

## PLASTIC WASTE - by Michaela Gsänger

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- Plastic waste is a big problem in Germany as well as in the whole world.
- With a use of 11,7 tons of plastic, Germany is the country, which consumes the most plastic in Europe. A lot of this plastic waste could be avoided, for example a plastic bag is used only 25 minutes on average and then put away.
- Only 42 % of this plastic waste are recycled, which is not much in comparison to for example Denmark, which recycles around 90% of their plastic.
- Europe consumes a quarter of plastic worldwide.
- A whole 35% of plastic waste is determined by packaging.
- A most of the plastic is routed into the ocean regardless to the consequences. The plastic splits into their components and is confused for food and eaten by many animals of the sea, which causes that they die.
- Plastic doesn't decompose in the ocean, so it stays there forever. The so called micro plastic, which develops ends up in our food and also in the most cosmetical products like shampoo, lotion, etc, which has a negative impact on our health and causes many diseases. The range of this problem is not scientifically probed yet.
- At the moment there are 6 huge piles, where all the plastic is gathered in the ocean worldwide. You can see it on the picture below.



- The first product made of plastic was sold in 1950. At this time worldwide there were used 1,5 tons of plastic every year. Now it's about 300 tons.
- The awareness of the problem with plastic is much bigger than a few years ago. In the most shops today you have to pay extra to get a plastic bag in contrast to formerly when you got one automatically to every buying department you did.
- Furthermore there are a few grocery stores now, where you can buy everything without packaging. That means you have to bring your own box and put it inside. At this time every big city has at least one of these shops and they are getting more popular. Presumably there will be more in the future until it will become a real alternative to conventional supermarkets.

# Recycling

(prepared for COSRA in 12/2017 by Ines Huibens)

## 1. General Information

- In Germany as all over the world we produce too much waste
- What is waste? → waste are the rests of a product or production
- There are different types of waste concerning the material and it can be liquid, hard or gaseous
- There is waste of industry and domestic refuse
- What happens with the waste depends on its material
- Let's talk about domestic refuse because this is the waste every one of us produces everyday

## 2. Domestic refuse

- Everybody has different waste as for example
  - o General rubbish
  - o Organic rubbish (for example rests of fruits or rests produced while cooking)
  - o Glass (for example bottles)
  - o The “yellow bag”: wrappings carrying the “green spot” (for example plastics, cans, tetrapaks)
  - o Paper
  - o Electronic waste (as we saw for example at Mr. Adamec)
  - o Packaging
  - o Hazardous waste
  - o Bulky waste (for example old pieces of furniture)
  - o Garden waste
  - o Fabrics
  - o Harmful substance

## 3. Legally situation

- Germany is a bureaucratic country
- There are laws for the treatment of waste
- As member of the European Union there are even European laws valuable for all European countries
- The laws give the following priority:
  1. Avoid of waste
  2. Preparation to reuse waste
  3. Recycling
  4. Other use, for example energy recovery
  5. Refuse disposal
- I don't think all German laws are great but I think this “waste priority” is good and make sense because it helps our environment
- There are many laws concerning the waste, for example some dangerous materials are even forbidden

#### 4. How to avoid waste?

- In every shop you get a (plastic) bag when you buy something
- Per year one billion plastic bags are used worldwide
- One European uses 500 plastic bags a year, in Germany its only 65 plastic bags per person and year.
- The big amount produces too much plastic waste that can be reduced easily:
  - o In Germany many shops stopped recently to sell plastic bags
  - o If you take cloth bags, you can use them more often and you can help to reduce the plastic waste!
- In Germany the water quality is high what helps to reduce plastic bottles because you can drink tap water. Therefor I always have one bottle that I carry along everywhere to refill
- There are even shops that sell without packaging. You can come with your boxes/bottles,... and you fill in the liquids, rice,... you need.
- Everyone can do a little bit

#### 5. Reuse

- You can use a product again, for example
  - o Textiles (second-hand-use): as we saw at Vinty's in Nuremberg
  - o Returnable bottles
    - When we buy glass bottles as for example beer we pay not only the contents (in this case the beer) but also the bottle. When it is empty you can go to the shop (or any shop that sells beer in bottles) and return the bottles and you get back the money for the bottles
    - In former times the system only was for glass bottles but now it is also for plastic bottles and cans
- Upcycling: out of the waste you create something new and beautiful and you give it another use

#### 6. Recycling

- When we talk about recycling it only means that the waste is prepared to be reused for the same or others purposes
- It is recycling if it was "waste" before, otherwise it is reuse (what is even better than recycling)
- The waste or parts of it are prepared to get secondary raw materials
- Often when people are talking about recycling they also think about "reuse" and "avoid" of waste

## 7. Refuse disposal

- Every household has to separate the waste. Therefore you have different dustbins (paper, organic rubbish, general rubbish, ...)
- There are punishments if you don't exploit the garbage/waste correctly
- What happens with the waste depends on what kind of waste it is
- Dustmen come to every house once a week/once in two weeks to collect the different garbage. It is organised in advance, so I know for example, paper is collected every two weeks on Tuesday. So on Monday I put the paper dustbin at the side of the road, so that they can collect and empty it easily. They collect the paper, organic waste, the "yellow bag" and "general waste".
- The other types of waste I have to bring to garbage collection stations. There are such garbage stations in every area. There they separate the waste.
- Furthermore for big waste (for example bulky waste) you are allowed to ask for a special service coming and taking it along twice a year (if you need it more often you have to bring it to the garbage collection station and you have to pay for it)