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REPORT

on a European strategy for plastics in a circular economy
(2018/2035(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on a European strategy for plastics in a circular economy (2018/2035(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 January 2018 entitled ‘A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy (COM(2018)0028),
- having regard to the Commission report of 16 January 2018 on the impact of the use of oxo-degradable plastic, including oxo-degradable plastic carrier bags, on the environment (COM(2018)0035),
- having regard to the Commission communication and the staff working document of 16 January 2018 on the implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation (COM(2018)0032),
- having regard to the Commission’s Ecodesign Working Plan 2016-2019 (COM(2016)0773), particularly the objective of establishing more product-specific and horizontal requirements in areas such as durability, reparability, upgradeability, design for disassembly, and ease of reuse and recycling,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 December 2015 entitled ‘Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy’ (COM(2015)0614),
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directives 2000/53/EC on end-of-life vehicles, 2006/66/EC on batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators, and 2012/19/EU on waste electrical and electronic equipment ¹,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/850 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste²,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/851 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste³,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2018 amending Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste⁴,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2015/720 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 amending Directive 94/62/EC as regards reducing the

¹ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 93.

² OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 100.

³ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 109.

⁴ OJ L 150, 14.6.2018, p. 141.

consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags¹,

- having regard to Directive 2009/125/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 establishing a framework for the setting of ecodesign requirements for energy-related products² (hereafter ‘the Ecodesign Directive’) and the implementing regulations and voluntary agreements adopted under that directive,
 - having regard to Decision No 1386/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013 on a General Union Environmental Action Programme to 2020³,
 - having regard to the Council conclusions of 18 December 2017 on eco-innovation: enabling the transition towards a circular economy,
 - having regard to Special Eurobarometer No 468 of October 2017 on attitudes of European citizens towards the environment,
 - having regard to the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UNFCCC,
 - having regard to the United Nations resolution entitled ‘Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on resource efficiency: moving towards a circular economy⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2017 on a longer lifetime for products: benefits for consumers and companies⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 January 2018 on international ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans in the context of the 2030 SDGs⁶,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinion of the Committee on Fisheries (A8-0262/2018),
- A. whereas plastic is a valuable material, widely used across all value chains, which has a useful place in our society and economy, if used and managed responsibly;
- B. whereas the way in which plastics are produced, used and disposed of today has devastating environmental, climate and economic drawbacks and potential negative health impacts on both humans and animals; whereas the key challenge is thus to

¹ OJ L 115, 6.5.2015, p. 11.

² OJ L 285, 31.10.2009, p. 10.

³ OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 171.

⁴ OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 65.

⁵ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0287.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2018)0004.

produce and use plastics in a responsible and sustainable way in order to reduce the generation of plastic waste and to reduce the use of hazardous substances in plastics, where possible; whereas research and innovation into new technologies and alternatives play an important role in this regard;

- C. whereas these drawbacks generate wide public concern, with 74 % of EU citizens expressing disquiet at the health impacts of plastics and 87 % saying they are preoccupied by their environmental effects;
- D. whereas the current political momentum should be used to shift to a sustainable circular plastics economy that gives priority to the prevention of plastic waste generation in line with the waste hierarchy;
- E. whereas several Member States have already put in place national legislative measures for banning microplastics which are intentionally added to cosmetics;
- F. whereas European countries have a history of exporting plastic waste, including to countries where inadequate waste management and recycling systems cause environmental damage and risk the health of local communities, particularly that of waste handlers;
- G. whereas plastic waste is a global issue and international cooperation is needed to combat the challenge; whereas the EU is committed to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, several of which are relevant to the sustainable consumption and production of plastics to limit their marine and terrestrial impacts;
- H. whereas global annual production of plastics reached 322 million tonnes in 2015, and is expected to double over the next 20 years;
- I. whereas in the EU, 25.8 million tonnes of plastic waste are generated each year;
- J. whereas in the EU only 30 % of plastic waste is collected for recycling; whereas only 6 % of plastic placed on the market is made from recycled plastic;
- K. whereas landfilling (31 %) and incineration (39 %) rates of plastic waste remain high;
- L. whereas around 95 % of the value of plastic packaging material currently leaks away from the economy, leading to an annual loss of between EUR 70 billion and EUR 105 billion;
- M. whereas the EU has a 2030 plastic packaging recycling target of 55 %;
- N. whereas plastic recycling entails significant climate benefits in terms of a reduction in CO₂emissions;
- O. whereas, globally, between 5 and 13 million tonnes of plastic end up in the world's oceans every year and, to date, over 150 million tonnes of plastic are estimated to be present in the oceans;
- P. whereas between 150 000 and 500 000 tonnes of plastic waste enter the seas and oceans of the EU every year;

