

# GUIDELINES TO ADDRESS SINGLE-USE PLASTICS THROUGH PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



# About

This publication has been commissioned by SCP/RAC to Ecoinstitut, as part of the portfolio of activities to improve the policy framework and engage with the food & beverage industry in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro, through the Cooperation Agreement between UN Environment/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Land and Sea Protection.

SCP/RAC has an official mandate from the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to engage in international cooperation with Mediterranean countries on the prevention of plastic pollution, including marine litter and on the development and innovation in the business sector.

Ecoinstitut S.C.C.L. is a non-for-profit associated work cooperative consisting of professionals with diverse academic and professional background. It has extensive experience in public policy and sustainability issues, particularly on green and sustainable public procurement.

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# Foreword

The Eighteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (“the Barcelona Convention”), held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 6 December 2013, adopted Decision IG.21/7 related to the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean in the Framework of Article 15 of the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol) to the Barcelona Convention, hereinafter referred to as the Marine Litter Regional Plan (UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.21/9).

Furthermore, and in accordance with Article 14 of the Marine Litter Regional Plan, the Secretariat in cooperation with relevant international and regional organisations, is mandated to prepare specific guidelines taking into account where appropriate existing guidelines, to support and facilitate the implementation of measures provided for in Articles 9 and 10 thereof, whereby, subject to availability of external funds, such guidelines shall be published in different Mediterranean region languages.

The MAP Programme of Work (PoW) 2018-2019 adopted by the Twentieth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, held in Tirana, Albania, from 17 to 20 December 2017, contains several activities addressing marine litter including the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between UN Environment/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Land and Sea Protection, which has specific outputs on the

development of a set of technical guidelines in the framework of Article 14 of the Regional Plan.

Public procurement affects a considerable share of world trade, amounting on average 10 to 25% of a country’s Gross Domestic Product or GDP, therefore public procurement plays a key role in achieving more sustainable production and consumption patterns. Though its pulling effect, public procurement can foster changes in the supply chain with a positive effect on the rest of the market; and at the same time, conduct its functions on a responsible manner. Marine litter is one of the Mediterranean environmental problems and, as with other environmental priorities, public procurement can contribute to tackle them, that is why public procurement actions are part of many policies and strategies addressing marine litter -such as the Regional Plan for the Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean and the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean. The role of public procurement to tackle plastic-packaging pollution has also been recognised by the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production adopted at the World Sustainable Development Summit Rio+20 which has launched an initiative to address plastic packaging through the market-enabling areas of lifestyles, education, consumer information and public procurement.

The guidelines intend to provide a common understanding of the set of measures and environmental criteria that can be considered in developing the most appropriate legal and operational



framework to address single use of plastic in public procurement in the signatory countries of the Barcelona Convention. While these guidelines focus on the full process of decision making, from absence of actions to a comprehensive programme of single use plastics consideration in public procurement, they can also be used to complement and strengthen actions in countries where the process is on-going. The guidelines build on the review and lessons learnt of international cases, considering the context in the Mediterranean region and specific actions supported by UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) components in some of the countries.

These guidelines introduce the subject by explaining the scope of the guidelines and why public procurement can contribute in abating the plastics crisis. Next, the document describes comprehensively a 10-steps implementation roadmap, including some examples.

10-steps implementation roadmap, including some examples. Finally, Annex I provides a model of policy to restrict the procurement and use of single-use plastics; Annex II compiles different criteria to be introduced in public procurement for each of the key sectors of the guidelines; Annex III presents different examples to illustrate a variety of the steps and possible actions; and Annex IV provides definitions to some of the terms used in the guidelines.

The present document has been developed within the Cooperation Agreement between UN Environment/ MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Land and Sea Protection. SCP/RAC has commissioned this work to Ecoinsitut, a non-for-profit associated work cooperative consisting of professionals with diverse academic and professional background. It has extensive experience in public policy and sustainability issues, particularly on green and sustainable public procurement.

