

Reducing use of plastic bags: the Council reaches a political agreement

The Council reached a political agreement on a draft directive to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic bags.

The new rules aim to limit the negative environmental impact of litter from plastic carrier bags by encouraging waste prevention and a more efficient use of resources. The litter from plastic bags is accumulated in the environment, in particular in water bodies and aquatic eco-systems. It has been increasingly recognised as a significant global environmental challenge.

New measures target plastic bags with a wall thickness below 50 microns, which represent the majority of plastic carrier bags consumed in the EU and are less frequently reused than thicker ones.

The new EU law will require governments to choose either to introduce a charge on single-use lightweight plastic bags by the end of 2018 or to take measures to reduce their use. If they choose the second option, the annual use of these bags will need to be reduced to an average of 90 per person by the end of 2019 and to 40 bags per person by the end of 2025 (compared with an average of 176 bags per person in 2010).

Very lightweight plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness below 15 microns can be excluded from these measures.

In addition, the European Commission and the member states will, at least during the first year after the date of transposition of this directive, actively encourage public information and awareness campaigns concerning the adverse environmental impact of excessive use of lightweight plastic bags.

Member states will have 18 months to incorporate the new rules into national legislation following their entry into force. Two years after the entry into force of the directive, the Commission will present two reports to the European Parliament and the Council. The first one will examine the impact of the use of oxo-degradable plastic bags on the environment. The second one will assess the different possibilities to reduce the use of very lightweight plastic bags. Both reports may be accompanied, if appropriate, by legislative proposals.

The agreement with the European Parliament on the text was reached at an informal trilogue on 17 November. The Permanent Representatives Committee unanimously approved the agreement on 21 November. A formal common position will be adopted at a later stage, after legal linguistic experts have checked the text.

[Political agreement of the Council](#) on reducing the consumption of plastic bags
