

An abbreviated version of the study for free downloading is available on the websites of IK, BKV and HDE. The unabridged version can be purchased from BKV at a price of EUR 350.00 plus VAT.

The **BKV Platform for Plastics and Recovery** is a company of the plastics-producing and processing industry as well as plastics machinery manufacture. The BKV stands for the industry's product responsibility. It provides a platform for project work, discussion and information on matters relating to the resource efficiency of plastics. The subject of plastics recovery is the focus of its projects.

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HDE represents the retail industry in Germany and is the voice of the sector vis-à-vis national and EU-level politics, other business sectors, the media and the public. Today the retail sector in Germany is the third largest economic sector behind industry and crafts with 400,000 companies and a combined turnover of over 430 billion euros. Every day, German retailers and their 3 million employees welcome 50 million consumers in their stores.

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With over 300 members, the German IK Association of Plastic Packaging,

IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackungen e.V., is the largest trade association within the plastics packaging industry in Europe. IK represents the lion's share of the German plastics packaging market, accounting for more than 4 million tons of plastic packaging and films.

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