



International
Plastic Bag Free Day
2017

**ENOUGH
EXCUSES:**

Time for Europe
to act against
plastic bag
pollution.

ENOUGH EXCUSES:

2

In April 2015, a European directive was adopted to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in Europe. **The 2015/720 European Directive has reflected the commitments of the 28 Member States of the European Union to drastically reduce their annual consumption of light plastic bags to 90 bags per person per year by 31 December 2019 and 40 bags by 31 December 2025.**

On average, a European uses indeed 175 single-use plastic bags per year. Since they've been first used in the 1970s, single-use plastic bags have become a product of our everyday life. Their exponential growth generated numerous adverse effects on the environment, representing in particular a major source of pollution of the marine environment. Plastic bags also have adverse effects at the socio-economic level and potentially on human health, once in the food chain. **Lightweight plastic bags are often only used once, for a few minutes, whereas it takes between one and four centuries for them to degrade in the natural environment.** Particularly harmful to the environment, they are relatively unnecessary items that could easily be replaced by long life alternatives.

The Plastic bags directive called for the responsibility of Member States to transpose the law and put measures into legislation to achieve these modest but vital objectives by the 27th of November 2016.

On this International Plastic Bag Free Day, more than seven months after the directive's transposition deadline, **after 18 months have been granted to Member States to transpose the directive in the best conditions, the results fall short of expectations in many Member States.**



INTERNATIONAL PLASTIC BAG FREE DAY 2017: ENOUGH EXCUSES!

3

After having been widely acclaimed by the citizens on this subject, Surfrider Foundation Europe has for five years carried out a powerful campaign against single-use plastic bags. Through our Ban The Bag campaign, part of Surfrider's rise above plastics programme, we have seen the legitimacy of our actions in favour of a ban on plastic bags in Europe significantly increasing. This report is the result of a rigorous assessment from Surfrider Foundation Europe of the actions undertaken or not by the EU governments at a time when ambitious measures to prevent pollution by plastic bags should already be in place if EU Member States were complying with the obligations set in the Plastic bags directive. More than sending an SOS, this report is intended to be a call for action.

More than sending an SOS,
this report is intended to be
a call for action.

On this highly symbolic date of the 3rd of July, the International Plastic Bag Free Day, launched in 2009 by several international NGOs and interpreted globally as a reference in terms of environmental appraisal on the consumption of single-use plastic bags, Surfrider sadly observes that some Member States have not always played their part. The whole international community is thus mobilized around this major event to call on their local authorities and shopkeepers to stop what is an avoidable pollution. The EU which took pride in adopting a major piece of environmental legislation is now tainted by the inaction of some of its members. While the European Union is aiming at strengthening its profile as a leader against plastic pollution at the regional and international level, its members -the 28 EU Member States- are inhibiting it from delivering on this topic of major importance, repeatedly praised by European citizens.

OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION: IS THE EU LEADING?

5000 billion plastic debris float in the ocean
and are at the origin of "plastic continents"
around the globe

This is particularly important six months ahead of the European Commission (EC)'s release of its strategy on plastics whose ambition is to end plastic leakage in the environment. Here, the challenges are bigger. Surfrider, and the Break free from plastic movement that Surfrider is a member of, are asking the EC to trigger a new vision and systemic change, where our plastic use is reduced, where plastic design is completely reviewed to ensure toxic-free plastics in fully repairable and reusable products and where plastic waste management is improved towards better collection and more recycling.

The world is looking at the EU to show the path towards a green-blue and circular economy

able to reduce its environmental footprint for the best, restore the health of our blue planet, and guarantee human survival.

In this context, EU action on oceans is of tremendous importance and is receiving increasing attention. It is critical to remember the scale and impacts of plastic pollution as a whole: 5000 billion plastic debris float in the ocean and are at the origin of "plastic continents" around the globe, including the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is 3.43 million square kilometres wide. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation is sounding the alarm by announcing that in 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans. Indeed, marine pollution is responsible for the inges-

tion of waste by marine species, the dispersal of invasive species and chemical pollutants that are also extremely harmful for human's health. Finally it's our entire way of life, health and survival which is at stake with a polluted ocean under constant pressures. Yet, there is no longer a need to prove its role as a major "lung" of our blue planet and the importance of the services it provides: from food to medicines, from employment to well-being, from recreation to renewable energy opportunities.

Europe, its citizens, companies, etc. are responsible for this unprecedented situation. Plastic is born in EU laboratories. EU companies are amongst the best plastic producers in the world and have sadly become one of the major plastic polluters in the world. In these difficult times for the European project where the EU faces criti-

cism, it is worth recalling that with the Plastic Bags directive the EU has adopted a major regulation which needs now to be enforced and completed with key legal measures addressing every source and cause of plastic pollution. Besides, we should not forget that EU citizens have continuously praised the EU for its environmental actions, as more than 70% responded to a 2011 consultation, supporting a ban on plastic bags at European level. Thus, in the absence of ambitious environmental policies put in place by European governments, citizen actions are increasingly flourishing at local and regional level as well as within progressive areas of the private sector.

TIME TO DELIVER

The European Union's legitimacy to meet the expectations of Europeans and the international community is at stake in the face of rising citizen awareness. **The International Plastic Bag Free Day is an opportunity to measure the European Union's efficiency in bringing Member States together around ambitious and effective environmental regulations against plastic pollution.** The ban on plastic bags, which is strongly advocated by Surfrider Foundation Europe, along with Italy and France for example, embodies the adoption of a symbolic legislation aiming at changing symptomatic behaviours of our consumer societies, widely represented in Europe.