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Policy Guidelines to  
Address Single-Use  
Plastics through Public  
Procurement in the  
Mediterranean



# 1. Introduction



## 1.1. Scope

Plastics and especially single-use plastics, represent 95% of the marine litter accumulated on the Mediterranean Sea and shorelines.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of marine litter on beaches shows that they are mostly food and beverage single-use plastic items and packaging (cutlery, trays, straws, caps, lids, plastics bottles) and shopping bags.<sup>2,3</sup> Their leakage into the environment has adverse impacts not only on the environment but also on economic development and public health; and the risks might increase given the trend towards a significant increase in plastic waste generation, of which a very high proportion is food and beverage packaging.<sup>4</sup>

The Regional Plan for the Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean,<sup>5</sup> adopted in 2013 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, urges governments to pass plastic waste reduction policies, support industry to minimize plastic packaging and redesign products, and change consumer habits. The Plan, as well as in other relevant policies for the region such as the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean<sup>6</sup> or the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy,<sup>7</sup> recognises public procurement as an instrument that can contribute to tackle the problem due to its transversal nature – it is the expression of the public sector as a consumer, is a market instrument that encourages industries to improve their practices and it contributes to achieve plastic reduction objectives.

These guidelines intend to provide a common understanding of the measures that can be considered in developing the most appropriate policy or regulatory framework to tackle single-use plastics through public procurement based on the experiences by numerous public authorities. Recommendations focus on two broad categories in line with the European Union's priority sectors for the circular economy<sup>8</sup> and the priority areas to tackle marine litter:

- Single-use plastics on the food & beverage sector, which from a public procurement perspective relate to purchases and contracts for the provision of food services in public buildings (schools, hospitals, universities...); catering services for meetings, conferences and events; and vending machines services; and
- Packaging in general applicable to any supplies, works and services carried out by public authorities.

These guidelines target policy-makers in the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and provide them with a step-by-step approach for developing the appropriate framework to address the reduction of single-use plastics through procurement in the public sector.

1. UNEP/MAP (2015). Marine Litter Assessment in the Mediterranean 2015. United Nations Environment Programme/ Mediterranean Action Plan. <http://web.unep.org/unepmap/marine-litter-assessment-mediterranean-2015>

2. Hanke G. (2016). Marine Beach Litter in Europe – Top Items. Technical Report by the Joint Research Centre. [https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/Marine\\_Litter/MarineLitterTOPItems\\_final\\_24.1.2017.pdf](https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/Marine_Litter/MarineLitterTOPItems_final_24.1.2017.pdf)

3. UNEP/MAP (2019) Marine Litter Assessment: Updated Baseline Values and Threshold Values for IMAF Marine Litter Indicators. UNEP/MED WG.476/3.

4. European Commission (2018). A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy. <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/plastics-strategy-brochure.pdf>

5. UNEP/MAP (2013). Regional Plan for the Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. <https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/bitstreams/8222/retrieve>

6. UNEP/MAP (2017). Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean. United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan.

7. European Commission, A European Strategy for Plastics.

8. Described in the European Commission (2019). Sustainable Products in a Circular Economy – Towards an EU Product Policy Framework contributing to the Circular Economy. [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/sustainable\\_products\\_circular\\_economy.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/sustainable_products_circular_economy.pdf), the aforementioned European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy or in the Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/904/oj>

They include the full process of decision making, from absence of actions to a comprehensive programme to tackle single-use plastics through public procurement, so they can be used to complement and strengthen actions in countries that are already implementing environmental criteria in their procurement processes.

The elaboration has been commissioned by SCP/RAC to Ecoinstitut, as part of the portfolio of activities to improve the policy framework and engage with the food & beverage industry in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro, through the Cooperation Agreement between UN Environment/MAP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Land and Sea Protection. Therefore, the situation in these countries has been particularly considered for the elaboration of the document, in addition to other case studies in the Mediterranean and beyond. As a result, the guidelines are operational at the regional level.

As previously mentioned, green public procurement is an excellent tool to foster circular economy and ultimately reduce plastic marine litter. Thus, the guidelines will be extensively promoted through the Barcelona Convention system.

## 1.2. Issue

Plastics have become an essential and ubiquitous material in our economy and daily lives due to their functional properties and low cost. Their use has exponentially increased since the 1960s, and it is expected to double over the next 20 years<sup>9</sup>.

