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VDMA: Next record year for the German plastics and rubber machinery manufacturers

- **US remains most important export market**
- **Strong export increase to Italy, Brazil and Russia**
- **Good order income for 2018, however, concerns about skills shortage**

Frankfurt, 4 May 2018 – The German plastics and rubber machinery manufacturers rush from one record to the next. They could increase their sales by another five per cent in 2017. “The past year has been in line with the positive development since 2010,” Ulrich Reifenhäuser, Chairman of the VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery Association, is pleased. “I am all the happier that we could surpass the original optimistic forecast of four per cent with this increase,” he adds. Since the economic crisis, which had also affected the plastics and rubber machinery manufacturers, this has been the eighth year of growth in a row. The current boom has been lasting unusually long.

Italy has become one of the most important sales markets

The pole position of the most important German sales markets was again occupied by the USA in 2017. This time, the threshold of 800 million euros could be passed. The value of plastics and rubber machinery, which was delivered from Germany to the US, added up to 847 million euros. This accounts for a plus of 10.1 per cent compared to the previous year.

The most important total market, however, is China. Besides exports of 717 million euros (+14.3 per cent compared to 2016), about another half billion euros could be added, which were produced by the plastics and rubber machinery manufacturers in China mainly for the local market.

Italy made a big leap from rank six to rank four. German plastics and rubber machinery in the amount of 250 million euros were delivered to Italy in 2017, which equals an increase of 32.1 per cent. Particularly the goals of the "Industry 4.0" plan of the Italian government become noticeable: investments in industrial goods should be stimulated and the Italian processors should increasingly renew their machine parks with high-tech products "Made in Germany".

Positive signals from Russia and Brazil

After deliveries of plastics and rubber machinery to Russia had been decreasing for a long time, there was a positive turnaround last year. The high growth rate of German exports in the amount of 34.1 per cent mainly results from the stimulation of the local packaging sector and does not mirror a nationwide recovery of the market. In total, 114 million euros of German plastics and rubber machinery could be exported to Russia.

A high export growth can also be announced for the Brazilian market where the longest and strongest recession has come to an end. There, exports grew by 35.4 per cent to 75 million euros. However, after the long downturn, Brazil will need more time to fully recover. Investments, for example, only pick up slowly, which is mainly due to the fact that there is a lot of uncertainty in the market ahead of this year's presidential election.

Full order books render a positive outlook for 2018

There is no end of the growth in sight for 2018. Due to the companies' full order books, the VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery Association expects a growth of three per cent. "This should, however, not hide the fact that the climate is starting to change," warns Thorsten Kühmann, Managing Director of VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery. "We are currently in a very long boom phase which is already exceeding its usual length. Due to this, the delivery times of the machinery manufacturers as well as those of the suppliers are unusually long. Moreover, the companies have massive problems to find qualified skilled workers," according to Kühmann.

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About VDMA Plastics and Rubber Machinery

More than 200 companies are members of the association, covering more than 90 percent of the branch production in Germany. Ten percent of our member companies come from Austria, Switzerland and France. The German member companies represent sales of EUR 7 billion in core machine engineering and EUR 10 billion including peripheral technology. Every fourth plastic machine produced in the world comes from Germany; the

export rate is 70 percent. Ulrich Reifenhäuser, Member of the Management Board of the Reifenhäuser Group, is the chairman of the association.