

**Question for written answer E-005086/2014  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Juozas Imbrasas (EFD)**

Subject: Reduction of Use of Lightweight Plastic Bags

Too many plastic bags are used in the European Union. Almost 100 billion plastic bags are used annually and it is believed that by 2020 their number might reach 111 billion unless actions are taken. So, every European uses 200 plastic bags annually. However, 89% of plastic bags are used only once and then they become waste. This excessive use of one-time plastic bags is not only inefficient from the resources perspective, it also has an adverse impact on the environment. Each year eight billion plastic bags turn into waste which is released into the environment, including the seas. Despite the increasing prices of resources only 6.6% of plastic bags are being recycled and this amount is not expected to increase during the coming years. Plastic bags do not have significant recycling value as they are thin and lightweight.

The problem will not be solved by recycling more plastic bags. Even though 39% of plastic bags are burned, every second bag is released into the dumps where the wind can easily blow them back into the environment.

At the moment plastic bags and plastic bottles make up the majority of plastic waste in Europe's seas: plastic waste makes up more than 70% of the total waste. Consequences are dramatic for sea fauna and sea mammals in particular. Plastic waste specks have been detected in over 90% of birds in the North Sea. Moreover, plastic waste has a negative impact on tourist zones, e.g. nature parks, where cleaning works are a heavy economic burden on local communities.

Excessive use of plastic bags, inefficient use of resources and inter-state environmental pollution are a common problem for all EU Member States and we need to solve it together.

The Bio-Intelligence Service has drafted a study where it actually disagrees with the possibility of continuing to require through revision that Member States set national prevention goals, since it is considered that it is too complicated and it is stated that implementation of such goals would not be ensured and would depend much on the political commitments of the Member States.

What measures will the Commission take in order to: decrease the use of plastic bags, which is beneficial from the environmental perspective and economically beneficial, does not have a great impact on employment, is acceptable to the public and helps to educate the public about the importance of sustainable consumption in general?