

EU reaches agreement on single-use plastic ban



A plan to ban single-use plastic products such as disposable plates and straws has been agreed. EU member states and the EU parliament still have to give the provisional agreement the go-ahead.

European lawmakers have reached an agreement on a ban of single-use plastic products, the Austrian presidency said in Brussels on Wednesday. The move is aimed at making the EU a world leader in using sustainable alternatives that avoid marine pollution.

Read more: [Germany unveils 5-point plan to reduce plastic waste](#)

What does the plan involve?

- There will be a plastic ban on products where alternatives are readily available and affordable, including plastic cotton swabs, cutlery, plates, straws, drink stirrers and sticks for balloons.
- Member states will have to implement measure to reduce the use of plastic food containers and drink cups.
- Producers will be made to help cover the costs of waste management and cleanup.
- Member states will have to collect 90 percent of single use plastic drink bottles by 2025.
- Certain products, such as sanitary towels, wet wipes and balloons, will have to have clear labeling which indicates how they should be disposed of.

- Member states will be required to raise the awareness of consumers about the negative impact of littering as well as the re-use and waste management options available.

World leaders

In a statement on Wednesday, the European agreement hailed the agreement as "the world's first comprehensive plastics strategy," saying Europe's businesses and consumers will be "tackling a problem with global implications."

"We have taken a big stride towards reducing the amount of single-use plastic items in our economy, our ocean and ultimately our bodies," Karmenu Vella, the EU's commissioner for environment, maritime affairs and fisheries, said as part of the statement.

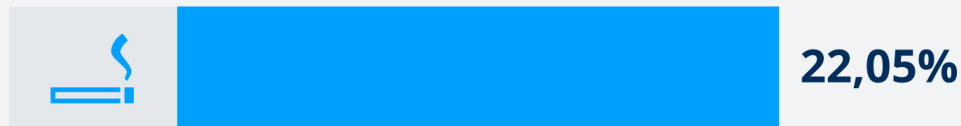
"When we have a situation where one year you can bring your fish home in a plastic bag, and the next year you are bringing that bag home in a fish, we have to work hard and work fast."

Reducing sea waste: The commission [proposed the EU-wide rules](#) in May, arguing at the time that 80 percent of sea waste is plastic. The proposals were meant to "target the top 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas." It also found that just under a third of plastic waste collected and recycled, and most of the remaining waste ends up in seas and oceans.

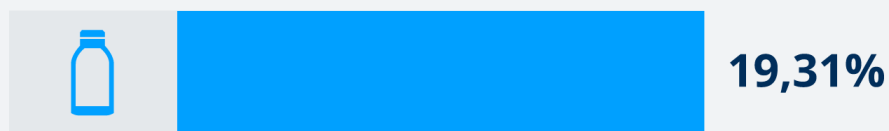
Read more: [Plastic waste and the recycling myth](#)

Marine waste on European beaches

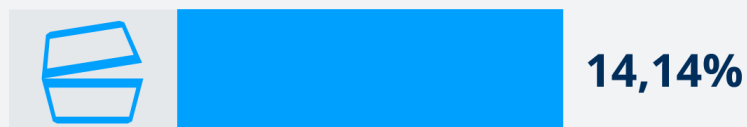
Single-use plastic items



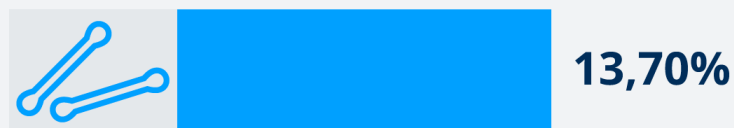
Cigarette butts



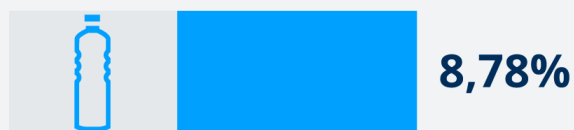
Other bottles incl. caps and lids



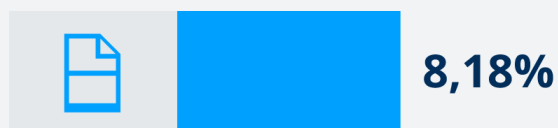
Food containers incl. fast food packaging