Globally, plastic packaging is the largest application of plastics, representing 26% of the total volume of plastic used. As packaging materials, plastics are especially inexpensive, lightweight and high performing, and consequently, plastics are increasingly replacing other packaging materials. In 2013, 78 million tonnes of plastic packaging were produced worldwide and plastic packaging volumes are expected to continue their strong growth, doubling within 15 years and more than quadrupling by 2050. The problem, however, is that an estimated 95% of the value of plastic packaging material is lost to the economy after a short first use. 72% of plastic packaging is not recovered at

all either because it is landfilled (40%) or leaked out to the environment (32%), 14% is lost after incineration and even when collected for recycling, some are lost in the process and others recycled into lower-value applications that are not again recyclable after use<sup>10</sup>.

This type of information is not available at Mediterranean scale yet. However, some studies like the one commissioned by SCP/RAC<sup>11</sup> at the sub-regional level (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) provides interesting information. The countries collect in average 78% of food and beverage plastic packaging, meaning that the remaining 22% end up in dumpsites or leaks into the environment. Out of the collected material, only 3,2% is recycled. In the case of the EU, out of the 27 million tonnes of plastic waste produced each year, only a third is recycled; half of all plastic waste in Italy, France and Spain ends up in landfills<sup>12</sup>.

The Mediterranean Sea and coast have become one of the most marine litter-affected areas in the world<sup>13</sup>. Plastics are the prevailing type, accounting up to 95-100% of total floating marine litter and more than 50% of seabed marine litter. The analysis of 33 beaches conducted in 2016<sup>14</sup>, indicated that only 5 types of debris, mostly single-use plastics (cutlery/trays/straws, cigarette butts, caps/lids, plastic bottles and shopping bags) represent more than 60% of the total recorded marine litter on beaches.

Marine litter is a growing global threat due to its significant environmental, social, economic, political and cultural implications. The main impacts on marine organisms are linked to entanglement with macro-plastics and ingestion of micro-plastics. However, there is also increasing evidence that plastic particles may carry and transfer toxic substances (persistent organic pollutants and endocrine disrupting chemicals) to marine organisms, mainly when ingested, that may also endanger human health via food chains<sup>15</sup>. In addition, marine litter has negative social and economic consequences such as loss of welfare, resource inefficiency or cost of clean-up among others.

9. European Commission, A European Strategy for Plastics.

10. Ellen MacArthur Foundation and SCP/RAC (2017). The New Plastics Economy — Rethinking the future of plastics & catalysing action. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/publications/the-new-plastics-economy-rethinking-the-future-of-plastics-catalysing-action>

11. SCP/RAC (2019). Priority areas of intervention to curb marine litter from food and beverage plastic packaging in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. [http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/91113\\_priority\\_areas\\_final.pdf](http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/91113_priority_areas_final.pdf)

