

Non-paper - Call for ambitious EU measures to reduce and prevent microplastics pollution

Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway

Date: 26 April 2023

Microplastics end up in the environment at all stages of the plastics lifecycle – production, use and disposal. They take on a variety of shapes and sizes. They spread through the air, water and soil, and are even found in biota and human bodies. In addition, there are indications that microplastics can be harmful to human health and ecosystems, including aquatic species.

The need to address microplastics pollution is becoming increasingly urgent. We therefore welcome the Commission's ambition to reduce emissions of microplastics into the environment by 30% by 2030. Yet, EU legislation to fully achieve the proposed reduction target and significantly reduce microplastics pollution is currently lacking. Denmark, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway therefore call on the Commission to introduce the necessary measures to reach the proposed reduction target in the proposal on 'Microplastics pollution – measures to reduce impacts on the environment'. In addition, the proposed measures to tackle microplastics pollution should also be adequately incorporated into all relevant European policy and legislation, such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the revision of the EU Waste Framework Directive, the Single-Use Plastics Directive, and the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

We would ask the Commission to take account of the three guiding principles below for ambitious European measures to reduce and prevent microplastics pollution:

1. Data and knowledge – towards European monitoring, supervision and enforcement

Scientific knowledge about microplastics is constantly growing. It is clear that microplastics end up in the environment, accumulate in the food chain and are subsequently detected in the human body. They don't belong there. More research is needed into the precise effects of microplastics on human health and ecosystems and how to prevent microplastics pollution, for instance by gaining a better understanding of the (chemical) composition and effects of polymers and additives being produced, marketed and used, and which are likely to end up in the environment.

Furthermore, it is important to develop uniform methods to monitor the volume, characteristics and quantity of microplastics in water, soil, and air, and to identify the main sources. Harmonized methods are also needed to enforce the relevant EU legislation with regard to microplastics.

2. Voluntary measures are not enough – towards European laws and regulations

In view of the current gaps in knowledge and data, we call on the Commission to introduce precautionary measures at EU level to prevent and reduce microplastics in the environment. Tackling microplastics pollution is a cross-border challenge, and therefore national and voluntary measures alone are not sufficient. Measures at EU level are needed to prevent and reduce microplastics, and where possible, measures should also be taken on a global level by including them in a UN treaty to end plastic pollution. We call on the Commission to introduce ambitious European legislation to prevent and reduce microplastics pollution.

3. Prevention is better than cure – towards a European source-based approach

It is important to tackle microplastics pollution, and for maximum impact, measures should be taken early in the lifecycle. We urge the Commission to move forward and propose ambitious measures aimed at all types of microplastics and all sources, starting with those that have been identified by scientific studies as releasing the most microplastics into the environment.¹ The Commission should also take account of unintended negative effects of measures to reduce and prevent microplastics pollution. For example, discouraging materials that contribute to microplastics pollution should not lead to the use of alternatives with an even greater environmental impact.

¹ [TNO-2022-microplastics-eng.](#)

Annex with Signatories

Magnus Heunicke

Minister of Environment

Denmark

Christophe Béchu

Minister of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion

France

Steffi Lemke

Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection

Germany

Joëlle Welfring

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development

Luxembourg

Vivianne Heijnen

Minister for the Environment

The Netherlands

Espen Barth Eide

Minister of Climate and the Environment

Norway