**For all media groups**

### An upcoming rare anniversary of growth

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**Sanitary industry: 10th boom year in a row? “Realistic” chance despite significant risks / 2018: further overall sales increase / 33 % increase since 2009 / VDS: search for joint solutions for structural changes / Convincing consumers with comprehensive bathroom quality / Definite topics of expertise / Favourable survey indicators / Acquisitions: favourite bathroom / Germans trust tradespeople / “Day of the Bathroom”: a definite, but not a fixed theme / Two independent campaign motifs**

**Frankfurt/Bonn – (vds)** The sanitary industry ranks the prospects of 2019 as another growth year as “realistic” on balance, so prolonging the unbroken trend since 2009. According to an Ifo Institute forecast, the cumulative turnover of the sector, which mainly consists of medium-sized companies, is likely to rise by a nominal 3 % to 25.6 billion euros. Although “significant world political and economic risks and uncertainties present incalculable difficulties for the export-oriented industry”, there are a number of positive underlying data, especially for the German core market. This fuels the hope of a “rare 10-year anniversary of growth”. Last but not least, according to a recent Nielsen survey, this includes the well above-average consumer confidence across European countries. This also goes for the related appetite for buying, according to the online study presented at the leading exhibition “ISH” held in Frankfurt in mid-March.

Based on an Ifo estimate for 2018, the Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) reported an increase in turnover of 3.3 % to 24.9 billion euros. Domestic business grew by 3 % to 20.7 billion euros, slightly weaker than the 5 % increase in sales to 4.2 billion euros abroad. According to Jens J. Wischmann, sales have risen since 2009 (EUR 18.7 billion) steadily by around 33 %. However, the positive overall picture for the past year must be reviewed differently, explained the managing director of the industry umbrella organisation. For example, while the skilled trades boast of consistently high capacity and full order books, the sanitary fittings industry in 2018 only posted stagnating results.

**Priority tasks**

In general, it is important to be prepared for fundamental structural changes and to seek constructive joint solutions. One example here is digitalisation, which is also under way in distribution channels, and the priority for proactive measures to counteract the growth-slowing shortage of skilled workers with qualification, recruiting and labour-saving systems. This ultimately affects industry, wholesale and the trade alike.

In the future, too, it will be crucial for the three-level professional association to concentrate consistently on what it can influence autonomously. The primary task is to convince consumers of the holistic product and service quality in the bathroom sector. There is no shortage of “relevant topics of expertise”. Tangible examples of this, according to Wischmann, are individualisation, demographic change and thus barrier-free bathrooms, health, sustainability and drinking water hygiene.

**Big bathroom advancement**

Current market research also gives favourable signs. The results of a survey, which has been available since the end of 2018, confirm these trends. This was the seventh survey from the Fachschriften-Verlag commissioned by the Ipsos Institute and it also incorporates more than 9 million homeowners in Germany who plan (major) renovation work in their homes until 2020. The main reasons for this are improved living quality and comfort (80 %), visual appreciation (75 %) and value retention or growth (73 %). 49 % of householders mentioned the reason “barrier-free / age-appropriate conversion” – an increase of 8 percentage points in comparison to 2016.

As was the case 2 years ago, the bathroom clearly maintained its position as an investment favourite at 38 %. Despite a significant increase to 27 %, the kitchen trailed considerably and had to settle for second place. According to the survey, the runners-up (roller shutters/ blinds 20 %, interior doors 19 %) were less than half as popular as the bathroom. For Wischmann, “once again, this impressive result documents the high relevance of the bathroom for personal well-being”.

**Professionals are well-placed**

When asked which products the renovators specifically want to acquire, many of the individual values have increased substantially. This confirms, according to the authors of the study, an even greater interest in complete bathroom modernisation. The ranking in detail: fittings, (shower) toilet, washbasin, shower tray/-partition, floor/wall tiles, bathroom furniture, bath/whirlpool tub and bathroom radiator. The choice of product or material in the bathroom is determined primarily by the client himself/herself (68 %). Tradespeople (38 %) also frequently take the role of decision-maker. This is followed by the comparatively less influential e.g. architects and hardware store consultants that each account for 8 %.

