

## What framework conditions are necessary for the packaging turnaround?

PreZero and WWF Germany debate the system change of a circular economy in the packaging industry with politicians from the German Parliament

**Neckarsulm/Berlin, February 15, 2022.** The CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets and the wasteful use of the planet's finite resources make the shift to a circular economy more pressing than ever. The goal of a system change from linear to closed material loops requires specific incentives and measures.

As the largest food retailer in Europe, the Schwarz Group intends to meet this challenge. With its environmental division PreZero, the company can map the entire material loop for food packaging. PreZero is convinced that there is a need for a good, technically sound exchange of the entire recyclables chain with the politicians. With this in mind, PreZero has supported the study "Verpackungswende jetzt! Systemwandel zur Kreislaufwirtschaft" (Packaging turnaround now! System change towards a circular economy) by WWF Germany, in which a system change scenario for plastic packaging is designed and calculated.

The study shows: Significantly more circular economy is possible. By 2040, Germany can reduce the total volume of waste by 40 percent the consumption of new plastic by around 60 per cent and the incineration of waste for energy by over 70 percent This is also an effective building block for climate protection: 68 million tons of greenhouse gases can be saved in this manner by 2040. But getting there requires many levers: mandatory guidelines, rewarding low-resource and recyclable packaging, incentives for recycle use, and better collection and sorting. And that goes beyond plastic packaging, too.

WWF Germany and PreZero jointly identified possible instruments and measures during a dialog event in Berlin, and discussed them with environmental policy representatives of the German government. The discussion during the dialog focused particularly on the topics of recyclability of packaging and the use of recycle as two key prerequisites for closed material loops.

Key demands for the packaging turnaround were formulated in a joint impulse paper by WWF and PreZero for the politicians.

The event opened with a **keynote speech by Bettina Hoffmann**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for the Environment. Joining the discussion were:

- **Michael Thews**, member of the German parliament, SPD parliamentary group chairperson on issues relating to the circular economy
- **Judith Skudelny**, member of the German Parliament , environmental spokesperson of the FDP parliamentary group
- **Dr. Jan-Niclas Gesenhues**, member of the German Parliament , chairperson for the circular economy of The Greens parliamentary group
- **Peter Kurth**, president of the BDE (German Waste Management Organization)
- **Dr. Martin Bethke**, Director Markets & Business WWF Germany
- **Thomas Kyriakis**, CEO of PreZero

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- **Astrid Teckentrup**, chairperson of the Management Board of Procter & Gamble DACH

**Quotes from the panelists:**

**Dr. Martin Bethke, Director Markets & Business WWF Germany:**

"A circular economy is the most important pillar for a sustainable economy in the boundaries of the planet. Until now, we have been taking resources from the planet, consuming them and throwing them away. Around half of the waste from plastic packaging ends up being incinerated – a huge burden for the climate and our ecosystems. We need to rethink: Use packaging only where absolutely necessary and not to think of it as a disposable product. Packaging is a valuable resource. Careful use protects climate and nature – and thus our basis for life and economic activity. The packaging sector in Germany can play a pioneering role in this."

**Thomas Kyriakis, CEO of PreZero:**

"As part of the Schwarz Group, we take responsibility for the packaging we put into circulation. In addition to developing our own sustainable packaging solutions, we are also looking at all the interfaces, from the collection, sorting and processing of recyclable materials to recycling, in order to create new products from recyclable materials. Those aspects of the circular economy which we have already implemented within the Schwarz Group, we can also bring to life in the future together with our partners and suppliers. However, we need politicians and other willing players to join us in ushering in the packaging revolution."

**Michael Thews, member of the German Parliament , SPD parliamentary group chairperson on issues relating to the circular economy:**

"We probably all agree that in the packaging industry there is no other alternative than changing the system to an honest circular economy. We, as legislators, have already taken many steps in this direction in the form of incentives, requirements and bans. This makes it even more important, on the one hand, to evaluate the efficiency and benefits of the measures and, on the other hand, to further improve the cooperation between industry, science and politics. But I am also firmly convinced that the communication and cooperation between the different sectors of the industry, between packaging and product manufacturers, marketing departments, recyclers and retailers must be intensified in order to achieve our goal."

**Jan-Niclas Gesenhues, Member of the German Parliament , Chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection:**

"We are tackling the waste problem at the source, i.e. with the packaging. Many manufacturers have recognized that consumers want packaging that is easy to recycle. We need to significantly increase the quality and use of recyclates and adapt it to the requirements, especially in the food sector, so that more manufacturers use recycled packaging. For this, we need a mix of legal targets for waste avoidance and recycling, economic incentives and targeted research funding. In this way, we are making an important contribution to environmental protection and resource conservation while creating new opportunities in the recycling market."

**Judith Skudelny, member of the German Parliament , environmental spokesperson of the FDP parliamentary group:**

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"The circular economy is a main topic of environmental policy for the next four years. Firstly, there are still a number of requirements from Brussels that we will actively work on. Secondly, we have done too little so far in terms of the real loops. Plastic bashing has led to more composite packaging, which is harder to recycle. We want to make decisions on a scientific basis. This includes, for example, eco-balance of beverage packaging.

Quality standards for recyclates are important, but so are sufficient quantities of secondary materials. We will only achieve these with uniform EU-wide standards and by ending waste.

Many companies are taking courageous steps forward, and we support them in this. But we are also challenging them – for example by revising §21 of the Packaging Act. By implementing Article 8 of the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive, they will share in the costs of cleaning up the environment caused by their products. We are committed to ensuring that this is done with as little bureaucracy and as much transparency and legal certainty as possible.

The progressive coalition of SPD, Bündnis 90/DIE GRÜNEN and the FDP will put an end to one-sided ideology. We are committed to a real packaging turnaround and closed loops, together with manufacturers and consumers."

**Peter Kurth, president of the BDE:**

„PreZero and WWF have made an excellent choice of the title 'Packaging turnaround now! System change towards a circular economy'. We do indeed need a turnaround in efforts to finally keep packaging waste in the loop. In order to increase the recyclate content of plastics, we need different and more targeted instruments. The coalition agreement offers some good approaches – now the implementation needs to be tackled vigorously."

**Astrid Teckentrup, chairperson of the Management Board of Procter & Gamble DACH:**

"Circular economy works better together. We require a new level of cooperation between all recycling partners involved in order to find joint solutions for system change in the circular economy – and to avoid opposing developments. Overarching platforms like 'HolyGrail 2.0' in the sorting or the 'CosPaTox' initiative for common standards in recycling show how this can be done in a pioneering way."

Link to the study "Verpackungswende jetzt!":

<https://www.wwf.de/themen-projekte/plastik/verpackungswende-jetzt>

More information about PreZero can be found at our [press portal](#).

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**Caption:** The participants of the discussion f.l.t.r: Astrid Teckentrup, Dr. Jan-Niclas Gesenhues, Dr. Martin Bethke, Markus Resch, Thomas Kyriakis, Judith Skudelny, Peter Kurth and Michael Thews (digital participation)

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