European
Commission
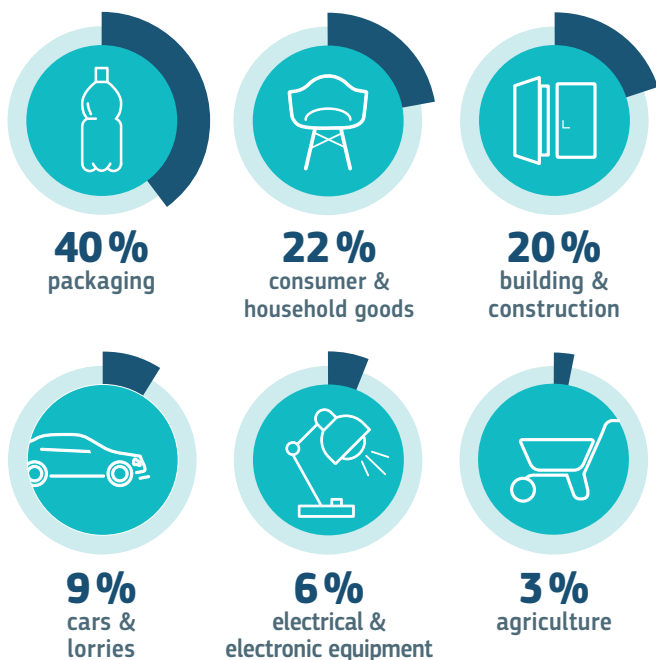
Changing the way we use plastics

It's light, it's cheap, it's everywhere and we can't live without it. Plastic is fantastic, but it has serious downsides as well. It's time to rethink plastic, and ask some tricky questions:

- How can we get away from single-use plastics?
- Can we make recycling it easier?
- And how can we stop plastic from ending up where it doesn't belong?

EUROPE PRODUCES A HUGE AMOUNT OF PLASTIC:
58 MILLION TONNES EVERY YEAR

40%
packaging

22%
consumer & household goods

20%
building & construction

9%
cars & lorries

6%
electrical & electronic equipment

3%
agriculture

Most of the raw material is fossil fuel based. Thus, if the current production trends continue, **by 2050** plastics could account for 20% of oil consumption, 15% of greenhouse gas emissions, and **there could be more plastics than fish in the sea**.

Source: PlasticsEurope

EUROPE PRODUCES 25 MILLION TONNES OF PLASTIC WASTE

ONLY 30%
is recycled

39%
is incinerated

31%
is in landfills

Source: PlasticsEurope, 2014

EU initiatives like higher recycling targets and more effective legislation for drinking water (cutting the need for bottled water) are improving the situation, but stronger action is needed.

More than 60% of plastic waste still comes from packaging, but only 40% of that packaging is recycled.

Sources: PlasticsEurope and Eurostat

Environment

Plastic leakage

Plastics are very durable, so they accumulate in nature, damaging ecosystems we rely on. In the oceans they break down into tiny fragments, which enter the food chain. The microplastics are eaten by plankton, which are eaten by fish, which are eaten by... us.

In 2010, the average European used **198 PLASTIC BAGS**

10 most common plastic objects found on European beaches

Drink bottles

Food containers

Bags

Crisp packets/ sweet wrappers

Cigarette butts

Cups & lids

Cutlery, straws & stirrers

Sanitary applications

Balloons and balloon sticks

Cotton buds

Single-use plastic items represent **50%** of marine litter

Source: Based on JRC report

Many of these items are packaging for food and drink and most were designed to be used only once ("single-use plastics"). That's a waste of valuable resources.

It's time to rethink plastics

It's time to change the way we design, produce, use and dispose of them. Let's reinvent plastics!

The EU has a new strategy to address the whole life-cycle of plastics. The aim is to make them:

By 2030, all plastic packaging placed on the EU market should be reusable or recyclable. As well as cutting the industry's carbon footprint, this will reduce plastic waste and marine litter, and slow the proliferation of microplastics.

