



A Europe-wide strategy on plastics should lead to a significant reduction of plastic use, not just managing waste and the production of recyclable plastics

On 16 January 2018, the European Commission adopted a Europe-wide strategy on plastics as part of the transition towards a more circular economy. The strategy focuses on growth and innovation, transforming the way products are designed, produced, used and recycled in the EU. By taking the lead in this transition, EU hopes to create new investment opportunities and jobs. Under the new plans, all plastic packaging on the EU market should be recyclable by 2030, the consumption of single-use plastics reduced and the intentional use of micro plastics restricted¹.

The strategy is largely compatible with the European Green Party's position on plastic waste management, especially in the area of repeated use and 100% recyclability of plastic products. However, the strategy fails to address the important issue of waste prevention, which is a number 1 priority in all waste-management policies. This is relevant to non-recyclable, single-use plastics, which have a competitive advantage of low production cost over their fully recyclable alternatives or environmentally friendly options. More importantly, however, it is also relevant to fully recyclable plastics, because each plastic product has a finite number of cycles it can undergo, after which it becomes plastic waste.

Therefore, prevention of waste should be at the forefront of the EU strategy for plastics. In our opinion, it should include a Europe-wide ban of particular plastic products (e.g. plastic bags, eating utensils) and an introduction of a tax on non-recyclable plastics, disposable plastic products and fossil fuels that are used as raw materials.

The EGP council, at its gathering in Antwerp in May 2018:

- Recommends that the European Commission continues identifying plastic products that should be banned in the European Union and comes up with an ambitious proposal. The plastic tax proposed by the European Commission, partly intended as revenue for the EU budget, should be passed on to the plastics industry in order to remove most plastic disposable products from the markets;
- Proposes that the prevention of plastic waste be at the forefront of the EU's strategy for plastics;
- Recommends that the EGP considers campaigning for the Europe-wide ban on these products;
- Calls on the Green/EFA MEPs to support this notion in the European Parliament.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/first-ever-europe-wide-strategy-plastics-2018-jan-16_en