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## **European Parliament Member Visits Koehler Paper: Discussions Revolve Around High Energy Prices and Reducing the Use of Plastic in Packaging**

- **Company asks for legal rules to incentivize paper-based packaging so as to avoid plastic**
- **Competitive disadvantage for the German industry due to high energy costs: effectual industrial electricity rate long overdue**

**Oberkirch, Germany, 01/27/2026** – Prof. Dr. Andrea Wechsler, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and part of the EPP European political party, has argued for the need to speed up the switch from environmentally harmful plastic-based packaging to environmentally friendly paper-based packaging solutions. Needless to say, her advocacy includes creating the policy conditions that will make this possible. During a joint visit to Koehler Paper in Oberkirch with Member of the German Bundestag Johannes Rothenberger (CDU) and Baden-Württemberg state parliament candidate Dr. Katrin Merkel (CDU), Wechsler underscored just how important it is for the world to leave disposable plastic packaging in supermarkets and other industries behind in order to effectively stop plastic pollution in our oceans and elsewhere. Their visit was combined with a visit to Hansgrohe’s site in the nearby city of Offenburg.

### **Reducing the amount of disposable plastic packaging: a need for more meaningful packaging classifications**

Against a backdrop of tremendous amounts of plastic waste worldwide, people are increasingly turning their sights on paper-based retail packaging – this packaging is significantly more environmentally friendly than plastic packaging, and can be disposed of as wastepaper and then recycled into a valuable and scarce secondary raw material that is desperately needed in Germany. Moreover, paper – at least in the case of Koehler Paper – is based on renewable raw materials from sustainable forestry and controlled sources. This of course underscores how, as mentioned previously, paper-based packaging is an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic-based packaging. During her visit, Prof. Wechsler spelled out what is needed in order to bring a change about: “Policymakers need to create the necessary incentives to bring about a switch to sustainable, recyclable solutions faster, and they need to do this right now where competitive paper solutions are available on the market and can replace plastic.” This, of course, would include a meaningful definition of paper in the concrete implementation of the EU Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). Koehler Paper COO Dr. Stefan Karrer corroborated this need and pointed out: “Existing regulations mean that producers of products such as food currently have to contend with enormous barriers when attempting to switch to environmentally sound and easily recyclable paper-based packaging, which is why they continue to rely on plastic-based packaging instead.” This means that unnecessary amounts of plastic are being used and disposed of every single day.

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### Long-term reduction in energy prices vital in order to secure competitiveness in Germany

During the MEP's visit, Koehler Paper representatives also underscored just how important it is for German SMEs to see a change in energy prices in Germany in order to become competitive once again. COO Dr. Stefan Karrer clarified: "Due to high energy costs in Germany, we're experiencing enormous competitive disadvantages in an industry where competition is global. In order to be able to ensure job security and value creation in this country, we really need to once again have public grid energy prices that are internationally competitive and can be reliably budgeted for."

During their chat with the MEP, Koehler Paper representatives insisted that it is absolutely crucial for the actions planned by Germany's federal government to truly bring relief to companies and to not be rendered ineffective as a result of other support measures being wound down. Put simply, energy prices are a powerful lever that can be used to noticeably improve the German industry's situation and ensure job security.



*Figure: MEP Prof. Dr. Wechsler (third from right) visited papermaker Koehler Paper at its site in the German town of Oberkirch together with Member of the German Bundestag Johannes Rothenberger (CDU) (fourth from right), and Baden-Wuerttemberg state parliament candidate Dr. Katrin Merkel (CDU) (third from left)*

Source: Koehler Group

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## About the Koehler Group

The Koehler Group was founded in 1807 and has been family-run from that moment to the present day. The group's core business activity lies in the development and production of high-quality specialty paper. This includes—among others—thermal paper, playing card board, beverage coasters, fine paper, carbon-less paper, recycled paper, decor paper, wood pulp board, sublimation paper, and also innovative specialty paper for the packaging industry. In Germany, the Koehler Group employs around 2,500 people across five production sites, with three additional sites in the USA. The group operates internationally, with an export share of around 70% in 2024, and brings in an annual turnover of around 1.1 billion euros.

As an energy-intensive company, Koehler invests in renewable energy projects such as wind energy, hydropower, photovoltaics, and biomass with its Koehler Renewable Energy business unit. The Koehler Group has set a goal of producing more energy from renewable sources by 2030 than is required for its paper production operations.

With its Koehler Innovative Solutions division, the Koehler Group is collaborating with start-ups to promote innovations in the core business segments “paper” and “renewable energy”.

Find more information at: <https://www.koehler.com>

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