- Q. whereas, according to studies cited by the UN, if nothing is done, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans by 2050;
- R. whereas plastic account for 85 % of beach litter and over 80 % of marine litter;
- S. whereas practically every type of plastic material can be found in the ocean from the Great Pacific garbage patch, containing at least 79 000 tonnes of plastic floating in an area of 1.6 million square kilometres, to the Earth's remotest areas such as the deep ocean floor and the Arctic;
- T. whereas marine litter also adversely affects economic activities and the human food chain;
- U. whereas 90 % of all seabirds swallow plastic particles;
- V. whereas the full impact of plastic waste on flora, fauna and human health is not yet understood; whereas the catastrophic consequences on marine life have been documented, with over 100 million marine animals killed each year due to plastic debris in the ocean;
- W. whereas solutions for tackling marine plastics cannot be isolated from an overall plastics strategy; whereas Article 48 of the Fisheries Control Regulation¹, which contains measures designed to promote the retrieval of lost fishing gear, is a step in the right direction, but is too limited in scope, given that Member States are allowed to exempt the vast majority of fishing vessels from this obligation and implementation of the reporting requirements remains poor;
- X. whereas European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) funding is being considered for projects in the Adriatic Sea, such as new governance tools and good practices to mitigate and, if possible, eliminate the abandonment of fishing gear, as well as giving fishing fleets a new role as sea sentinels;
- Y. whereas the Member States are signatories to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and should aim for full implementation of its provisions;
- Z. whereas ghost fishing occurs when lost or abandoned, non-biodegradable fishing nets, traps and lines catch, entangle, injure, starve and cause the death of marine life; whereas the phenomenon of 'ghost fishing' is brought about by the loss and abandonment of fishing gear; whereas the Fisheries Control Regulation requires the mandatory marking of gear and the notification and retrieval of lost gear; whereas some fishermen therefore bring back to port, on their own initiative, lost nets retrieved from the sea;
- AA. whereas although it is difficult to accurately assess the precise contribution of aquaculture to marine litter, it is estimated that 80 % of marine debris is plastic and micro-plastic, and that somewhere between 20 % and 40 % of that marine plastic litter is partly linked to human activities at sea, including commercial and cruise ships, with the rest originating

¹ OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

on land, and whereas, according to a recent FAO study¹, around 10 % comes from lost and discarded fishing gear; whereas lost and discarded fishing gear is one component of marine plastic litter and an estimated 94 % of the plastic that enters the ocean ends up on the sea floor, hence the need to use the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in order for fishermen to partake directly in ‘fishing for marine litter’ schemes, by providing them with payment or other financial and material incentives;

- AB. whereas between 75 000 and 300 000 tonnes of microplastics are released into the EU environment each year, including micro-plastics which are intentionally added to plastic products, micro-plastics released during the use of products and those produced by the degradation of plastic products;
- AC. whereas micro-plastics and nano-sized particles create specific public policy challenges;
- AD. whereas micro-plastics are found in 90 % of bottled water;
- AE. whereas the Commission’s request to ECHA to examine the scientific basis to restrict the use of intentionally added micro-plastics to consumer- or professional-use products, is welcomed;
- AF. whereas the Commission’s request to ECHA to prepare a proposal for a possible restriction on oxo-degradable plastic is welcomed;
- AG. whereas according to Article 311 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the introduction of new own resources is subject to a special legislative procedure requiring unanimity among Member States and consultation of Parliament;

General remarks

1. Welcomes the Commission’s communication entitled ‘A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy’ (COM(2018)0028) as a step forward in the EU’s transition from a linear towards a circular economy; recognises that plastic plays a useful role in our economy and in our daily lives but at the same time has significant drawbacks; considers that the key challenge therefore is to manage plastics in a sustainable way throughout the whole value chain and thus change the way in which we produce and use plastics, so that value is retained in our economy, without harming the environment, climate and public health;
2. Stresses that prevention, as defined in the Waste Framework Directive, of plastic waste upfront should be the first priority in line with the waste hierarchy; considers, furthermore, that substantially boosting our plastics recycling performance is also key for supporting sustainable economic growth as well as protecting the environment and public health; calls on all stakeholders to consider the recent Chinese import ban on plastic waste as an opportunity for investing in plastic waste prevention, including by stimulating reuse and circular product design, and for investing in state-of-the-art facilities for collection, sorting and recycling in the EU; believes that exchanging best practices in this regard is important, in particular for SMEs;

¹ [Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear](#)

3. Is convinced that the plastics strategy should also serve as a lever for stimulating new, smart, sustainable and circular business, production and consumption models covering the entire value chain in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal number 12 on sustainable consumption and production and by internalising external costs; calls on the Commission to foster clear linkages between the Union's waste, chemicals and product policies to this end, including by the development of non-toxic material cycles as laid down in the 7th Environmental Action Programme;
4. Calls on the Commission to establish a post-2020 policy for the circular economy and bio-economy based on a strong research and innovation pillar, and to ensure that the necessary commitments will be available in the new multiannual financial framework (MFF); stresses in particular the importance of research to develop innovative solutions and to understand the impact of macro-, micro- and nano-plastics on ecosystems and on human health;
5. Emphasises that plastics are diverse and have a variety of applications, and that a tailored, often product-specific, approach is thus required for the various value chains, with a diverse mix of solutions taking into account the environmental impact, existing alternatives, local and regional demands and ensuring that functional needs are met;
6. Stresses that joint and coordinated actions by all stakeholders across the entire value chain, including consumers, are necessary in order to succeed and achieve an outcome that is advantageous for the economy, the environment, the climate and health;
7. Emphasises that the reduction of waste generation is a shared responsibility and that converting general concern about plastic waste into public responsibility remains an important challenge; highlights the fact that developing new consumption patterns by stimulating the behavioural change of consumers is key in this regard; calls for increased consumer awareness-raising about the impact of plastic waste pollution, the importance of prevention and proper waste management and of existing alternatives;