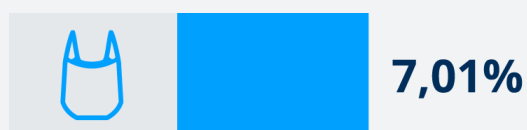
Cotton bud sticks



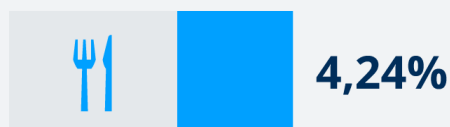
Drinks bottles incl. caps and lids



Wet wipes

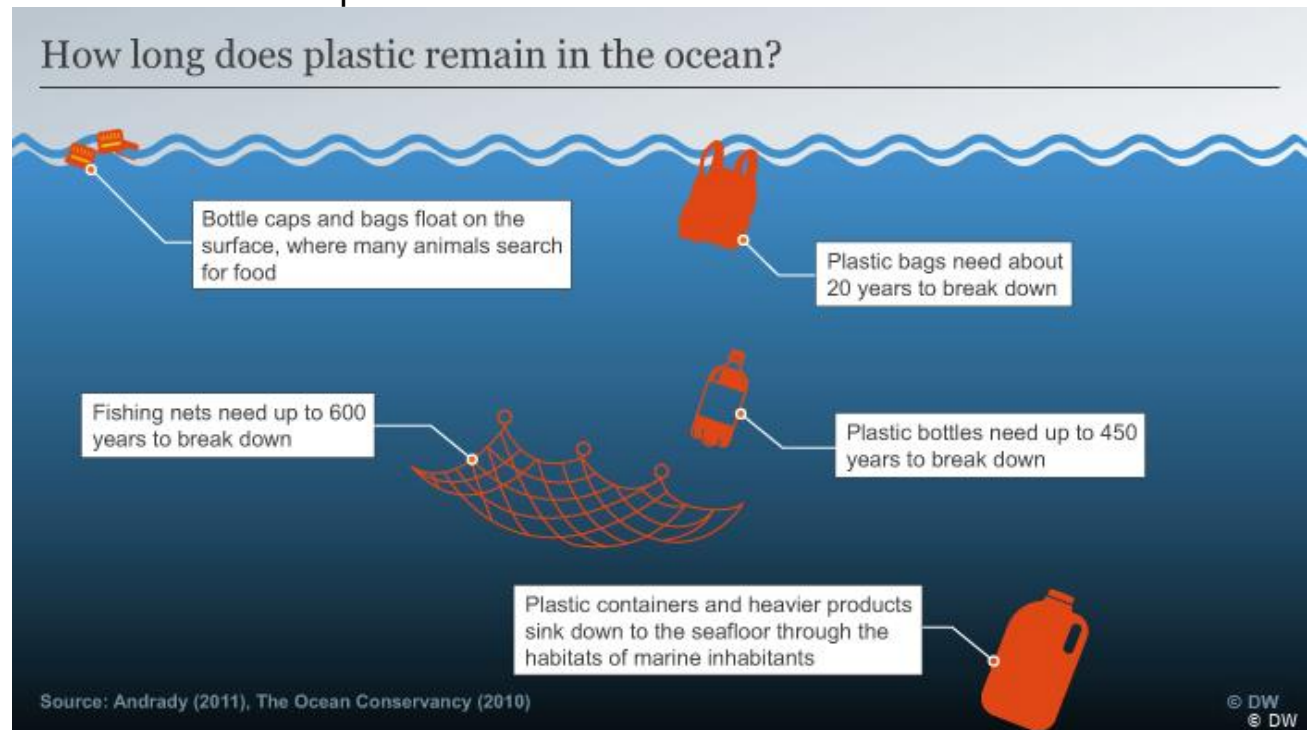


Plastic bags



4,24%

Threat to the environment: Because of their slow decomposition rate, plastics are a particular problem for the world's oceans. Traces amount of plastic can be found in species such as whales, turtles, and birds, as well as seafood that ends up in the human food chain.



What happens next? The proposed measures still need approval from EU members states and EU parliament. The ban is expected to come into effect in two years time.