

Plastic waste and bags

Commission sitting on the fence with plastic bag proposals

The European Commission today presented proposals to amend existing EU legislation on plastic waste with a view to reducing the use of lightweight plastic bags. Commenting on the proposals, Green environment spokesperson **Margrete Auken** (MEP, Denmark) said:

"While a European approach to reducing plastic use is long overdue, the Commission is sitting on the fence with today's proposals. The failure to set out clear targets for reducing lightweight plastic bags will clearly undermine the prospect of ensuring a reduction across the EU. Instead, the Commission is leaving it open to member states to decide how and to what extent they seek to reduce plastic bags.

"Lightweight plastic bags are very low-hanging fruit when it comes to reducing unnecessary plastic waste, and its impact on the environment. As a number of member states have already shown, the use of these bags can be significantly reduced with effective policy-making. Given plastic waste is an issue that transcends borders, a coherent EU approach, with clear targets for reduction, is badly needed. While member states should be able to choose how to reduce plastic bag use - whether through bans or levies - there should be obligatory reduction targets, otherwise only those member states that want to act will do so.

"Each year, 8 billion of the roughly 90 billion lightweight plastic bags sold end up as litter, accumulating in the environment and ending up in our seas, waterways and the general environment, with majorly negative impacts on wildlife and health. However, rates differ dramatically across member states, showing that regulatory approaches are successful. The Commission has missed an opportunity today but we will seek to ensure the Parliament redresses this."

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Margrete Auken

Member

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