From design for recycling to design for circularity

8. Calls on the competent authorities in the Member States to ensure that the entire product and waste acquis is fully and swiftly implemented and enforced; points out that in the EU only 30 % of plastic waste is collected for recycling, leading to an enormous waste of resources; stresses that plastics will no longer be accepted in landfills by 2030 and that Member States have to manage their plastic waste according to the provisions laid down in Directive 2008/98/EC; reiterates that Member States should make use of economic instruments and other measures to provide incentives for the application of the waste hierarchy; stresses the importance of separate collection and sorting facilities to enable high-quality recycling and boost the uptake of quality secondary raw materials;
9. Calls on all industry stakeholders to start taking concrete actions now to ensure that all packaging plastics are reusable or recyclable in a cost-effective manner at the latest by 2030, to couple their brand identity to sustainable and circular business models and to use their marketing power to promote and drive sustainable and circular consumption patterns; calls on the Commission to monitor and evaluate the developments, promote best practices and to verify environmental claims to avoid "greenwashing";

10. Believes that civil society should be duly involved and informed so that they are able to hold industry to its commitments and obligations;
11. Urges the Commission to fulfil its obligation to revise and reinforce the essential requirements in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive by end of 2020, taking into account the relative properties of different packaging materials on the basis of life-cycle assessments, addressing in particular prevention, and design for circularity; calls on the Commission to come forward with clear, implementable and effective requirements, including on "reusable and recyclable plastic packaging in a cost-effective manner", and on excessive packaging;
12. Calls on the Commission to make resource efficiency and circularity overarching principles, including the important role that circular materials, products and systems can play, also for non-packaging plastic items; considers that this can be achieved inter alia by Extended Producer Responsibility, by developing product standards, by conducting lifecycle assessments, by broadening the eco-design legislative framework to cover all main plastic product groups, by adopting eco-labelling provisions and by implementing the Product Environmental Footprint method;

Creating a genuine single market for recycled plastics

13. Notes that there are various reasons for the low uptake of recycled plastics in the EU, as a result of inter alia low fossil fuel prices partly due to subsidies, lack of trust and shortage of high-quality supply; emphasises that a stable internal market for secondary raw materials is necessary to ensure the transition to a circular economy; calls on the Commission to tackle the barriers facing this market and to create a level playing field;

Quality standards and verification

14. Calls on the Commission to come forward swiftly with quality standards in order to build trust and incentivise the market for secondary plastics; urges the Commission, when developing these quality standards, to take into account various grades of recycling which are compatible with the functionality of different products, while safeguarding public health, food safety and the environment; calls on the Commission to ensure the safe use of recycled materials in food contact materials and to spur innovation;
15. Asks the Commission to take into consideration best practices with independent third-party certification and to encourage the certification of recycled materials, as verification is essential in order to boost the confidence of both industry and consumers in recycled materials;

Recycled content

16. Calls on all industry players to convert their public commitments to increase the uptake of recycled plastics into formal pledges and to deliver concrete actions;
17. Believes that mandatory rules on recycled content may be needed in order to drive the uptake of secondary raw materials insofar as markets for recycled materials are not yet functioning; calls on the Commission to consider introducing requirements for minimum recycled content for specific plastic products put on the EU market, while

respecting food safety requirements;

18. Calls on the Member States to consider introducing a reduced value-added tax (VAT) for products containing recycled content;

Circular procurement

19. Stresses that procurement is an essential instrument in the transition towards a circular economy as it has the power to boost innovation in business models and to foster resource-efficient products and services; highlights the role of local and regional authorities in this regard; calls on the Commission to set up an EU learning network on circular procurement in order to harvest the lessons learnt from pilot projects; believes that these voluntary actions should pave the way, based on a robust impact assessment, for binding EU rules and criteria on public circular procurement;
20. Calls on Member States to phase out all perverse incentives which work against achieving the highest possible levels of plastics recycling;

Waste-chemicals interface

21. Calls on the competent authorities in the Member States to optimise controls on imported materials **and products** in order to ensure and enforce compliance with EU chemicals and product legislation;
22. Points to the resolution of the European Parliament on implementation of the circular economy package: options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation;

Prevention of plastic waste generation

Single-use plastics

23. Notes that there is no panacea to address the harmful effects to the environment of single-use plastics, and believes that a combination of voluntary and regulatory measures, as well as a change in consumer awareness, behaviour and participation, is therefore required to resolve this complex issue;
24. Takes note of actions already taken in some Member States and therefore welcomes the Commission's proposal on a specific legislative framework for reducing the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, in particular single-use plastics; considers that this proposal should contribute to a significant reduction in marine litter, of which more than 80 % is plastic, thereby contributing to the goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds;
25. Believes it is important that this framework offers an ambitious set of measures for the competent authorities in the Member States which is compatible with the integrity of the single market, producing a tangible and positive environmental and socio-economic impact and providing the necessary functionality to consumers;
26. Recognises that reducing and restricting single-use plastic products can create