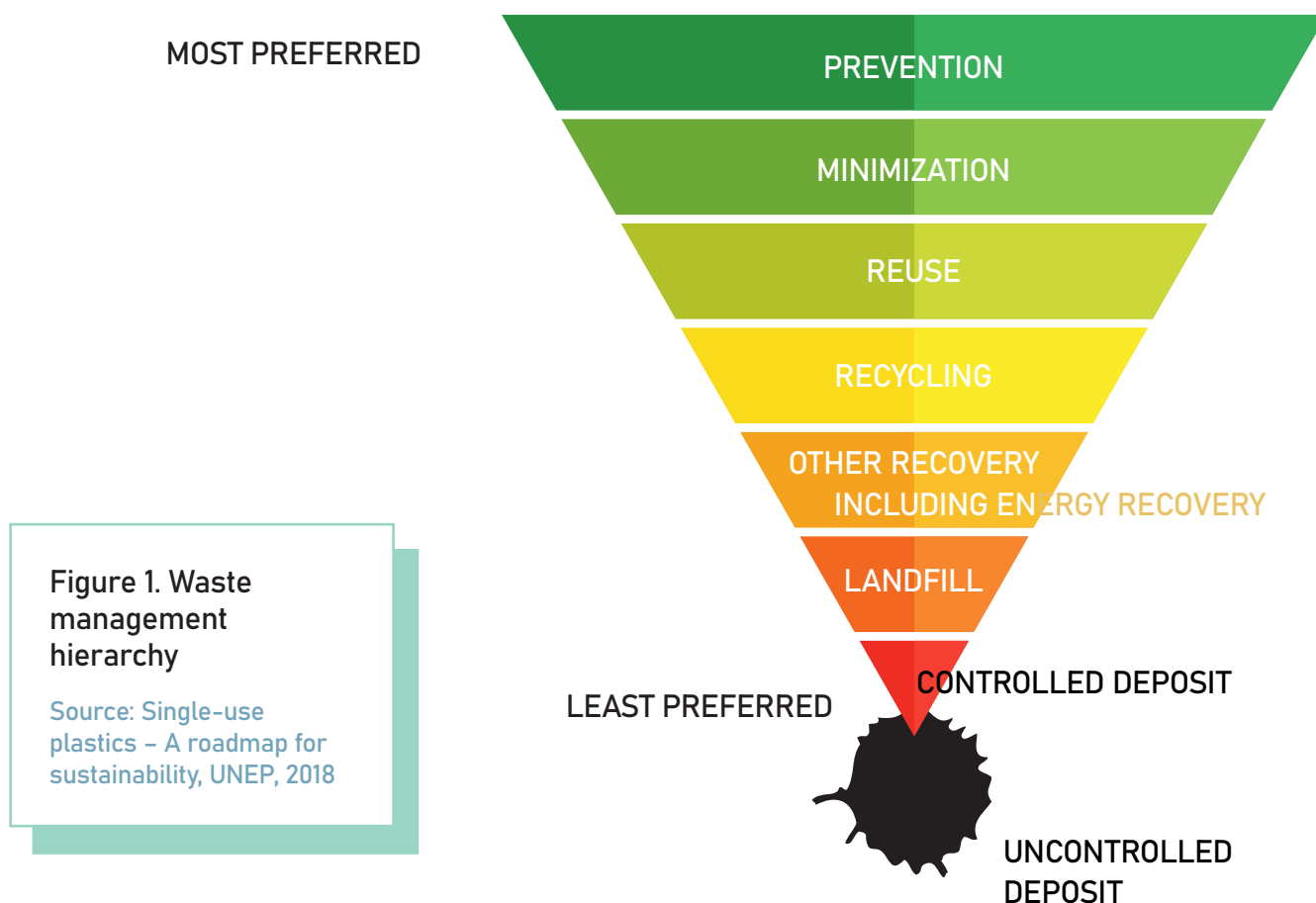
12. Alessi, E. et al. (2018). Out of the plastic trap: saving the Mediterranean from plastic pollution. WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative. [https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/a4\\_plastics\\_med\\_web\\_08june\\_new.pdf](https://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/a4_plastics_med_web_08june_new.pdf)

13. UNEP/MAP (2017). 2017 Mediterranean Quality Status Report. [https://www.medqsr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2017MedQSR\\_Online\\_0.pdf](https://www.medqsr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/2017MedQSR_Online_0.pdf)

14. Hanke G. (2016). Marine Beach Litter in Europe – Top Items. Technical Report by the Joint Research Centre (JRC). [https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/Marine\\_Litter/MarineLitterTOPItems\\_final\\_24.1.2017.pdf](https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/Marine_Litter/MarineLitterTOPItems_final_24.1.2017.pdf)

15. Ellen MacArthur Foundation and SCP/RAC, The New Plastics Economy.





To tackle single-use plastics, action should follow a circular economy approach and apply the same priorities as in the waste management hierarchy defined in the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (Decision IG.21/7), which in its article 9(1) provides for the application of the following waste hierarchy as a priority order in waste prevention and management legislation and policy: prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, other recovery, e.g. energy recovery and environmentally sound disposal when seeking alternatives (see Figure 1). This is particularly relevant for those Mediterranean countries where waste collection and management are particularly poorly organized, making prevention and reuse even more important. However, due diligence should always be exercised and health, safety, environmental and accessibility needs considered when selecting alternatives for single-use plastic items.