LONGER LASTING

EASIER TO REUSE & RECYCLE

EASIER TO COLLECT

We also need to stop using plastic where there are better alternatives available, and ensure that the plastics we use keep their economic value for as long as possible, and don't end up in landfills.

THE EU GENERATED 15.88 MILLION TONNES OF PLASTIC PACKAGING WASTE IN 2015

Source: Eurobarometer

EU average

31 kg/person
of plastic packaging waste was generated
(2014)

40%
of plastic packaging waste was recycled
(2015)

What are you doing about plastic waste?

EU average

Source: Eurobarometer

65%
separate waste for recycling

34%
avoid single-use goods like cutlery & cups

24%
avoid buying over-packaged products
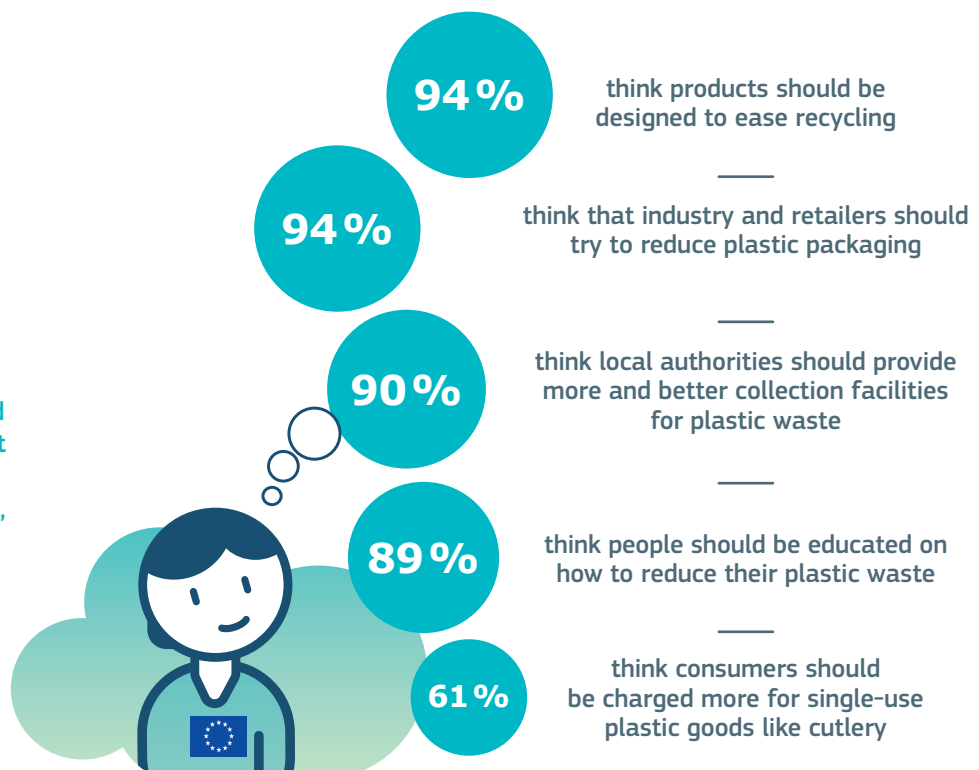
75%
use fewer single-use plastic bags

How would you tackle the plastic challenge?

Most Europeans back measures to cut plastic waste.

With 87% of Europeans worried about the environmental impact of plastic, and 74% worried about its impact on their health, people have the drive to tackle the plastic challenge, but what do they think should be done?

Source: Eurobarometer

94% think products should be designed to ease recycling

————

94% think that industry and retailers should try to reduce plastic packaging

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90% think local authorities should provide more and better collection facilities for plastic waste

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89% think people should be educated on how to reduce their plastic waste

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61% think consumers should be charged more for single-use plastic goods like cutlery

#PlasticsStrategy

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