

## Reducing marine litter from plastics

In May 2018, the European Commission presented a legislative proposal to tackle marine litter, targeting the top ten single-use plastic items found on European beaches as well as fishing gear, which together make up about 70 % of marine beach litter items in Europe. Interinstitutional negotiations with the Council delivered an agreement in December 2018, on which Parliament is expected to vote during its March II plenary session.

### Background

About three quarters of the marine litter in the world's seas is plastic, and most of this originates from land-based sources. The European Commission estimates that the ten most found single-use plastic items constitute 43 % by count of all marine litter items on European beaches. Fishing gear containing plastics accounts for another 27 %. A major threat to marine and coastal biodiversity, marine litter also has socio-economic impacts, with costs for the EU economy estimated at between €259 million and €695 million per year. A 2017 Eurobarometer [survey](#) showed that a large majority of Europeans are concerned about the impacts of everyday plastic products on their health (74 %) and on the environment (87 %).

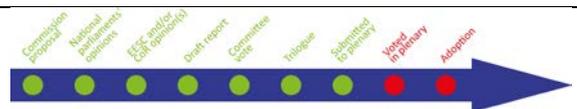
### European Commission proposal

Focussing on the ten most found single-use plastic items plus lost and abandoned fishing gear, the [proposed directive](#) aims to reduce impacts on the environment and to avoid fragmentation in the internal market. It provides for differentiated measures for the different product categories covered. These include bans on certain items for which readily available alternatives exist (plastic cotton bud sticks, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers and sticks for balloons); consumption reduction targets (for plastic food containers and drinks cups); a 90 % separate collection target for plastic drinks bottles; product design requirements (tethered caps and lids for plastic drinks containers and bottles); labelling requirements (for balloons, wet wipes, sanitary towels) to inform users of their correct disposal; awareness-raising measures and extended producer responsibility schemes (EPR, requiring producers to help cover the costs of waste management, clean-up and awareness-raising) for food containers, packets and wrappers, drinks containers and cups, tobacco products with filters, wet wipes, balloons, lightweight plastic carrier bags and fishing gear.

### European Parliament position

Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) adopted its [report](#) on the proposal on 10 October 2018. The trilogue [agreement](#) reached with the Council on 19 December 2018, and endorsed by the ENVI committee on 22 January 2019, introduces a number of changes to the proposal. In line with Parliament's stance, the text extends the scope of market restrictions (bans) to products made from oxo-degradable plastic and certain expanded polystyrene food and drinks containers. It sets binding targets for recycled plastic content in bottles of 25 % by 2025 (for PET bottles) and 30 % by 2030 (for all bottles); adds tobacco products with filters and plastic cups to the list of items subject to labelling requirements (but removes this requirement for balloons); and clarifies the costs to be covered by tobacco product producers as part of the EPR scheme. As regards fishing gear, Member States would be required to set up national minimum annual collection rates of waste fishing gear for recycling and to monitor fishing gear placed on the market, as well as waste fishing gear collected, with a view to the establishment of binding quantitative EU-wide collection targets. Parliament is due to vote on the text during the March II session.

First-reading report: [2018/0172\(COD\)](#); Committee responsible: ENVI; Rapporteur: Frédérique Ries (ALDE, Belgium).



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