Thanks to our detailed monitoring of the Member States' legislations (see our map included in the report), we note that the European Directive on the reduction of plastic bags has not been transposed throughout the entire European Union and that some actions undertaken by some States remain extremely weak in efficiency. Therefore, ahead of the European Plastic Strategy proudly announced by the European Commission as proposing a turning

point as from December 2017 on tackling plastic pollution, we have doubts about the ability of the European Union to keep its word. Indeed, what guarantees do we have for this European Plastic Strategy when we observe that the European Commission has taken about 6 months to respond to Member States on their failure to transpose the directive against plastic bags? And yet, the European Commission has recently urged some Member States to notify its services of any adopted national measures to reduce plastic bags usage without commenting on the content of these measures.

The credibility of the European Union in the international arena is also at stake. At the meeting on Supporting the Implementation of SDG 14, at the European Parliament, held prior to the United Nations conference focusing on the protection of oceans, Ulf Bjornholm, head of the UN Environment Office, recalled that 2017 is indeed "the year of the oceans". Hence, an international consensus on these contemporary issues is emerging more and more precisely, and the European Union, as a host of the 2017 "Our Ocean" conference, must set the example.

THE WORLD IS LOOKING AT US!

In December 2017, this momentum on ocean conservation continues with the holding of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the organization of a special session on marine litter in which the EU can still be illustrated by its ability to deliver and make EU Member States deliver by taking ambitious measures against plastic bags.

The European Union is emerging as a world leader in environmental protection and has shown its strong influencing potential in the framework of the Paris Agreement at the COP21. Nevertheless, it must honour its commitments in practice and set the example with an ambitious application of the directive on the reduction of plastic bags. At a time when the United States is withdrawing from its international commitments to halt climate change, it is important that the European Union continues

to propagate good practices, such as the introduction of a ban on plastic bags, already independently applied in several American States and around the globe.

This ability is today questionable. Indeed, the European directive does not explicitly ask the Member States to introduce a ban, but simply a reduction of light-weight plastic bags mainly through the establishment of taxes or reduction targets. Surfrider Foundation Europe asks the European Commission to take its responsibilities as the guardian of the European Treaties by encouraging Member states to act more ambitiously. Indeed, the European institutions have the capacity to promote a harmonized action in the long term and must make every effort to put these levers of action at the service of a ban on plastic bags as a first symbolic step for the reduction of marine litter.

IS TRANSPOSITION “IN THE BAG”? NOT SURE...

On the occasion of the International Plastic Bag Free Day, Surfrider Foundation has chosen to draw up a report compiling information on the current state of legislations on plastic bags in the Member States of the European Union.

In order to do so, we have studied the evolution of legislations from November 2016 and have concluded our study for this report in May 2017. We based our research on press articles, legal literature and benefited from valuable contributions from both our Surfrider volunteers networks, and networks from other NGOs offering us a concrete overview of the legislation in place in each European country.

On the basis of this information, we have compiled the map below, following 5 categories, objectively defined according to the prevalent cases in Europe. We used associated objective symbols and classified these different undertaken actions with a colour code according to the more or less positive impact that this gov-

ernment response will have on the marine environment.

We advocate the banning of plastic bags as the best option to protect aquatic environments from pollution by plastic bags and as the most logical one since the already existing alternatives can make the plastic bag economy obsolete. This option is indisputably the most effective as it prevents any arbitrary decision by various stakeholders to continue to favour devastating actions for the planet. Starting with the green colour indicating the best option to fight the scourge of plastic bags (ban), our colour code then degrades from yellow (tax) to orange (voluntary agreement) and red (no legal response).