- opportunities for sustainable business models;
27. Refers to the ongoing work under the ordinary legislative procedure on this proposal;
 28. Stresses that there are various pathways to achieving high separate collection and recycling rates and a reduction in litter of plastic waste, including extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes with modulated fees, deposit-refund schemes and increased public awareness; recognises the merits of established regimes in different Member States and the potential for exchanging best practices between Member States; underlines that the choice of a certain scheme remains within the remit of the competent authority in the Member State;
 29. Welcomes the fact that Directive 94/62/EC stipulates that Member States must establish mandatory EPR schemes for all packaging by the end of 2024 and calls on the Commission to assess the possibility of extending this obligation to other plastic products in accordance with Articles 8 and 8a of Directive 2008/98/EC;
 30. Takes note of the Commission's proposal on the system of own resources of the European Union (COM(2018)0325) for a contribution based on non-recycled plastic packaging waste; stresses that the steering effect of a possible contribution must be coherent with the waste hierarchy; underlines therefore that priority should be given to the prevention of waste generation;
 31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to join and support the international coalition to reduce plastic bag pollution launched at the COP 22 in Marrakesh in November 2016;
 32. Believes that supermarkets play a crucial role in the reduction of single-use plastic in the EU; welcomes initiatives like plastic-free supermarket aisles which provide opportunities for supermarkets to test compostable biomaterials as alternatives to plastic packaging;
 33. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for a directive on port reception facilities (COM(2018)0033), which aims to significantly reduce the burden and costs for fishermen of bringing fishing gear and plastic waste back to port; underlines the important role that fishermen could play, in particular by collecting plastic waste from the sea during their fishing activity, and bringing it back to port to undergo proper waste management; stresses that the Commission and the Member States should incentivise this activity, so that waste collected during clean-up activities would not be covered by any cost recovery system, and fisherman would not be charged a fee for its treatment;
 34. Regrets that the implementation of Article 48(3) of the Fisheries Control Regulation on retrieval and reporting obligations regarding lost fishing gear did not feature in the Commission's 2017 evaluation and implementation report; stresses the need for a detailed assessment of the implementation of the requirements of the Fisheries Control Regulation in terms of fishing gear;
 35. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support plans for the collection of litter at sea with the involvement, where possible, of fishing vessels, and to introduce port reception and disposal facilities for marine litter, as well as a recycling

scheme for end-of-life nets; calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the recommendations found in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, liaising closely with the fishing sector to fight ghost fishing;

36. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to enhance data collection in the area of marine plastics by establishing and implementing an EU-wide mandatory digital reporting system for gear lost by individual fishing vessels in support of recovery action, using data from regional databases to share information on a European database managed by the Fisheries Control Agency or to develop SafeSeaNet into a user-friendly, EU-wide system, allowing fishermen to signal lost gear;
37. Stresses the need for Member States to make greater efforts to develop strategies and plans to reduce the abandonment of fishing gear at sea, for example through EMFF grants, Structural Funds and ETC support and the necessary degree of active regional involvement;

Bio-based plastics, biodegradability and compostability

38. Strongly supports the Commission in coming forward with clear additional standards, harmonised rules and definitions on bio-based content, biodegradability (a feedstock independent property) and compostability in order to tackle existing misconceptions and misunderstandings and to provide consumers with clear information;
39. Highlights the fact that fostering a sustainable bio-economy can contribute to decreasing Europe's dependency on imported raw materials; highlights the potential role for bio-based and biodegradable plastics, where shown to be beneficial from a life-cycle perspective; considers that biodegradability needs to be assessed under relevant real-world conditions;
40. Emphasises that biodegradable and compostable plastics can help support the transition to a circular economy, but cannot be considered a remedy against marine litter, nor should they legitimise unnecessary single-use applications; calls, therefore, on the Commission to develop clear criteria for useful products and applications composed of biodegradable plastics, including packaging and applications in agriculture; calls for further R&D investment in this issue; stresses that biodegradable and non-biodegradable plastics must be treated differently in view of proper waste management;
41. Emphasises that bio-based plastics offer potential for partial feedstock differentiation and calls for further R&D investment in this regard; acknowledges the existence of innovative bio-based materials already on the market; stresses the need for neutral and equal treatment of substitute materials;
42. Calls for a complete EU ban on oxo-degradable plastic by 2020, as this type of plastic does not properly biodegrade, is not compostable, negatively affects the recycling of conventional plastic and fails to deliver a proven environmental benefit;

Micro-plastics

43. Calls on the Commission to introduce a ban on micro-plastics in cosmetics, personal care products, detergents and cleaning products by 2020; furthermore calls on ECHA to

assess and prepare, if appropriate, a ban on micro-plastics which are intentionally added to other products, taking into account whether viable alternatives are available;

44. Calls on the Commission to set minimum requirements in product legislation to significantly reduce the release of micro-plastics at source, in particular for textiles, tyres, paints and cigarette butts;
45. Takes note of the good practice of Operation Clean Sweep and various ‘zero pellet loss’ initiatives; believes there is scope to replicate these initiatives at EU and global level;
46. Calls on the Commission to look into the sources, distribution, fate and effects of both macro- and micro-plastics in the context of wastewater treatment and storm water management in the ongoing fitness check on the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive; calls, furthermore, on Member States’ competent authorities and the Commission to ensure the full implementation and enforcement of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; calls, in addition, on the Commission to support research in sewage sludge treatment and water purification technologies;

Research and innovation

47. Welcomes the Commission’s announcement that an additional EUR 100 million will be invested under the Horizon 2020 programme to drive investment towards resource-efficient and circular solutions, such as prevention and design options, diversification of feedstock and innovative recycling technologies such as molecular and chemical recycling, as well as the improvement of mechanical recycling; highlights the innovative potential of start-ups in this regard; supports the establishment of a Strategic Research Innovation Agenda on material circularity, with a specific focus on plastic and plastic-containing materials, beyond packaging, to guide future funding decisions in Horizon Europe; notes that adequate funding will be necessary to help leverage private investment; emphasises that public-private partnerships can help accelerate the transition to a circular economy;
48. Emphasises the strong potential for linking the digital agenda and the circular economy agenda; underlines the need to address regulatory barriers to innovation and calls on the Commission to examine possible EU innovation deals in line with achieving the goals set out in the plastics strategy and the broader circular economy agenda;
49. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support the use of innovative fishing gear by encouraging fishermen to ‘trade in’ old nets and to adapt existing nets with net trackers and sensors linked to smart phone apps, radio frequency identification chips and vessel trackers so that skippers can keep more accurate track of their nets and retrieve them if necessary; acknowledges the role that technology can play in preventing plastic waste from entering the sea;
50. Calls for Horizon Europe to include a ‘Mission Plastic Free Ocean’ in order to use innovation to reduce the amount of plastics entering the marine environment and to collect plastics present in the oceans; reiterates its calls about combatting marine litter (including prevention, increasing ocean literacy, raising awareness about the environmental challenge of plastic pollution and other forms of marine litter, and clean-up campaigns

such as fishing for litter and beach clean-ups) as referred to in the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 10 November 2016 on ‘International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans’ (JOIN(2016)0049),; calls for an EU policy dialogue on marine litter between policy-makers, stakeholders and experts;

