Basic information

2018/2035(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
European strategy for plastics in a circular economy **Subject** 3.40.01 Chemical industry, fertilizers, plastics 3.70.01 Protection of natural resources: fauna, flora, nature, wildlife, countryside; biodiversity 3.70.12 Waste management, domestic waste, packaging, light industrial waste	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	DEMESMAEKER Mark (ECR)	01/02/2018
	Shadow rapporteur FLORENZ Karl-Heinz (PPE) BONAFÈ Simona (S&D) JÄÄTTEENMÄKI Anneli (ALDE) TORRES MARTÍNEZ Estefanía (GUE/NGL) AFFRONTE Marco (Verts/ALE) PEDICINI Piernicola (EFDD) GODDYN Sylvie (ENF)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries	FLACK John (ECR)	14/03/2018

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Secretariat-General	JUNCKER Jean-Claude

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
16/01/2018	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2018)0028	Summary
15/03/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/07/2018	Vote in committee		
17/07/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0262/2018	Summary
12/09/2018	Debate in Parliament		
13/09/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0352/2018	Summary
13/09/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/09/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2018/2035(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/8/12349

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE619.271	27/03/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE622.234	25/05/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE622.235	25/05/2018	
Committee opinion	PECH	PE619.288	02/07/2018	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0262/2018	17/07/2018	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0352/2018	13/09/2018	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission document (COM)	COM(2018)0028	16/01/2018	Summary

Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2018)829	11/03/2019	

National parliaments

Document type	Parliament /Chamber	Reference	Date	Summary
Contribution	RO_CHAMBER	COM(2018)0028	30/05/2018	

European strategy for plastics in a circular economy

2018/2035(INI) - 17/07/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted an own-initiative report by Mark DEMESMAEKER (ECR, BE) in response to the Commission's communication entitled 'A European strategy on plastics in a circular economy'.

Plastic is a **valuable material** that plays an important role in our society and economy. However, the way 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.

The EU has a 2030 plastic packaging recycling target of 55 %. Today, however, **only 30% of plastic waste is collected for recycling** and only 6% of plastic placed on the market are made of recycled plastic. In addition, plastic account for 85% of the waste found on beaches and more than 80% of marine waste.

The key challenge is therefore to **produce and use plastics in a responsible and sustainable way** in order to reduce the production of plastic waste and limit the use of hazardous substances in plastics, so that value is retained in our economy, without harming the environment, climate and public health.

The report invited 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.

From recycling to circularity: **a change of design**: Members insisted that all the acquis on waste and products be fully and swiftly implemented and enforced. All industry stakeholders should 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.

The Commission is urged 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 lifecycle assessments.

Creating a genuine single market for recycled plastics: stressing that a stable internal market for secondary raw materials is necessary to ensure the transition to a circular economy, Members called on the Commission to remove the obstacles facing this market and create a level playing field.

Standards and quality verification: Members called on the Commission (i) to introduce quality standards quickly in order to build confidence and incentivise the secondary plastics market (ii) to take into account good practices in independent third-party certification and to encourage the certification of recycled materials.

Promoting the use of recycled materials: the report called on all industry stakeholders to convert their public commitments to increase the use of recycled plastics into **formal pledges** and to deliver concrete actions. **Binding rules** on the content of recycled materials may be necessary, as well as the introduction of a reduced value added tax (VAT) for products containing recycled materials.

Designing public procurement with a view to circularity: stressing that public procurement is an essential instrument in the transition to a circular economy, Members called on the Commission to set up a European Union learning network on circular public procurement. They also invited the competent authorities of the Member States to optimise controls on imported materials and products in order to ensure and enforce compliance with EU chemicals and product legislation.

Limiting the production of plastic waste: Members believe that a combination of voluntary and regulatory measures, as well as a change in consumer awareness, behaviour and participation are needed to solve the complex problem of combating the harmful effects of single-use plastics on the environment. They therefore support the Commission's proposal for a specific legislative framework to reduce the environmental impact of certain plastic products, in particular single-use plastics.

The report welcomed initiatives like **plastic-free supermarket aisles** which provide opportunities for supermarkets to test compostable biomaterials as alternatives to plastic packaging.

The Commission, Member States and regions are invited to support **marine waste recovery programmes**, if possible by involving fishing vessels in improving data collection on marine plastics.

Members supported the Commission in proposing clear harmonised rules on bio-based content and biodegradability. They pointed out that 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. They also called for a **complete ban on oxo-degradable plastic** in the EU by 2020.

The report called on the Commission to **ban microplastics** in cosmetics, personal care products, detergents and cleaning products by 2020 and to prepare a proposal for a ban, taking into account whether or not viable alternatives exist. It also called 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.