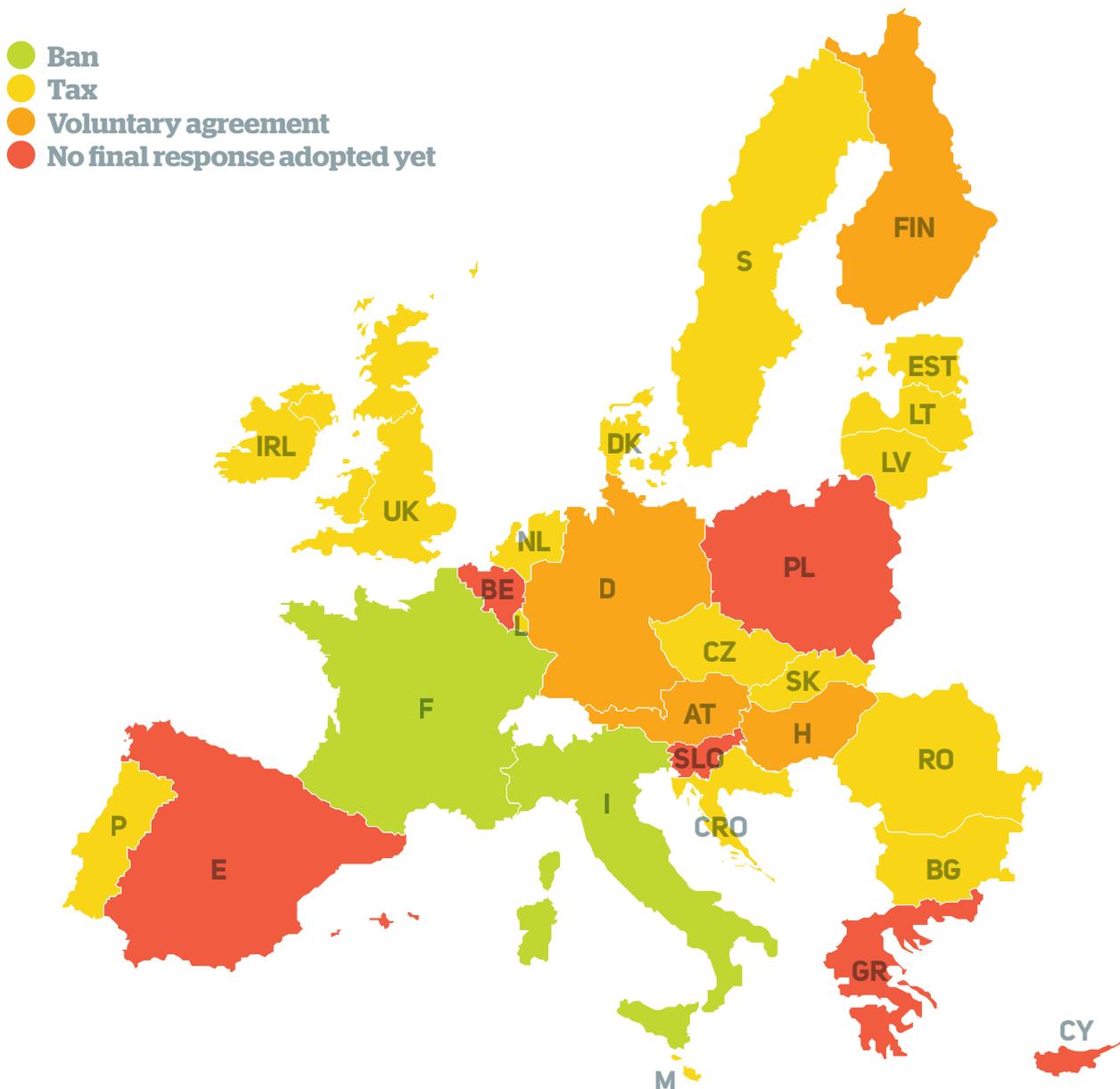
In a nutshell, many Member States have failed to transpose the European directive, showing a lack of credibility in the commitments they have made. Others have simply taxed plastic

bags, set agreements with the private sector, and even simply relayed the Commission's message about the risk posed by plastic pollution. The sovereignty of the Member States is supposed to allow them to draw inspiration from EU law and policies to formulate more

in-depth and constructed responses to major problems. Unfortunately, European States have shown that they misuse their sovereignty, demonstrating no audacity or effectiveness in transposing this mandatory directive, to the detriment of the environment.

6

This report is translated below in the form of a map containing up-to-date information on legislations against light-weight plastic bags (between 15 and 50 microns), according to the classification explained below.



THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION LEFT **HOLDING THE BAG**

7

We rightly recall that as part of its commitment to make a profound democratic change, the Juncker Commission has to respond to the very clear will of European citizens to see a stronger response formulated to the problem of plastic bag pollution, by ensuring that Member States are adopting measures and concretely encouraging them to choose the way of the ban.

We also highlight the European Commission's self-contradictions, as it published on the 28th of April 2017 a policy document encouraging a better access to environmental justice for citizens who wish to "challenge before a national court the decisions, acts and omissions of public authorities in relation to the Union's environmental law", whilst at the same time showing a real lack of reactivity to the Member States' failure to transpose the 2015/720 Directive.

The Environmental Implementation Review, a tool launched for the first time in 2017 which consists in a monitoring of the implementation of European environmental legislations and policies within the Member States, has demonstrated a major lack of authority from the European Commission. Whilst described as a tool "to address gaps in implementation and to try to find solutions before the problems become urgent", the EIR did not keep its promises, giving rise to a very moderate report, where very often the very poor transposition of the Plastic bags Directive was largely ignored. We call on the EC, as the guardian of EU treaties, to rightfully ensure on time that Member States follow and respect EU law on plastic bags' reduction.

MEMBER STATES: ALL IN THE SAME BASKET?

Seven months after the set deadline for the transposition of the referred European Directive, we conclude from our research on existing legislations that **Cyprus, Greece and Poland have not taken any concrete legal measure to reduce the use of light-weight plastic bags on their territory**, despite significant citizen movements on the Greek islands and in some Cypriot cities. Furthermore, Poland is one of the largest consumers of plastic bags with an average of 460 plastic bags per capita per year.

Surfrider Foundation Europe severely denounces these States for their lack of environmental solidarity at European level, their ecological unconsciousness and their ignorance of local citizen movements.

A second category of Member States, concerns European governments which have concluded voluntary agreements to reduce the use of plastic bags on their territory. Indeed, **States like Germany, Hungary or Austria have opted for a voluntary agreement**. The State thus encourages retailers to take measures to reduce their consumption of plastic bags, in particular by taxing them, without however obliging them

to do so. Surfrider Foundation Europe does not consider this measure as being effective. Voluntary agreements have proven not to put sufficient pressures for all business players to act.

Elsewhere, **States such as Denmark, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Portugal impose a compulsory tax to be set up by retailers on plastic bags**. While obviously more dissuasive for the consumer, this measure keeps plastic bags on the market, creating a business at the expense of the environment that continues to suffer from the presence of plastic bags.