Global action

51. Calls on the EU to play a pro-active role in developing a Global Plastics Protocol and to ensure that the various commitments made at both the EU and global levels can be tracked in an integrated and transparent manner; calls on the Commission and the Member States to show active leadership in the working group established by the United Nations Environment Assembly in December 2017, to work on international responses for combating plastic marine litter and micro-plastics; emphasises that the issues of plastic pollution and waste management capacities must be a part of the EU’s external policy framework, given that a great portion of plastic waste in the oceans originates from countries in Asia and Africa;
52. Calls on all EU institutions, together with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, to focus on prevention, scrutinise their internal procurement rules and plastic waste management practices and significantly reduce their generation of plastic waste, in particular by replacing, reducing and restricting single-use plastics;
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53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Turning plastic wastelands into fields of gold

Circular opportunities for our environment, climate and economy

1. What is at stake?

Plastic is an important and **valuable material** which has a useful place in our society and economy. However, the way in which plastics are produced and used today is both unaffordable and unsustainable. Plastic is developed to last in perpetuity, but is often still designed to be disposed of after use. Moreover, the collection of plastics for recycling remains very low. Out of approximately 25, 8 million tonnes of plastic waste generated in the EU each year, less than 30% is collected for recycling. This has significant drawbacks:

- 1) **A loss for the environment:** plastic waste has an especially devastating impact on marine ecosystems with plastics accounting for over 80% of marine litter. In the EU, between 150.000 and 500.000 tonnes of plastic waste enter its seas and oceans each year. Furthermore, on average, between 75.000 and 300.000 tonnes of micro-plastics are released into the environment on an annual basis in the EU;
- 2) **A loss for climate:** studies have shown that the recycling of 1 million tonnes of plastics is equivalent to taking 1 million cars off the road¹;
- 3) **A loss for our economy:** estimates reveal that 95% of the value of plastic packaging material leaks away from the economy, leading to an annual loss rate of between €70 and €105 billion;
- 4) **A potential impact on health:** micro-plastics and their by-products can also enter the food chain, the human health effects of which are still inconclusive.

There is now genuine **political momentum** to promote transformational change and shift to a **circular plastics economy**. Indeed China's recent decision to ban the import of plastic waste, forces the EU to act. The rapporteur strongly believes that the EU should consider this ban as an opportunity to invest and innovate from within, and stop "outsourcing" our plastic waste problem.

This political momentum is also **supported by Europe's citizens**. A recent Eurobarometer survey makes clear that the vast majority of respondents (87%) agree that they are worried about the impact of plastic products on the environment².

The publication of the **Commission's Communication** on "A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy" is therefore very timely and **is welcomed** by the rapporteur. The rapporteur draws attention to the following **five general challenges**:

- We need to manage plastics in a sustainable way across the whole value chain;
- The Strategy should look beyond sustainable packaging materials, and serve as a lever for stimulating new, smart and circular business and consumption models covering the entire value chain;

¹ Please see http://presse.ademe.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FEDEREC_ACV-du-Recyclage-en-France-VF.pdf

² Special Eurobarometer 468, Attitudes of European citizens towards the environment, October 2017.

- The Commission should set a post-2020 policy for the circular economy based on a robust research and innovation;
- Plastic has a myriad of applications and instead of a “one-size-fits-all” solution, a tailored, often product-specific approach, is required;
- Joint commitments and actions by all stakeholders, including cross-sector collaboration, across the value chain, are necessary and we need to change public concern on plastic waste into public responsibility.

2. What does it take?

2.1 From design for recycling to design for circularity

It all begins with proper waste and material management. The full and timely **implementation of the entire waste “acquis”**, including the significant improvements introduced by the recently adopted revision of EU waste legislation, by competent authorities in the Member States, is a critical first step.

Furthermore, the rapporteur supports the ambition of the Commission to **make all packaging plastics placed on the European market reusable or recyclable by 2030**. All industry stakeholders should deliver concrete actions in order to put this ambition into practice, not only for consumer packaging but equally for the business-to-business sector, and should couple their brand identity to sustainable and circular business models.

Moreover, the rapporteur believes that civil society has a role to play in holding industry accountable for its commitments, and sees the upcoming “**New Deal for Consumers**” as the ideal framework for doing so. He considers Dutch example of a “Packaging Contact Point” (“Meldpunt Verpakkingen”) to be an interesting and relevant model which could be replicated in other Member states, as it involves consumers and incentivises industry to make packaging more sustainable¹.

The rapporteur firmly supports the Commission’s intention to come forward with an **update of the essential requirements** in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD). He urges the Commission to make “circularity first” an overarching principle, which should apply also to **non-packaging plastic items** through the development of product standards and a revision of the Eco-design legislative framework.

2.2 Creating a genuine Single Market for recycled plastics

The uptake of recycled plastics in new products remains low: only around 6% according to Commission figures. The rapporteur sees **four key building blocks to create a genuine single market for secondary plastics**.