Members supported the development of a **strategic research and innovation agenda** on material circularity, with a focus on plastics and materials containing plastics, beyond packaging. They called for the Horizon Europe programme to include a 'mission plastic free ocean' in order to use innovation to reduce the amount of plastics entering the marine environment.

Lastly, the report called on the EU to play a pro-active role in the development of a global plastics protocol and to ensure that the various commitments made both at EU and global levels can be monitored in an integrated and transparent manner.

European strategy for plastics in a circular economy

2018/2035(INI) - 16/01/2018 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: to propose a European strategy for plastics.

BACKGROUND: around **25.8 million tonnes of plastic waste** are generated in Europe every year. Less than 30% of such waste is collected for recycling. Of this amount, a significant share leaves the EU to be treated in third countries, where different environmental standards may apply.

At the same time, **landfilling and incineration rates of plastic waste remain high** (31% and 39%, respectively). It was estimated that plastics production and the incineration of plastic waste give rise globally to approximately 400 million tonnes of CO_2 a year.

Globally, 5 to 13 million tonnes of plastics — 1.5 to 4 % of global plastics production — end up in the oceans every year. It is estimated that **plastic accounts for over 80 % of marine litter**. Plastic debris can be washed up on land and degrade into **microplastics**.

In the EU, **150 000 to 500 000 tonnes of plastic waste** enter the oceans every year.

The proposed Europe-wide strategy on plastics is a part of the transition towards a more circular economy. It lays the foundations to a **new plastics economy**, where the design and production of plastics and plastic products fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs and more sustainable materials are developed and promoted. The Commission considers that the EU is best placed to lead the transition to the plastics of the future.

CONTENT: the plastic strategy shall lay the foundations for a new circular plastics economy. This will help to reduce plastic litter in land, air and sea while also bringing new opportunities for innovation, competitiveness and high quality jobs.

Under the new strategy, the European Union shall endeavour to:

1) Improve the economics and quality of plastics recycling: the aim is to improve the production and design of plastics and plastic products. The Commission has already proposed new rules on waste management. Once adopted and implemented, this new European legislation should do much to improve the current situation, driving public and private investment in the right direction.

The Union should in particular:

- **promote improved design for recycling while preserving the internal market**: the Commission will work on a revision of the essential requirements for placing packaging on the market. The objective will be to ensure that, **by 2030**, all plastics packaging placed on the EU market is reusable or easily recycled. It will seek to develop requirements under the Ecodesign Directive for products that take into account aspects related to the circular economy, including recyclability;
- **boost demand for recycled plastics**: weak demand for recycled plastics is another major obstacle to transforming the plastics value chain. Before considering regulatory action, the Commission is launching an **EU-wide pledging campaign** to ensure that by 2025, ten million tonnes of recycled plastics find their way into new products on the EU market. To achieve swift, tangible results, this exercise is addressed to both private and public actors, inviting them to come forward with substantive pledges by June 2018;
- **improve the selective collection of plastic waste and modernise the Union's sorting and recycling capacity**: to encourage more standardised and effective practices across the EU, the Commission will issue **new guidance** on separate collection and sorting of waste. More importantly, the Commission strongly supports the European Parliament and the Council in their current effort to amend waste rules to ensure better implementation of existing obligations on separate collection of plastics.

2) Curb plastic waste and littering: the EU has already taken steps by setting requirements for Member States to adopt measures to cut the consumption of plastic bags and to monitor and reduce marine litter.37 EU funding is also being deployed to understand and combat the rise of marine litter.

To reduce discharges of waste by ships, the Commission is presenting together with this strategy a legislative proposal on port reception facilities. This presents measures to ensure that waste generated on ships or gathered at sea is delivered on land and adequately managed. Building on this, the Commission will also develop targeted **measures for reducing the loss or abandonment of fishing gear at sea**.

Awareness campaigns, measures to prevent littering and projects to clean up beaches can be set up by public authorities and receive support from EU funds, for instance through the European Solidarity Corps.

The Commission has started the process to restrict the use of intentionally added **microplastics** and creating labels for ‘compostable’ or ‘biodegradable’ plastics.

3) Drive innovation and investment towards circular solutions: achieving the ambitious goals on plastics recycling alone will require an **estimated additional investment of between EUR 8.4 and 16.6 billion**. Therefore, creating an enabling framework for investment and innovation is central to implementing this strategy.

In the run-up to 2020, an **additional EUR 100 million** will be devoted to financing priority measures, including developing smarter and more recyclable plastics materials, making recycling processes more efficient, and tracing and removing hazardous substances and contaminants from recycled plastics. Finally, the Commission will develop a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda on plastics to provide guidance for future research and innovation funding after 2020.