All survey participants (in addition to renovators, this includes house planners and -builders) primarily trust tradespeople (66 %) with preparation and installation. With regard to the purchasing location, the study states: “The more technical and larger the product is, the higher the participation level of retailers and tradespeople.” Both together achieve about 60 % in the “bathroom/sanitary” category and thus they represent the highest level of acceptance in the product groups recorded. DIY stores (21 %), online shopping (6 %) and manufacturers (6 %), on the other hand, are used “considerably less” or “hardly” as sources of products/materials.

All in all, this study reinforces the “stable foundation” of the professional bathroom business, emphasised Wischmann. This corresponds fundamentally with similar studies like those regularly initiated by VDS. Thus, at the “ISH”, the forsa-Institut has revealed current German opinion on the subject of “bathroom and health”. One result of the new representative research: almost every second German citizen aged 18 and above can imagine health care at home.

**Premiere for dual offer**

Once again in 2019, the activities of the umbrella organisation are primarily aimed at providing targeted support to the industry in its national and regional/local consumer offensive. The nationwide “Day of the Bathroom” continues to play an important role in the comprehensive program of activities. It will take place on 21st September and – like its currently 14 predecessors – should make a real contribution to bringing awareness of the bathroom to the public in general and emphasising in particular the professional competence of the trade professionals.

The “Flagship” will enjoy a premiere for its 15th edition, so adapting to new situations and developments. For the first time, VDS is offering the cooperating companies two independent, pre-released campaign motifs shown at the trade fair. While a version under the motto “All about well-being” focuses on the topic of “health”, the alternative with the slogan “Colourful mixture” focuses on the new trend of colourfulness in the bathroom, which was also a topic at the “ISH”. Both approaches therefore follow different routes and thus make it possible for the companies “on site” to direct their efforts to their individual events. Mr Wischmann announced further details about material available for April/May. He remains convinced: “The ‘Day of the Bathroom’ is a definite, but not a fixed theme.”

**Captions**

The sanitary industry ranks the prospects of 2019 as another growth year as “realistic” on balance, so prolonging the unbroken trend since 2009. The Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) reported an increase in turnover of 3.3 % to 24.9 billion euros, the ninth consecutive annual increase. However, the positive overall picture for the past year must be reviewed differently for separate distribution channels.

**Graphic:** Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) / Frankfurt Trade Fair Image 3191 EN

There is no shortage of "relevant competence topics" for the bathroom industry, explains the Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS). The same applies to favourable underlying data gathered by current consumer studies. According to a representative Ipsos research, private renovators especially want to invest in bathroom equipment till 2020.

**Photo:** Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) Image 4739

Once again in 2019, the activities of Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) are primarily aimed at providing targeted support to the industry in its national and regional / local consumer offensive. The nationwide “Day of the Bathroom” continues to play an important role in the comprehensive program of activities. The 15th edition, taking place on the 21st of September will feature a premier. Shown in the picture: The poster for the “Colour” theme.

**Photo:** Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) Image 4740

Almost every second German citizen over the age of 18 can imagine health care at home. This key finding of a new forsa study is reason enough for the Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) to continue to emphasise the topic of "Bathroom and Health" at the next "Day of the Bathroom" on September 21st, 2019. The action poster is therefore written with the motto "All about well-being".

**Photo:** Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) Image 4741

Jens J. Wischmann believes that in the future, too, it will be crucial for the three-level professional association to concentrate consistently on what it can influence autonomously. The primary task is to convince consumers of the holistic product and service quality in the bathroom sector.

**Photo:** Vereinigung Deutsche Sanitaerwirtschaft (VDS) Image 675

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