Our research has nevertheless led us to pay tribute to three cases: **France and Italy represent a better hope for a cleaner Europe. They all chose to ban light-weight plastic bags from their supermarkets**, even extending this ban to plastic bags under 15 microns commonly used for fruit and vegetables, not covered by the European directive. After a six years' ban, the consumption of plastic bags in Italy fell by 55%, while previously Italians ranked among the biggest consumers of plastic bags in Europe.

REMAINING CONCERNS

8

Although the initiative of the European Commission to act against plastic bags' pollution through the 2015/720 Directive is to be welcomed, setting a precedent, it should be stressed that not only its transposition but also part of its content remains unsatisfactory.

Very light weight plastic bags

Indeed, it is contradictory that only the so-called "light-weight" plastic bags, and not the "very light-weight" ones, that is to say those plastic bags less than 15 microns, are targeted by the action of the European Union. From 15 to 50 microns, plastic bags are even less resistant to multiple uses and transportation and are generally the object of an ephemeral existence due to their single use, ending up in the environment in the worst cases for a decomposition journey of more than 400 years. The disastrous impacts of these lighter bags on the environment being the same as those covered by the 2015/270 Directive, it makes no sense not to include them. We therefore call on Member States to act rationally and extend their measures to these bags.

Bioplastic bags

Surfrider Foundation Europe calls for the utmost vigilance of the European institutions and Member States about "bioplastics". The term "bioplastics" encompasses two realities, bags made up of plastics derived partly or fully from biomass and bags which are biodegradable. In response to the need to reduce plastic bags, more and more "biodegradable" and "bio-sourced" bags are being distributed by retailers, which insist on their green credentials to better sell the lie to consumers. These supposed solutions should not replace the primary objective of prohibiting any disposable plastic bags. And for good reason, these bags are single-use and end up being waste, in the same way as the so called conventional plastic bags. Most of this waste requires a very specific industrial treatment, conditioned to an upstream efficient sorting by consumers (biodegradable / industrial compost).

Oxodegradable bags

Oxodegradable bags are "conventional" plastic bags which include additives designed to promote the oxidation of the material and make the bag break down in small particles invisible to the naked eye. Surfrider strongly regrets that the services of the European Commission have remained silent to the repeated meeting requests it has sent on three occasions (on 13/03/17, 05/04/17 and 02/05/17) to share its views and concerns on the topic. As set out in the Directive, the Commission had by 27 May 2017 "to present a report examining the impact of the use of oxodegradable plastic carrier bags and present a legislative proposal if appropriate". In this framework, a wide range of industry players were consulted (Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Association, the Oxo-biodegradable Plastics Federation, Symphony Environmental Technologies Plc, Wells Plastics Ltd, the British Plastics Federation, EPI Environmental Products Inc, Roediger Agencies cc, Centre de Recherche Industrielle du Québec, European Plastics Converters, Organic Waste Systems nv, the Bio-based and Biodegradable Industries Association, Novamont S.p.A., L'Association française de normalisation, Suez S.A., the British Polythene Industries, Chase plastics Ltd and the Association of European Plastics Converters), but no NGO's were similarly consulted. Our NGO has been calling on the EC to ban those bags which have proved to be, as detrimental - if not more detrimental than other bags because of their green credentials, making them even harder to remove from the marine environment.

For both biodegradable and oxodegradable plastic bags, their labelling is likely to send out a misleading message to consumers who tend to discard them more willingly, believing that they biodegrade readily, which could lead to an increase in littering behaviour and levels. Those bags, whilst being perceived as environmentally friendly, may therefore undermine efforts to reduce overall shopping bag consumption and associated resource use.

**We therefore urge the
Commission and the Member
States to promote the only
sustainable alternatives to
singleuse plastic bags:
reusable bags. Canvas
bags, wicker baskets, nets,
backpacks, Tupperware,
wooden crates ...**

**All these solutions are
within everyone's reach.
Avoiding using plastic bags is
something as simple as taking
one reusable bag with us
whenever we go out.**



RECOMMENDATIONS

#BANTHEBAG

10

On this International Plastic Bag Free Day, Surfrider Foundation Europe calls on the European Commission to reposition itself as a world leader in environmental protection by requiring Member States to take more ambitious measures against plastic bag pollution, directing their actions towards full compliance with the Plastic bags directive, ideally opting for the prohibition of these items.

In this year of 2017 that is dedicated to the protection of the oceans and only a few months ahead of the celebration of the Our Ocean conference in the European Union, **we call on the Member States to respect the commitments they have made by taking part in the European project and acting in accordance with the Plastic bags directive in 2015 and to ensure the transposition and effective implementation of the European directive,** and thus implementing an ambitious environmental policy line. We therefore call on the Member States to assume their responsibility in preventing disposable plastic bags from ending in our oceans by phasing them out on their territory with a view to a sustainable economic, societal and ecological European transition.