Public authorities need to invest in extended and improved separate collection. **Well-designed Extended Producer Responsibility** schemes can play a key role to provide the necessary funding.

4) Build on global action: the EU will continue to support international action, promote best practices worldwide, and use its external funding instruments to support improved waste prevention and management around the world. In particular, the Commission will continue to make use of policy dialogues on environment and industry and dialogues under free trade agreements, and actively cooperate in Regional Sea Conventions.

The measures taken at European Union level to implement this strategy will be put forward in line with the **Better Regulation principles**. In particular, any measure likely to have significant socioeconomic impact will be accompanied by an impact assessment.

European strategy for plastics in a circular economy

2018/2035(INI) - 13/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 597 votes to 15, with 25 abstentions, a resolution on a European strategy on plastics in a circular economy in response to the Commission communication on the same issue.

Background: the way plastics are produced, used and disposed of today has devastating effects on the environment, climate and economy: 74% of European citizens are concerned about the health impacts of plastic products and 87% are concerned about their environmental impact.

The EU has a 2030 plastic packaging recycling target of 55 %. Today, however, **only 30% of plastic waste is collected for recycling** and only 6% of plastic placed on the market are made of recycled plastic. In addition, plastic account for 85% of the waste found on beaches and more than 80% of marine waste.

The key challenge is therefore to produce and use plastics in a responsible and sustainable way in order to reduce the production of plastic waste.

Parliament invited 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.

From recycling to circularity: a change of design: Members insisted that all the ***acquis*** on waste and products be fully and swiftly implemented and enforced. As plastics will no longer be accepted in landfills by 2030, all industry stakeholders should 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.

The Commission is urged to fulfil its obligation to revise and reinforce the **essential requirements** and take into account the relative properties of different packaging materials on the basis of lifecycle assessments.

Parliament called for **extended producer responsibility** by: (i) developing product standards, (ii) broadening the eco-design legislative framework to cover all main plastic product groups, (iii) adopting eco-labelling provisions and (iv) applying the product environmental footprint method.

Creating a genuine single market for recycled plastics: stressing that a stable internal market for secondary raw materials is necessary to ensure the transition to a circular economy, Members called on the Commission to remove the obstacles facing this market and create a level playing field.

- ***Standards and quality verification***: Members called on the Commission (i) to introduce quality standards quickly in order to build confidence and incentivise the secondary plastics market (ii) to take into account good practices in independent third-party certification and to encourage the certification of recycled materials.
- ***Promoting the use of recycled materials***: Parliament called on all industry stakeholders to **convert their public commitments to increase the use of recycled plastics into formal pledges** and to deliver concrete actions. Binding rules on the content of recycled materials may be necessary, as well as the introduction of a reduced value added tax (VAT) for products containing recycled materials.
- ***Designing public procurement with a view to circularity***: the Commission is called on to set up a European Union learning network on circular public procurement. The competent authorities of the Member States are urged to optimise controls on **imported materials** and products in order to ensure and enforce compliance with EU chemicals and product legislation.

Single-use plastics: Parliament considered that a combination of voluntary and regulatory measures, as well as a change in consumer awareness, behaviour and participation are needed to solve the complex problem of combating the harmful effects of single-use plastics on the environment. It

therefore support the Commission's proposal for a specific legislative framework to reduce the environmental impact of certain plastic products, in particular single-use plastics.

Parliament welcomed initiatives like **plastic-free supermarket aisles** which provide opportunities for supermarkets to test compostable biomaterials as alternatives to plastic packaging.

Marine litter: the resolution stressed the important role that fishermen could play, in particular by collecting plastic waste from the sea during their fishing activities and returning it to port. It invited the Commission and the Member States to encourage this activity, as well as to support **marine waste recovery programmes**, if possible by involving fishing vessels in improving data collection on marine plastics.

Bio-based content, biodegradability and compostability: Parliament supported the Commission in proposing **clear harmonised rules** on bio-based content and biodegradability. It pointed out that 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. It also called for a complete ban on oxo-degradable plastic in the EU by 2020.

The Commission is called on to:

- **ban microplastics** in cosmetics, personal care products, detergents and cleaning products by 2020 and to prepare a proposal for a ban, taking into account whether or not viable alternatives exist;
- 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.

Members supported the development of a **strategic research and innovation** agenda on material circularity, with a focus on plastics and materials containing plastics, beyond packaging. They called for the Horizon Europe programme to include a 'mission plastic free ocean' in order to use innovation to reduce the amount of plastics entering the marine environment.

Lastly, Parliament called on the EU to play a pro-active role in the development of a **global plastics protocol** and to ensure that the various commitments made both at EU and global levels can be monitored in an integrated and transparent manner.