

FEAD feedback on the Roadmap for the review of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

FEAD, the European Waste Management Association, represents the private waste and resource management industry across Europe. Private waste management companies operate in 60% of municipal waste markets in Europe, and in 75% of industrial and commercial waste. We **welcome** the review process of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), yet we find that the Directive **needs more coherence** with the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive and in general with all the EU Waste Legislation, as well as a stronger focus on the very first step to avoid marine pollution, which is **waste collection**.

Waste management activities are integral to circular industrial chains and have a crucial role to play in ensuring the circularity of our economies. The **European private waste management sector**, represented by **FEAD**, has a clear understanding of the environmental, health, and economic impacts of marine pollution, especially due to plastics, microplastics, and nano-plastics. Plastic waste generation will remain a reality, despite any measures to be envisaged to take control on the constant increase of plastic production, so we strongly advocate for having a regulatory framework at the EU level that results in the sound management of the plastic waste generated.

1. Waste collection, recycling, recovery

Excessive plastic needs to be replaced by a **circular model**, whereby plastics that have already been introduced in the economy, remain in there through **recycling and recovery**. A stronger focus needs to be given to plastic that finds its way out of the waste treatment process. That is the case especially for single-use plastics, which is a major factor of the amount and growth of microplastics. To prevent leakage of plastic waste and consequently of microplastics we absolutely need better and stronger **collection, separation, and recycling** rates and systems.

A shock on demand for plastic recyclates is one of the primary conditions for enhancing plastic recycling. This can be achieved by binding regulatory tools, i.e., **mandatory recycled content rules** and **mandatory Green Public Procurement rules**, and also by **new investments along the plastic waste value chain**.

Regarding mandatory recycled contents in particular, they are the way forward to intensify the use of recyclates in many plastics applications: in the construction sector (e.g., plastic pipes and door/window frames), in the automotive sector (bumpers, cable insulation, carpet fibres, foam seating, insulation panels, etc) and for plastic packaging. Traceability and verification of recycled content can be ensured through the development of reliable tools based on third-party assessment.

The significance and effectiveness of mandatory recycled contents are illustrated in the Single Use Plastics (SUP) Directive. The SUP Directive was adopted on 5 June 2019 and foresees 25% mandatory recycled contents in PET bottles for beverages by 2025, with a collection target of 77%. The targets for recycled contents are at 30% by 2029 for other plastics in bottles for beverages, with a collection target of 90% by 2030. This obligation to be fulfilled by the Member States will create new collection systems in the Member States and guarantee cleaner waste streams ready for recycling.

2. A comprehensive plan for micro-plastics

It is also indispensable to have a **clear understanding and distinction between biodegradable and bio-based plastics. Most plastics do not degrade** but end up in smaller pieces, i.e., microplastics and nano-plastics. The efficient way to tackle microplastics and nano-plastics is through a **comprehensive plan**. Biodegradable plastics and so-called compostable plastics are not necessarily compostable in the existing composting plants. There should be an assessment framework with clear criteria for analysing in which applications the use of biodegradable and compostable plastics is indeed beneficial to the environment. In other cases, the use of biodegradable and compostable plastics should be avoided. Alternatives to conventional fossil-based plastics, such as biobased plastics, could offer environmental benefits, under the condition they are recyclable, as any other plastic, and provided that they have been developed in compliance with EN standards.

With regards to the contamination of marine organisms by small plastic particles and their chemicals which, despite all measures taken to avoid plastic waste, may still end in oceans, we underline the importance of **eco-design**, to avoid the use of hazardous substances from the very start of the product value chain.

A recent **study commissioned by EP PETI Committee** and entitled “The environmental impacts of plastics and micro-plastics use, waste and pollution: EU and national measures”, finds that: “in Europe, € 630 million are spent every year to clean plastic waste from coasts and beaches while the failure to recycle costs the European economy € 105 billion”. This money should be used to strengthen **proactively** the waste management activities, especially when exporting plastic waste to third countries tends to be out of the picture.

3. Intra-EU plastic waste shipments more than ever needed

Safe and efficient intra-EU plastic waste shipments are crucial for the circular economy and respectively for preventing leakages to the environment. Due to the variety of polymers, products, packaging, additives, uses, no EU country has the full plastic waste management and recycling chain on their territory, not even the larger and more industrialised Member States. Many installations of the recycling and recovery chain are destined to import/export plastic waste flows across Europe. Some EU countries have very few facilities.

Exports are consequently crucial in the logistic chain of waste management and recycling, to ensure all the needed steps in the recycling value chain can be operated across the EU without unnecessary administrative burden, delays, costs that would result from the extension of the notification-based procedure for shipments, instead of the green-listed procedure that

was in force until the end of 2020. Increased enforcement of the EU Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR) can strengthen the acceptance of shipments by authorities and private individuals. Digitalisation and the introduction of an electronic, EU-wide notification system can lead to better and faster exchange between the authorities involved, while ensuring the highest levels of environmental protection. The upcoming revision of the WSR should clearly address these issues. For intra-EU waste shipments there is no issue of marine pollution due to plastics; the main challenge is to ensure that plastic waste can be shipped to the next treatment installation without unjustified red tape, costs, and delays.

The EU must also intensify the efforts against illegal exports and waste crime, including illegal waste handling. This can provide for a suitable treatment of waste. Despite some tools, such as the Regulation 660/2014 which aimed at strengthening waste shipment inspections¹, more action is needed to combat illegal trafficking. Coordination and allocation of resources, including training of staff controlling waste shipments, between different national authorities are the key to ensure effective and efficient enforcement of the waste shipment regulation. Controls should not only be focused on registered, legal waste shipping operators. In particular, the export of second-hand goods (e.g., vehicles and old electrical appliances) that are actually no longer functional must be better controlled on site in the ports. These goods have a high potential for being improperly disposed of in third countries. An extended use of electronic tools (EDI – Electronic Data Interchange) would help facilitate controls on professional operators, while allowing to focus efforts on illegal actors.

4. Enhancing international cooperation

The EU Marine Strategy should not focus only on measures to be deployed in the EU territory but address the problems of poor waste management and environmental policies in the developing world as well. The EU and its Member States should **enhance the international cooperation and coordinated action in delivering the international commitments to protecting the marine environment and biodiversity.**

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¹ <https://www.impel.eu/tools/guidance-on-effective-waste-shipment-inspection-planning/>