1) Quality standards and verification

There is currently a mismatch between the quality of recycled plastics and the quality required for the functionality of a certain product. This is due to a lack of trust, verification and transparency. Developing **recycling grades which match the functionality of various products** and **verification** are key in this regard. A European audit scheme is already available

¹ <https://meldpuntverpakkingen.nl/>

for use, EuCertPlast.¹ However, the rapporteur believes that an independent third party certificate, could equally offer an important step forward. The QA-CER certification scheme developed by the Belgian Quality Association could provide a model for Europe to follow².

2) Push for recycled content

The rapporteur welcomes the various positive public commitments by leading industry players on recycled content, but considers it key that these public commitments are turned into concrete **pledges**. However, this voluntary approach alone may not be sufficient: the rapporteur therefore believes that **mandatory rules for recycled content for specific products may be needed**. EPR and VAT modulations could support this.

3) Design for circularity in procurement

Public and private procurement has the power to boost innovation in business models. Nevertheless, circular procurement remains the exception, and not the rule. In order to incentivise it, various actions could be taken, also at the EU level: in particular, stimulating and supporting innovation, research and the exchange of best practices. The EU could establish an **EU learning network on circular procurement** so that the lessons learnt from various Green Deals (e.g. in Flanders³ and the Netherlands⁴) are gathered and offer support for the establishment of future agreements. Furthermore, lessons learnt from voluntary bottom-up actions could pave the way for establishing **binding rules for public circular procurement**.

4) Waste-chemicals interface

Finally, the rapporteur believes that a link with the Commission's Communication on the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation is essential to the establishment of a single market for recycled plastics. In particular, the rapporteur considers **stepping-up controls on imported materials** as an absolute necessity, while underlining that the presence of a substance of concern should not be a blanket justification to preclude the recycling of waste for certain specific, well-defined and safe applications.

2.3 Prevention of plastic waste generation

1) Single-use

Over 80% of marine litter comes from plastics, 50% of which is derived from single-use plastics. These numbers show that there are legitimate grounds to take action on these single-use items. The rapporteur therefore **supports specific legislation on single-use plastics** in order to reduce marine litter. A framework is needed which provides a set of possible measures for the competent authorities in the Member States, is compatible with the integrity of the single market, offers a tangible positive environmental impact, and gives the necessary functionality to consumers.

The rapporteur stresses that there are various pathways to achieve high collection and recycling rates and a reduction in litter, including deposit-refund schemes or EPR schemes. He underlines

¹ <https://www.eucertplast.eu/>

² http://www.bqa.be/files/uploads/Audits/2016_BQA_folder_QA-CER.pdf

³ <http://vlaanderen-circulair.be/nl/onze-projecten/detail/green-deal-circulair-aankopen>

⁴ <https://mvonederland.nl/green-deal-circulair-inkopen>

that the choice for a certain scheme remains within the remit of the competent authority in the Member State, taking into account local specificities and ensuring that existing well-performing and cost-efficient systems are not jeopardised. He is also eager to stress that fiscal policy remains a Member State competence, and therefore opposes the introduction of an EU-wide plastics tax as a potential own resource stream for the EU.

2) Bio-plastics

There are many misconceptions and misunderstandings about bio-plastics, which includes biodegradable, compostable and bio-based plastics. The rapporteur therefore supports the Commission in coming forward with **clear harmonised rules on both bio-based content and biodegradability**.

Biodegradable plastics can be a supporting element in the transition towards a circular economy, but should not be seen as a universal remedy against marine litter. The rapporteur therefore calls on the Commission to develop **a list of useful products and applications consisting of biodegradable plastics**, based on clear criteria.

Moreover, **bio-based plastics** can be part of a broader solution as they offer the potential for partial feedstock differentiation and can thus decrease the EU's resource dependency on third countries. The rapporteur believes that **further R&D investment** in this area are needed in order to spur innovation.

The rapporteur also calls for a **complete ban on oxo-degradable plastic**, as this type of plastic does not safely biodegrade and therefore fails to deliver a proven environmental benefit.

3) Micro-plastics

The rapporteur believes that the most cost-efficient option is to tackle the use of micro-plastics at source. He therefore calls for a **ban on micro-plastics which are intentionally added** to products, such as for cosmetics and cleaning products, and for which viable alternatives are available. The recent introduction of legislation that bans the use of plastic micro-beads in rinse-off cosmetic products in some Member States, for example the United Kingdom, prove that this is possible.

The rapporteur furthermore calls on the Commission to set **minimum requirements** in product legislation to tackle micro-plastics at source, in particular for textiles, tyres, paints and cigarette butts. He believes that the findings of the MERMAIDS Life+ project¹, which focused on the mitigation of micro-plastics impact caused by textile washing processes, offers some interesting insights in this regard.

2.4 Innovation

Innovation, research and development, and investments in infrastructure are critical if the EU wants to succeed in developing a new plastics economy. The Commission's announcement to invest an additional €100 million to drive investment towards circular solutions under Horizon 2020 is encouraging. The rapporteur supports the development of a Strategic Research Innovation Agenda on plastics which should also look beyond 2020.

¹ <http://life-mermaids.eu/en/>

The rapporteur is also convinced that areas such as chemical recycling and applications of carbon capture and utilisation (CCU) which use carbon dioxide as a feedstock, should be part of the innovation agenda. He also calls on the Commission to build further on the experience of existing innovation clusters, such as the Flemish Catalisti¹.