KEYS - Colour code and symbols

-  Ban
-  Tax
-  Voluntary agreement
-  No final response adopted yet



International Plastic Bag Free Day 2017

11

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
AUSTRIA		<p>VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT</p> <p>Voluntary agreement since January 2017</p> <p>The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW), in collaboration with well-known retailers, Greenpeace and Global 2000 have agreed on a voluntary agreement to reduce plastic BAGS.</p> <p>According to the objective of BM Rupprechter's policy, the agreement provides for a more ambitious target than the European Directive, namely a maximum of 25 plastic bags per person per year and a reduction of disposable bags made of other materials such as paper.</p> <p>A report on the actions of the companies signing the agreement will be published each year to assess the evolution of the consumption of plastic bags.</p>
BELGIUM		<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>Federal level The federal government drafted proposals for a future law on plastic bags but nothing has been officially adopted yet and the discussions are still ongoing.</p> <p>Proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bags with a thickness greater than 50µ (> 50µ) would be charged (a minimum price will be fixed). - Bags of a thickness between 15 and 50µ would be banned, unless they are compostable at home, still costing a minimum price. - Bags of less than 15µ (<15µ) would be free but should be compostable at home. <p>Wallonia: December 2016: Prohibition on the use of plastic bags for a single use. March 2017: Prohibition on the use of all the other plastic sacs for a single use. An exemption will be the thin vegetable and fruit sacs provided that they are used for</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
BELGIUM	⊗	<p>foods that can be moist. The politics want to allow these bags until the end of 2018, only if they are compostable at home and have at least 40% biomaterial.</p> <p>Brussels Region: September 2017: Prohibition on the use of plastic bags for a single use. September 2018: Prohibition on all the other plastic bags for a single use. When the plastic bags are made of biodegradable plastic or can be composted are exempt from the prohibition.</p> <p>Flanders: January 2018: Planning on prohibiting single use plastic bags but this law has not been voted yet</p>
BULGARIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Bulgaria was one of the first EU member states to introduce the tax on plastic bags.</p> <p>Therefore, from October 2012, Bulgaria imposed an ecotax on any bags made of polyethylene with a thickness of up to 25 microns and size smaller than 390/490mm, which are defined as single-use bags under Bulgarian legislation.</p> <p>The tax on polyethylene bags increased to 35 stotinki in 2012, 45 stotinki in 2013, and 55 stotinki in 2014. As of April 2016, The Minister of Environment and Waters Ivelina Vassileva has said there will not be any further increase in the tax.</p>
CROATIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>As of 2014, plastic bags are being charged by the retailers, despite the protests from the Consumer Protection Association.</p> <p>The new Regulation on Packaging and Packaging Waste, issued on August 4, 2015 by the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection (name changed to Ministry of Environment and Energy in 2016) was delivered to regulate procedures and goals in packaging waste management, including the plastic bags, with the aim to reduce the packaging waste.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
CYPRUS	⊗	<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>No concrete legal actions taken by the Cypriot government.</p> <p>No final draft yet, No voting, No implementation: There was a “public consultation” (presentation of a proposal on plastic bags regulation and many comments were heard) for this legislation in 10/11/2016. The law was supposed to be passed by the Parliament by the end of 2016 but this date was postponed to February 2017.</p> <p>In May 2017, still no legal actions have been undertaken to reduce the consumption of plastic bags in Cyprus.</p> <p>The Department of Environment proposed (in the initial text of 10/11/2016) a 0,02 euros per bag, mandatory for all retailers. The big retailers actually are very supportive and also ask for 0,04-0,06 euros per bag as they would get money from selling plastic bags.</p> <p>The Cypriot government is also thinking about increasing the bags’ thickness.</p>
CZECH REPUBLIC	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on plastic bags (between 15 and 50 microns) since beginning of 2017 - The price is determined by retailers and not by the law.</p>
DENMARK	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Supermarkets charge 2-3,5DKK for a plastic bag.</p>
ESTONIA	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on disposable plastics bags from July 2017. Raising the price for heavier plastic shopping bags by 2019.</p> <p>Currently, local retailers charge an average of €0.15 per plastic bag, but the Environment Ministry is aiming to increase this to between €0.30 and €1, according to various proposals.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
FRANCE		<p>BAN</p> <p>Prohibition of single-use plastic bags from 1 July 2016.</p> <p>Prohibition of plastic bags other than cash bags, effective from 1st January 2017 (providing for derogation for plastic bags that are totally or partially bio-based and compostable in domestic composting, with consumer information on the composition of the bags).</p>
FINLAND		<p>VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT</p> <p>The purpose of the agreement is to agree on voluntary measures of the retail sector to ensure that the minimum objectives concerning the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in the Packaging Waste Directive are reached in Finland.</p> <p>This agreement enters into force once it has been signed and remains in force until 31 December 2025.</p> <p>If the evaluation shows that the objectives to 2025 are not likely to be met, the Ministry will prepare proposals for changes concerning the period 2021-2025. In this context it is also agreed how the changes are to be implemented together with the parties to the agreement.</p>
GERMANY		<p>VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT</p> <p>The agreement from April 2016 is in force as of 01. July 2016. Since then, in retail companies, people have to pay a fee of between €0.5 and €0.50 per bag, depending on the size of the bag.</p> <p>In April 2016 there were 260 retail companies that voluntarily joined. By July 2016 there were 350 according to the 'Handelsblatt'.</p> <p>Recycling tax compulsory for retailers providing plastic bags.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
GREECE	⊗	<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>According to recent news announced on 6th June during an information event, the plan for Greece is to implement a 0.08€ tax on plastic bags starting from January, 1st 2018 for the 1st semester of 2018. Afterwards, this tax will be re-examined and possibly re-adjusted. From what is heard, the legislation will be out soon and will clarify the aforementioned points, but there is no concrete legislation so far.</p> <p>The Greek islands Alonisos and Sifnos have already started to independently impose a tax on plastic on bags.</p>
HUNGARY	⊕	<p>VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT</p> <p>Actions on reducing Plastic Bags in the country were supposed to be taken from August 2016 as the government's 2016 second term legislative programs implied the intention of the modification of the 442/2012. (XII. 29.) order about packaging and the packaging waste from waste management.</p> <p>No more information about it.</p> <p>*A voluntary agreement between the Hungarian government and retailers is already in place.</p>
IRELAND	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on plastic bags since 2002 of €0.22.</p>
ITALY	⊚	<p>BAN</p> <p>Ban on Plastic Bags since 2011 and reduction of plastic bags consumption of more than 55% since 2011.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
LATVIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on natural resources is levied on each unit weight of packaging since 2011.</p> <p>Announcement in July 2016: « To reduce consumption of plastic bags, Latvian Environmental Protection and Regional Development Ministry plans to prohibit free plastic bags in shopping centres and other locations. »</p>
LITHUANIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on disposable plastic bags.</p> <p>June 2016: the Parliament adopted certain amendments to the Law on the Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste, drafted by the Ministry of Environment, effectively prohibiting, as of 31 December 2018, free lightweight plastic bags (15 to 50 micron).</p>
LUXEMBOURG	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Valorux which overall goal is to find a solution to the necessary obligation of recycling and valorising packaging waste launched a project to reduce the use of free plastic carrier bags. In cooperation with the Environment ministry and big retailers they introduced a levy of €0.03 on single-use plastic bags.</p>
MALTA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Malta has an eco-tax of €0.15 in place since 2009 * Yet many retailers still do not charge for plastic bags.</p>
THE NETHERLANDS	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Ban on free plastic bags since January 2016.</p> <p>The new Dutch law states that businesses have the freedom to decide how much they will charge customers for a plastic bag. The official guideline mandated by the state is €0.25 per bag.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
POLAND	⊗	<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>In September 2016, Poland’s Ministry of the Environment drafted a bill introducing compulsory recycling fees for plastic bags at local retail outlets. The first recycling fees are supposed to be collected in 2019.</p> <p>No news on this since Nov. 2016.</p>
PORTUGAL	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>A tax of €0.10 on plastic bags is in place since February 2015</p>
ROMANIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>There is an eco-tax of 0,2 RON (€0.04) imposed on producers and importers of non-biodegradable bags - the idea is that producers and retailers can then make this tax be paid by consumers to encourage them to use less plastic bags.</p>
SLOVAKIA	☑	<p>TAX</p> <p>Tax on disposable plastic bags since March 2017 and obligation for retailers to keep records of sold bags until 2019. The prices range between 3 and 9 cents per bag.</p>
SLOVENIA	⊗	<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>1st April 2017: The Ministry of the Environment has published a legislative blueprint aimed at reducing the consumption of lightweight plastic bags that involves a ban on free bags.</p> <p>No news on the legal implementation of this tax or not.</p>

