



On June 12, 2019, the Single-Use Plastics Directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment was published in the European Union's Official Journal. This marks the final step of the legislative procedure. Member States will now have two years to transpose this Directive into their national laws, until July 3, 2021. The Directive is available here in all EU languages: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2019.155.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2019:155:TOC

What does this Directive Entail?

The Directive itself is aimed at reducing the impact of single-use plastics (SUP) items on the environment, which represent about half of all marine litter items found on European beaches (by count). The Directive focuses on the 10 most commonly found SUP and fishing gear, which together account for approximately 70% of all marine litter. For the purposes of this Directive, the Commission defines 'single-use plastic product' as "a product that is made wholly or partly from plastic and that is not conceived, designed or placed on the market to accomplish, within its life span, multiple trips or rotations by being returned to the producer for refill or re-used for the same purpose for which it was conceived." The Directive includes a list of measures proposed to minimise the usage of these items:

1) **PRODUCT BANS** – As per Article 5, certain SUP items like **cotton bud sticks, cutlery (forks, knives, spoons, chopsticks), plates, straws, stirrers, balloon sticks, oxo-degradable plastics and expanded polystyrene (EPS) food containers and cups** will be banned in the European Union **from 2021**.

2) **EPR SCHEMES** – As per Article 8, Member States will have to establish EPR schemes by 2021; producers of SUP products including food containers, packets and wrappers, beverage containers, cups for beverages, tobacco products with filters, wet wipes, balloons, and lightweight plastic carrier bags will be **expected to cover the costs** of collecting waste consisting of those SUP products and its subsequent transport and treatment, **including the costs of litter cleanup** and awareness raising measures.

3) **DESIGN REQUIREMENTS** – Article 6 sets out product design measures for SUP beverage containers to ensure that their caps and lids remain attached (i.e. **tethered**) to the container during its use stage in order to improve recyclability and ensure they do not leak into the environment. In addition, there is a **25% target for recycled content in PET bottles by 2025 and 30% in all plastic bottles by 2030**.

4) **SEPARATE COLLECTION TARGET** – Article 9 stipulates that Member States will be required to **collect 90% of single-use plastic bottles with caps and lids by 2029, with an interim target of 77% by 2025**. Deposit return schemes are suggested as a method to achieve this objective.

5) Other measures include 'measurable quantitative' reduction in consumption of some single-use items (Article 4) and also **labelling requirements** (i.e. to inform consumers about appropriate waste disposal operations) and some **awareness raising measures** (Article 7).

Reinforcing EU's Leadership Role on Environment

The EU is often regarded as a world leader when it comes to environmental policies, and this latest directive is no exception. While headlines around the world continue to reveal a grim picture of discarded plastics in our environment, in the EU, real action is taking place. This new legislation gives hope that the tide is starting to turn on plastic pollution. Member states must act now to translate words into action and ensure that the ambition stays high.