2.5 Global action

Internationally, innovative and cost-effective efforts to address plastic waste are developing quickly. If the EU wants to lead the global agenda of the circular economy and make an impact, it must be at the forefront and play a pro-active role in developing a **Global Plastics Protocol**. The rapporteur therefore calls on the Commission to come forward with an instrument to track the various commitments in an integrated and transparent manner.

3. Conclusion

The Chinese import ban on plastics waste offers an immense opportunity for the EU to promote transformational change and shift towards a circular plastic economy. We need to use this momentum to invest and innovate. If we succeed in developing a holistic approach covering the entire value chain through circular business and consumption models, we can create a win-win situation for all stakeholders involved. **We can turn plastic wastelands into fields of gold.**

¹ <http://catalisti.be/>

2.7.2018

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on a European strategy for plastics in a circular economy
(2018/2035(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: John Flack

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas enormous quantities of plastic and microplastics enter the sea, where, having been discarded, they break down in the water and subsequently enter the food chain, where toxic compounds are ingested by a wide range of marine life and can poison and cause death to living marine resources, as well as have a direct impact on human health; whereas marine plastic litter can also have an impact on the efficiency of fishing gear which, in the case of small-scale fishing, is even greater and causes economic problems;
- B. whereas the issue of plastic marine litter is a global challenge that can only be tackled by international cooperation;
- C. whereas Resolution 11 of the UN Environment Assembly of the UN Environment Programme of 23-27 May 2016 recognised that ‘the presence of plastic litter and microplastics in the marine environment is a rapidly increasing serious issue of global concern that needs an urgent global response taking into account a product life-cycle approach’;
- D. whereas the same resolution encouraged product manufacturers and others ‘to eliminate or reduce the use of primary microplastic particles in products’; whereas bans on the use of microplastics in specific personal care products have been put in place in the United States and Canada; whereas several Member States have notified the Commission of draft laws to ban microplastics in certain cosmetics, and whereas the Commission has requested that the European Chemicals Agency restrict intentionally added microplastics; whereas the Council has also called on the Commission to take measures on microplastics, especially those from cosmetics and detergents; whereas there is

considerable confusion among consumers related to plastics terminology, particularly as regards bioplastics and biodegradable and bio-based plastics, and clear information from plastics producers is critical to delivering on the plastics strategy;

- E. whereas the Commission is committed to developing, where appropriate, product requirements under the Ecodesign Directive¹ that take account of microplastics, and it also has developed criteria to improve the recyclability of plastics in its Ecolabel and Green Public Procurement criteria;
 - F. whereas solutions for tackling marine plastics cannot be isolated from an overall plastics strategy; whereas Article 48 of the Fisheries Control Regulation², which contains measures designed to promote the retrieval of lost fishing gear, is a step in the right direction, but is too limited in scope, given that Member States are allowed to exempt the vast majority of fishing vessels from this obligation and implementation of the reporting requirements remains poor;
 - G. whereas the Member States are signatories to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and should aim for full implementation of its provisions;
 - H. whereas ghost fishing occurs when lost or abandoned, non-biodegradable fishing nets, traps and lines catch, entangle, injure, starve and cause the death of marine life; whereas the phenomenon of ‘ghost fishing’ is brought about by the loss and abandonment of fishing gear; whereas the Fisheries Control Regulation requires the mandatory marking of gear and the notification and retrieval of lost gear; whereas some fishermen therefore bring back to port, on their own initiative, lost nets retrieved from the sea;
 - I. whereas although it is difficult to accurately assess the precise contribution of aquaculture to marine litter, it is estimated that 80 % of marine debris is plastic and microplastic, and that somewhere between 20 % and 40 % of that marine plastic litter is partly linked to human activities at sea, including commercial and cruise ships, with the rest originating on land, and whereas, according to a recent FAO study³, around 10 % comes from lost and discarded fishing gear; whereas lost and discarded fishing gear is one component of marine plastic litter and an estimated 94 % of the plastic that enters the ocean ends up on the sea floor, hence the need to use the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in order for fishermen to partake directly in ‘fishing for marine litter’ schemes, by providing them with payment or other financial and material incentives;
1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled ‘A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy’ (COM(2018)0028), which supports the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive⁴, which aims to achieve good environmental status for European marine waters; regrets, however, that the implementation of Article 48(3) of the Fisheries Control Regulation on retrieval and reporting obligations regarding lost fishing gear did not feature in the Commission’s 2017 evaluation and implementation report; stresses the need for a detailed assessment of the implementation of the

¹ OJ L 285, 31.10.2009, p. 10.

² OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 1.

³ [Abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear](#)

⁴ OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, p. 19.

requirements of the Fisheries Control Regulation in terms of fishing gear;