Member state	Actions undertaken	Description
SPAIN	⊗	<p>NO FINAL RESPONSE ADOPTED YET</p> <p>The Spanish government is planning on publishing a royal decree in Summer 2017 that would impose a tax on disposable plastic bags from January 2018, between €0.05 and €0.30. No final actions have been taken yet regarding the adoption of this decree.</p> <p>Catalonia: Tax on free disposable plastic bags, including biodegradable and oxodegradable ones, since April 2017.</p>
SWEDEN	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Supermarkets charge around 2SEK for a plastic bag. In July 2016, the Naturvårdsverket suggested to increase the tax and charge at least 5SEK for a plastic bag.</p>
UNITED KINGDOM	⊙	<p>TAX</p> <p>Wales : 5p charge since 2011 Northern Ireland : 10p charge since April 2013 Scotland : 5p charge since October 2014 England : 5p charge since October 2015</p>

SOURCES

All

- ▶ National transposition measures communicated by the Member States
- ▶ Study to provide information supplementing the study on the impact of the use of "oxo-degradable" plastic on the environment, DG Environment, 02/05/2017
- ▶ The impact of the use of "oxo-degradable" plastic on the environment, DG Environment, 20/09/2016
- ▶ Study to assist the Commission to carry out a life cycle impact assessment of different possibilities to reduce the consumption of very lightweight plastic carrier bags, DG Environment, 27/07/2016

Austria

- ▶ Der Anfang vom Ende der Plastiktüten in Österreich, VictorGroup
- ▶ Pfiatdisackerl - der Weg zu weniger kurzlebigen Sackerl, BLMFUW Bundesministeriums für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft, 17/01/2017
- ▶ Plastic bags on the way out in Austria's supermarkets, The Local, 16/01/2017

Belgium

- ▶ Loi sacs plastiques en Belgique
- ▶ Les sacs plastique à usage unique interdits à Bruxelles à partir du 1^{er} septembre 2017, RTL.be, 07/06/2017
- ▶ Plastic verbod in België, Worldpack, 25/07/2016
- ▶ Sacs plastiques payants : frondes régionales contre le prix minimum de Marghem", RTBF, 22/06/2016
- ▶ Le parlement wallon vote l'interdiction des sacs plastiques à usage unique, LAVENIR, 22/06/2016
- ▶ Sacs plastique : l'UCM et Aplsia déplorent la "cacophonie" entre entités, RTL, 21/06/2016
- ▶ Bientôt la fin des sacs plastique gratuits dans tous les magasins, Moneytalk, 20/06/2016
- ▶ La fin des sacs plastique à usage unique en Wallonie, RTL, 21/04/2016

