

Reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

2018/0172(COD) - 28/05/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to prevent and reduce plastic marine litter from single use plastic items and fishing gear containing plastics.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: **plastic makes up 80-85% of the total number of marine litter items**, measured through beach counts. The 10 most found single-use plastic items represent 86% of all single use plastic items (constituting thus 43% of all marine litter items found on European beaches by count). Fishing gear containing plastics accounts for another 27% of marine litter items found on European beaches. Single-use plastic products and fishing gear containing plastic are therefore a particularly serious problem in the context of marine litter and pose a severe risk to marine ecosystems, biodiversity and, potentially, to human health.

Existing Union legislation and policy instruments provide some regulatory responses to address marine litter. However, the impact of that legislation on marine litter is **not sufficient** and there are differences in the scope and the level of ambition amongst national measures to prevent and reduce marine litter.

Therefore, as part of its [plastics strategy](#), the European Commission committed to look into further action to address plastic marine litter that builds on the piecemeal efforts underway in EU Member States, and that follows the approach used of light-weight plastic carrier bags.

This initiative focuses therefore on the **10 most found single use plastic items and fishing gear**, which together represent around 70% of these marine litter items by count. The initiative should be seen in the broader context of the transition to a circular economy.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: four scenarios were modelled based on a **selection of different measures applied to different items**: (i) items for which sustainable alternatives are available. The objective is to promote less harmful alternatives; (ii) items for which there is no alternative. The aim is to limit damages by better informing consumers and making producers financially responsible of environmental consequences; (iii) items which are already well captured. The objective is to ensure that they end up in the existing selective collection and recycling circuit.

The scenario chosen is that of a **'medium-high impact on reducing marine litter'** which would address the underlying drivers more adequately and goes further to change consumer behaviour.

CONTENT: the proposed Directive aims to **prevent and reduce the impact of certain single-use plastic products and fishing gear containing plastic on the environment** and human health as well as to promote the transition to a circular economy with environment-friendly innovative business models, products and materials, thus contributing to the efficient functioning of the internal market.

This proposal provides **specific objectives and measures for the prevention and management of waste** in relation to single-use plastic products that are most found on the beaches in the Union and fishing gear containing plastic.

Specifically, the proposal:

- requires Member States to take the necessary measures to **achieve a significant reduction in the consumption of food containers, cups for beverages that are single-use plastic products**;
- lays down **restrictions on the placing on the market** of certain single-use plastic products for which alternatives exist on the market: plastic cotton buds, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers and sticks for balloons;
- lays down **product design requirements for beverage containers** that are single-use plastic products, to ensure that their caps and lids with a significant part made of plastic remain attached to the container during its use stage so that such waste does not leak into the environment;
- lays down **marking requirements** for certain single-use plastic products to avoid that they are improperly disposed of, for example through flushing in toilets. This shall apply to sanitary towels, wet wipes and balloons;
- establishes **extended producer responsibility schemes for fishing gear** containing plastics and certain single-use plastic products such as food containers, bags and packaging, beverage containers and cups, tobacco products with filters, wet wipes, balloons and lightweight plastic bags. The proposal also lays down specific and additional requirements for the financial responsibility of producers, in particular, for awareness raising campaigns and in the case of single-use plastics also the clean-up of litter;
- obliges Member States to collect 90% of single-use plastic drinks bottles by 2025, for example through deposit refund schemes;
- requires Member States to take **measures to raise awareness** about the impact of littering and inappropriate disposal of waste on the environment, in particular, the aquatic environment and about the available re-use and waste management options.

Lastly, the proposal requires Member States to put in place a **data set on products** subject to a consumption reduction objective in order to monitor the implementation of that consumption reduction objective under this Directive.