2. Stresses that understanding and tackling marine litter requires a series of interlinked and ambitious multilevel actions and calls, therefore, for the EU and the Member States to improve the coordination of international efforts to reduce the forms of marine pollution and to step up global measures against plastic, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goal 14); points out that efforts may include campaigns and programmes to raise awareness of the impact of waste on marine ecosystems, research into the feasibility of biodegradable/compostable fishing nets, education projects for fishermen and specific public programmes to remove plastics and other objects from the seabed, as well as looking into the viability of extended producer responsibility for fishing gear;
3. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support plans for the collection of litter at sea with the involvement, where possible, of fishing vessels, and to introduce port reception and disposal facilities for marine litter, as well as a recycling scheme for end-of-life nets; calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the recommendations found in the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear, liaising closely with the fishing sector to fight ghost fishing;
4. Stresses that Member States and the regions must do more to formulate strategies and plans to reduce the loss of fishing gear at sea and that EMFF grants should be used for the collection and removal of marine waste and marine litter, as well as the setting-up of gear-recycling schemes and the necessary infrastructure; encourages the Member States and the regions, in conjunction with the EMFF, to submit proposals under the Horizon 2020 programme; points out that Member States may also wish to implement a voluntary bonus scheme for fishermen who bring back plastic waste and lost or obsolete nets; strongly encourages the Commission and the Member States to provide more support for existing initiatives to tackle this global challenge, such as ‘Fishing for litter’, ‘Oceana’, the ‘Surfrider Foundation’, the ‘Plastic Oceans Foundation’, the ‘Mission Blue’ initiative and ‘One world, one ocean’;
5. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to support the use of innovative fishing gear by encouraging fishermen to ‘trade in’ old nets and to adapt existing nets with net trackers and sensors linked to smart phone apps, radio frequency identification chips and vessel trackers so that skippers can keep more accurate track of their nets and retrieve them if necessary; acknowledges the role that technology can play in preventing plastic waste entering the sea;
6. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to enhance data collection in the area of marine plastics by establishing and implementing an EU-wide mandatory digital reporting system for gear lost by individual fishing vessels in support of recovery action, using data from regional databases to share information on a European database managed by the Fisheries Control Agency or to develop SafeSeaNet into a user-friendly, EU-wide system, allowing fishermen to signal lost gear;
7. Microplastics are detrimental to fish stocks, biodiversity and human health; calls, therefore, on the Commission to develop and support capacities to detect and monitor microplastic contamination levels in commercial fish, seafood products and the marine

environment and its biological resources; calls on the Commission to adopt food safety risk-analysis frameworks to evaluate hazards and risks to consumers; calls on the Commission, in line with the principle of substitution and the REACH procedures for restricting substances that pose a risk to the plastics strategy, to follow through, as a matter of urgency, with the process requested by the Council to restrict the use of intentionally added microplastics, by requesting that the European Chemicals Agency review the scientific basis for taking regulatory action at EU level to bring about a gradual reduction in the use of microplastics in goods such as cosmetics, personal care products, detergents and paints, leading to a total ban; stresses the importance of cooperation between Member States, national and regional authorities, industry and stakeholders concerned with the effects of microplastic and nanoplastic contamination and the impact of pollution on fisheries, aquaculture and seafood supply chains.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	20.6.2018
Result of final vote	+: 20 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, David Coburn, Richard Corbett, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Mike Hookem, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Remo Sernagiotto, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas
Substitutes present for the final vote	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Giuseppe Ferrandino, John Flack, Seán Kelly, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Ana Miranda

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

20	+
ALDE	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Norica Nicolai
ECR	John Flack, Remo Sernagiotto
EFDD	David Coburn, Mike Hookem
GUE/NGL	Liadh Ní Riada
PPE	Carlos Iturgaiz, Seán Kelly, Werner Kuhn, Gabriel Mato
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Renata Briano, Richard Corbett, Ulrike Rodust, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Isabelle Thomas
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Linnéa Engström, Ana Miranda

0	-

1	0
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	10.7.2018
Result of final vote	+: 57 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Pilar Ayuso, Catherine Bearder, Ivo Belet, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Nessa Childers, Birgit Collin-Langen, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Mark Demesmaeker, Stefan Eck, Bas Eickhout, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Francesc Gambús, Arne Gericke, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Sylvie Goddyn, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, Jytte Guteland, György Hölvényi, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Karin Kadenbach, Urszula Krupa, Giovanni La Via, Jo Leinen, Peter Liese, Valentinas Mazuronis, Susanne Melior, Miroslav Mikolášik, Rory Palmer, Massimo Paolucci, Piernicola Pedicini, Bolesław G. Piecha, Pavel Poc, John Procter, Julia Reid, Frédérique Ries, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Davor Škrlec, Renate Sommer, Adina-Ioana Vălean, Damiano Zoffoli
Substitutes present for the final vote	Guillaume Balas, Anja Hazekamp, Jan Huitema, Merja Kyllönen, Alojz Peterle, Christel Schaldemose, Keith Taylor
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Zoltán Balczó, Marc Joulaud, Stanisław Ożóg

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

57	+
ALDE	Catherine Bearder, Jan Huitema, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Valentinas Mazuronis, Frédérique Ries
ECR	Mark Demesmaeker, Arne Gericke, Urszula Krupa, Stanisław Ożóg, Bolesław G. Piecha, John Procter
EFDD	Piernicola Pedicini
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	Stefan Eck, Anja Hazekamp, Merja Kyllönen
NI	Zoltán Balczó
PPE	Pilar Ayuso, Ivo Belet, Birgit Collin-Langen, Karl-Heinz Florenz, Francesc Gambús, Jens Gieseke, Julie Girling, Françoise Grossetête, Andrzej Grzyb, György Hölvényi, Marc Joulaud, Giovanni La Via, Peter Liese, Miroslav Mikolášik, Alojz Peterle, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Renate Sommer, Adina-Ioana Vălean
S&D	Guillaume Balas, Biljana Borzan, Paul Brannen, Soledad Cabezón Ruiz, Nessa Childers, Miriam Dalli, Seb Dance, Jytte Guteland, Karin Kadenbach, Jo Leinen, Susanne Melior, Rory Palmer, Massimo Paolucci, Pavel Poc, Christel Schaldemose, Daciana Octavia Sârbu, Damiano Zoffoli
VERTS/ALE	Marco Affronte, Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Davor Škrlec, Keith Taylor

1	-
EFDD	Julia Reid

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention