Press release | 21.11.2014

Plastic bags

Historic deal on new rules a breakthrough for tackling plastic waste

A deal on new EU rules to reduce plastic bag use, which was reached between the European Parliament and Council this week, was today confirmed by representative of EU governments. The new rules oblige EU governments to adopt measures to drastically reduce the use of single-use plastic carrier bags. Commenting on the outcome, Green MEP **Margrete Auken**, the European Parliament's rapporteur (lead negotiator) for the legislation, stated:

"This deal is a historic breakthrough in tackling the pervasive problem of plastic waste in our environment and waste reduction in general. This marks the first time we have binding measures at EU level to reduce waste. Despite brinksmanship from numerous governments and the Commission's recalcitrant stand throughout the negotiations, we have agreed binding EU rules on reducing plastic bag use. EU member states will have to take action to reduce plastic bag use but they will be able to choose how to do it: either they introduce pricing for plastic bags or equally effective measures, or they deliver on ambitious reduction targets (1).

"Pricing is the obvious way to go: it has proven to be the most effective measure for reducing the consumption of single use plastic bags, and is already used or foreseen in many jurisdictions. However, it is should be applied across the board, from large supermarkets to small corner shops.

"Given plastic waste respects no borders, notably in waterways, there is a clear argument for Europe-wide regulation. Using regulation to reduce plastic bag use, with the myriad of environmental problems this causes, has proved a major success and it is common sense to regulate this at EU level.

"We strongly regret the failure to ban the hugely problematic 'oxo-biodegradable' plastic bags. These plastic bags worsen the litter problem by fragmenting into micro-plastics polluting the environment and hindering composting and recycling. The only real beneficiary of this is one small company in the UK. Despite clear evidence on the problems of these bags, we will have to wait for further EU action on this problem."

(1) Average consumption of single-use plastic bags was found to be at 176 bags per person per year in 2010. The reduction targets agreed are set as follows: 90 bags by the end of 2019 (equivalent to a reduction of almost 50% as compared to 2010), 40 bags by the end of 2025 (equivalent to a reduction of almost 80%).

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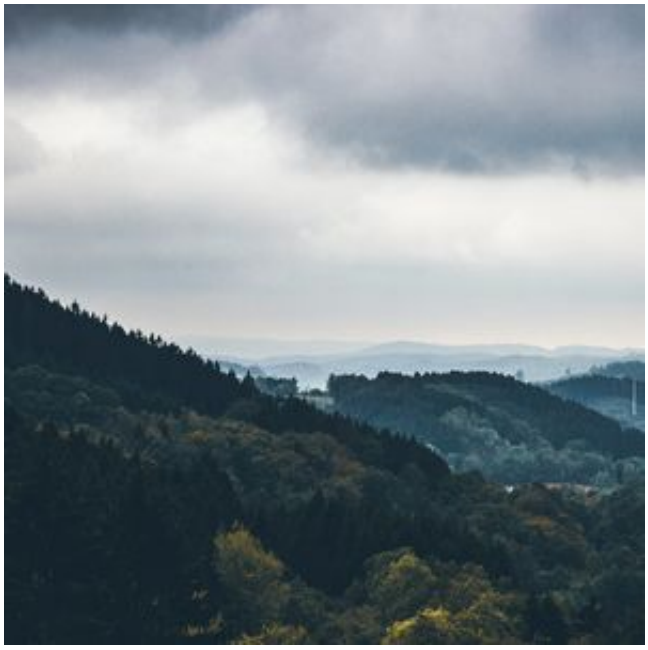


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Margrete Auken

Member

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