Bulgaria

- ▶ Bulgaria's Environment Ministry Reports Substantial Reduction in Plastic Bag Use, Novinite, 01/05/2015
- ▶ Bulgaria to increase plastic bag tax by 233%, Plastics News Europe, 28/06/2012

Croatia

- ▶ MINISTARSTVO ZAŠTITE OKOLIŠA I PRIRODE, Narodne Novine, 12/08/2015
- ▶ U tišini opet postajemo hodajuće reklame, Vijesti.HRT, 02/07/2014
- ▶ Ban on Plastic Bags in Republic of Croatia, Prijatelj-

ji-zivotinja, 12/05/2013

- ▶ Ministrica Holy odgađa uvođenje "poreza" na plastične vrećice, Novilist.hr, 28/05/2012

Cyprus

- ▶ Aglandjia declares war on plastic bags, Cyprus Mail, 24/11/2016
- ▶ Cyprus ready to cut down on plastic bag use, In Cyprus, 29/10/2016
- ▶ Τέρμα οι δωρεάν σακούλες από την 1/1 του 2018, Politis, 28/10/2016

Czech Republic

- ▶ Senate passes payment for plastic bags in shops, Prague Monitor, 20/04/2017
- ▶ Český Lidl úplně končí s igelitkami. Už za 14 dnů, Marketing and Media, 16/02/2017
- ▶ Czech Republic Says Goodbye to Free Plastic Bags, Expats.cz, 03/02/2017
- ▶ Czech compostable bio bags to be placed on market soon Prague Monitor, 08/08/2016
- ▶ En 2018, les sacs en plastique gratuits, c'est fini, Radio Praha, 06/06/2016

Denmark

- ▶ Fact sheet: Tax on plastic bags, The Danish Ecological Council

Estonia

- ▶ Estonia to reduce availability of plastic bags in shops, Baltic News Network, 22/03/2017
- ▶ The Riigikogu approved an Act limiting the use of plastic bags, Riigikogu, 21/03/2017
- ▶ Estonia to ban free plastic bags in stores next year, News Postimees, 25/08/2016
- ▶ At the Supermarket in Latvia, Life In Riga, 08/10/2013

France

- ▶ Interdiction des sacs plastique à usage unique en caisse à partir de juillet 2016, Service-public, 04/07/2016
- ▶ Les sacs plastiques distribués en caisse interdits à partir du 1^{er} juillet 2016, economie.gouv, 30/06/2016
- ▶ France bans plastic bags, what about the rest of the EU?, Euronews, 30/06/2016

Finland

- ▶ Framework agreement to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags (Plastic Carrier Bag Agreement)
- ▶ EU to halve plastic bag use by 2019, Euractiv, 29/04/2015

Germany

- ▶ So schreitet die Verbannung der Tüte voran, Thueringen24, 28/02/2017
- ▶ LINDA Apotheken führen Marktinnovation an Papiertragetaschen ein, Apotheke Adhoc, 10/10/2016
- ▶ Rewe hat die Plastiktüte jetzt ganz ausgemustert, HNA, 22/09/2016
- ▶ Gratis-Plastiktüten sind kaum noch zu haben, Handelsblatt, 23/07/2016
- ▶ REWE verkündet Verzicht auf Plastiktüten, NABU, 01/06/2016
- ▶ German government signs deal to reduce plastic bag use, DW, 26/04/2016

Greece

- ▶ Charge for plastic bags to be introduced next month, Ekathimerini, 30/10/2016
- ▶ Τα 4 ελληνικά νησιά που λένε «όχι» στις πλαστικές σακούλες, Dikaiologitika, 27/10/2016
- ▶ Δράσεις για τη μείωση της πλαστικής σακούλας στην Τήνο, Koinignomi, 24/06/2016
- ▶ Σαντορίνη: Ξεκινάει το πιλοτικό πρόγραμμα μείωσης χρήσης πλαστικής σακούλας, Atlantea News, 09/05/2016
- ▶ Τα 4 ελληνικά νησιά που λένε «όχι» στις πλαστικές σακούλες, Dimokratiki, 03/04/2016
- ▶ Η Σίφνος καταργεί την πλαστική σακούλα, Sifnosislandcoop, 26/03/2016

Hungary

- ▶ Korlátozzák műanyag táskák és zacskók használatát itthon is!, Papirtaska
- ▶ Indul a háború a műanyag zacskók ellen Magyarországon is!, Eco Lounge, 27/07/2017
- ▶ T/12367.Számú törvényjavaslat a környezetvédelmi témékdíjról szóló 2011. évi LXXXV. törvény módosításáról, MAGYARORSZÁG KORMÁNYA, 10/2016
- ▶ Magyarország is hadat üzen a zacskóknak, Napi.hu, 26/07/2016
- ▶ A nejlonzacskó jövője az EU-ban, Humusz, 03/03/2016
- ▶ EU legislation on plastic bag pricing must be accompanied by retailer action, The Guardian, 29/04/2014
- ▶ Reducing the use of lightweight plastic Carrier bags, European Parliamentary Research Service, 10/04/2014
- ▶ Reduction Strategies—What Works?

