

National governments must follow suit, say campaigners

The European Parliament has leapt forward to protect people and the environment from plastic pollution, but national governments must now show the same ambition, according to the Rethink Plastic alliance.

An overwhelming majority in the European Parliament voted today to strengthen the European Commission's plan to cut pollution from single-use plastic items. The Parliament voted to ban some of the most problematic throwaway products, such as expanded polystyrene food containers and to ensure producers are held accountable for the costs of single-use plastic pollution. For fishing gear, one of the largest contributors to marine litter, harmonised standards will be developed and minimum collection and recycling targets will be set at the EU level.

"The European Parliament has made history by voting to reduce single-use plastics and slash plastic pollution in our rivers and oceans" said Meadhbh Bolger, resource justice campaigner at Friends of the Earth Europe on behalf of Rethink Plastic. "Citizens across Europe want to see an end to plastic pollution. It's now up to national governments to keep the ambition high, and resist corporate pressure to continue a throwaway culture."

However, campaigners are disappointed that the full Parliament did not vote for a ban on very light-weight single-use plastic bags, as supported by its Environment committee. A leaked letter recently exposed how major plastic polluters such as Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Danone are lobbying national environment ministers to water down the directive.

Representatives of EU national governments are expected to meet later this month to agree on their joint position, and the three-way negotiations between governments, the European Parliament, and the European Commission could then start as soon as early November.

The measures adopted include:

A EU-wide ban of single-use plastic cotton buds, straws, plates and cutlery (with exemptions until 2023), beverage stirrers, balloon sticks, oxo-degradable plastics and expanded polystyrene food containers

An obligation for EU countries to adopt measures to achieve a 25% reduction of the consumption of food containers and cups for beverages

An obligation for EU countries to reduce post-consumption waste from tobacco product filters containing plastic by 50 % by 2025 and 80 % by 2030,

Extended Producer Responsibility schemes that include the cost of clean up and awareness raising measures

Harmonised standards and an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for fishing gear, as

well as a 50% collection target and a 15% recycling target for fishing gear by 2025

An obligation to separately collect 90% of beverage containers and ensure they are produced from 35% recycled content by 2025

An obligation to prevent the use of hazardous chemicals in the composition of sanitary items

An obligation to label products to inform consumers about the presence of chemicals of concern in certain single-use plastic products

These measures apply to all single-use plastics listed in the Annexes including bio-based and biodegradable plastics.

Source: foeurope