Italy

- ▶ Le norme nazionali sulla cimmmercializzazione dei sacchetti di plastica non-biodegradabile, Camera, 01/01/2016
- ▶ Italian ban on plastic bags in New Year, BBC, 31/12/2010

Ireland

- ▶ By 'bagging it,' Ireland rids itself of a plastic nuisance, NY Times, 31/01/2008

Latvia

- ▶ Aizliegš plastmasas maisiņus, NRA, 21/07/2017
- ▶ Latvijā grib mainīt pircēju paradumus: veikalos aizliegš par brīvu dalīt plastmasas maisiņus, SKATIES, 15/09/2016
- ▶ Plastmasas maisiņus Latvijā tomēr lieto arvien vairāk, NRA, 15/09/2016
- ▶ Free plastic bags to be prohibited in the EU, Baltic News Network, 22/07/2016
- ▶ Country Factsheet Latvia (LV), European Commission, Support to Member States in improving waste management based on assessment of Member States' performance, 2011

Lithuania

- ▶ Lietuvoje žmonės jau rečiau ėmė naudotis plastikiniaiis pirkinių maišeliais, Udienu, 07/10/2016
- ▶ Paprašius susimokėti, 90% britų atsisakė plastikinių maišelių, Verslo Zinios, 02/08/2016
- ▶ Seimas ir Europos Sąjunga, LRS, 16/06/2016
- ▶ Retailers will no longer be allowed to hand out plastic carrier bags free of charge, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, 16/06/2016
- ▶ Seimas linkęs uždrausti nemokamus plastiko maišelius, Delfi Verslas, 31/05/2016

Luxembourg

- ▶ La fin des sacs en plastique pas pour tout de suite, Paperjam, 26/10/2016
- ▶ La fin des sacs plastique à usage unique ?, L'essentiel, 01/06/2016
- ▶ PRO EUROPE's position on plastic carrier bags, Pro Europe, 29/10/2011

Malta

- ▶ European Union has approved a directive that would reduce the consumption of plastic bags, The Independent, 28/04/2015

The Netherlands

- ▶ Verbod op gratis plastic tassen, Rijksoverheid
- ▶ Dutch ban on free plastic bags sees 71 pct drop in use, NL Times, 18/04/2017
- ▶ The (Dutch) Ban on Plastic Bags: Make Your Choice!, Antaris Consulting, 27/01/2016
- ▶ No more free plastic bags in 2016, I am expat, 02/01/2016

Poland

- ▶ Poland missed deadline for plastic bag phase-out plan, Radio Poland, 29/11/2016
- ▶ Polish government eyes plastic bag fee, Plastics News Europe, 28/09/2016
- ▶ Plastikowe torebki w sklepie będą obowiązkowo płatne do 1 zł. Od 2019 roku, Polsatnews, 22/09/2016

Portugal

- ▶ Agencia Portuguesa do ambiente
- ▶ The Portuguese plastic carrier bag tax: The effects on consumers' behaviour, *Microplastic*, 23/03/2017
- ▶ Só 9% do grande comércio ainda usa sacos de plástico com taxa, *Publico*, 06/09/2016
- ▶ Quer saco? Paga 10 cêntimos, *SAPO*, 12/02/2015

Romania

- ▶ Eco-tax on plastic bags in Romania, *Pre-waste*
- ▶ Bill: Biomaterial content will be marked on plastic bags in Romania, *Romania Insider*, 18/04/2017

Slovakia

- ▶ Parliament passed ban on giving out plastic bags for free, *Slovak Spectator*, 23/03/2017
- ▶ Cabinet approves ban on free plastic bags, *Spectator*, 14/12/2016
- ▶ Slovakia seeks to curb usage of plastic bags, *Spectator*, 11/08/2016

Slovenia

- ▶ Uredba o okoljski dajatvi za onesnaževanje okolja zaradi nastajanja odpadne embalaže, *PISRS*
- ▶ Days of lightweight plastic bags numbered, *STA*, 01/04/2017
- ▶ Razmišljajte trajnostno, *Najdi*, 22/10/2016
- ▶ Povprečna plastična vrečka je v Sloveniji v uporabi zgolj pol ure, *RTVSLO*, 03/07/2015
- ▶ O PROJEKTU VREČKA NA VREČKO, 2014/2015

Spain

- ▶ The Waste Agency of Catalonia | End of plastic bags for free in all shops, *ACRPLUS*, 30/03/2017
- ▶ Competencia pide un impuesto para las bolsas de plástico en lugar de cobrarlas, *El País*, 17/02/2017
- ▶ Todos los comercios cobrarán entre 5 y 30 céntimos por cada bolsa de plástico, *El País*, 16/02/2017
- ▶ Las bolsas de plástico gratuitas tienen los días contados, *RTVE*, 09/02/2017
- ▶ Proyecto de real decreto sobre reducción del consumo de bolsas de plástico, *Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca, Alimentación y Medio ambiente*, 02/12/2016
- ▶ El Congreso acuerda la prohibición de las bolsas de un solo uso en 2017, *RTVE*, 23/11/2016

Sweden

- ▶ Sweden considers higher fees for plastic bags, *Eyes on Arctic*, 06/07/2016

United Kingdom

- ▶ Number of plastic bags found on UK beaches falls by nearly half, *The Guardian*, 22/11/2016

- ▶ 199m fewer plastic bags in circulation since introduction of 5p charge in NI, *The Belfast Telegraph*, 26/08/2016
- ▶ England's plastic bag usage drops 85% since 5p charge introduced, *The Guardian*, 30/07/2016
- ▶ Plastic bag charge in Scotland sees usage cut by 80%, *BBC*, 20/10/2015
- ▶ Plastic bag use down 70% in Wales since charges began, *The Guardian*, 04/09/2015
- ▶ Tax on plastic bags introduced in April 2013, *BBC*, 30/01/2012