In order to tackle this issue, changes are required in both sides of the market - the production and consumption side. Public organisations operate both as regulators of the market, but also as participants in the market, i.e. as consumers, through their contracts and purchases<sup>17</sup>.

Public procurement affects a considerable share of world trade, amounting on average 10 to 25% of a country's Gross Domestic Product or GDP<sup>18</sup>, therefore public procurement plays a key role in achieving more sustainable production and consumption patterns. Though its pulling effect, public procurement can foster changes in the supply chain with a positive effect on the rest of the market; and at the same time, conduct its functions on a responsible manner.

For almost fifty years, government at all levels have been introducing environmental criteria in their purchases. One of the first policies including GPP

16. McCrudden, C. in Adell, A. and Schaefer, B. (2019). Promoting the Circular Economy through Public Procurement [Paper]. ERSCP Conference Proceedings, Barcelona 13-18 October 2019.

17. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank (2017). Doing Business 2017. Equal Opportunity for All. The World Bank Group. <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/media/Annual-Reports/English/DB17-Report.pdf>



obligations was the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of the US Government, which required federal agencies to “procure items composed of the highest percentage of recovered materials practicable”<sup>18</sup>. Since then, many other policies have been enforced to reduce pollution, promote green products, fight climate change or protect forests through public procurement.

Marine litter is one of the Mediterranean environmental problems and, as with other environmental priorities, public procurement can contribute to tackle them, that is why public procurement actions are part of many policies and strategies addressing marine litter –such as the Regional Plan for the Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, the Regional Action Plan on

Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean or the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy mentioned before. The role of public procurement to tackle plastic-packaging pollution has also been recognised by the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production adopted at the World Sustainable Development Summit Rio +20 which has launched an initiative to address plastic packaging through the market-enabling areas of lifestyles, education, consumer information and public procurement.

That is why the SCP/RAC has produced these guidelines, to help governments define policies and actions to contribute to fight marine litter through public procurement.



18. Adell, A. and Schaefer, B., Promoting the Circular Economy through Public Procurement [Paper].

## 2. Roadmap to tackle single-use plastics through public procurement



Considering experiences in the Mediterranean region and beyond, sound solutions should be designed in a mid-term time frame. A progressive, step-by-step approach should be adopted in order to ensure that:

- a) Governmental resources, mandates, guidelines and monitoring mechanisms are in place to successfully use public procurement to reduce the acquisition and use of single-use plastics and to review and adapt approaches if the objectives are not met.
- b) Relevant industry has time/incentives/access to technology to allow them to produce and provide economically/environmentally/technically sound alternatives, without jobs/revenues loss.
- c) Relevant standards and norms are in place to ensure the production of safer alternatives and help in the definition and verification of tender specifications.
- d) Companies are aware of the impacts of the different alternatives and are incentivized to modify their production and service practices; and users are also aware of the impact of their own behaviour and are motivated to modify their consumption patterns.
- e) The waste management system in the countries is adapted to implement additional measures to reduce the impacts of single-use plastics. First, it is important that selective collection and recycling rates improve, and unsound disposal is avoided. Later, the waste management system may need to adapt to the new alternatives introduced in the market, such as compostable items.

The process to tackle single-use plastics through public procurement consists of the following ten steps listed below. Governments that are already implementing environmental criteria in their

procurement processes may find complementary and supportive measures:

- STEP 1 - Assess the current situation of single-use plastics in the organisation's procurements
- STEP 2 - Assess waste treatment systems and infrastructure
- STEP 3 - Assess public procurement legal framework
- STEP 4 - Engage with the market and other stakeholders to assess their readiness and identify and develop alternatives
- STEP 5 - Adopt and implement specific public procurement options
- STEP 6 - Elaborate green public procurement (GPP) criteria
- STEP 7 - Provide training for contract managers, procurement staff and all economic operators involved
- STEP 8 - Raise awareness, communicate and foster wider participation
- STEP 9 - Improve waste management systems
- STEP 10 - Monitor, review and adapt

The steps contain some examples, from the Mediterranean region and beyond, and are complemented with additional information provided in the annexes: Annex I provides a model of policy to restrict the procurement and use of single-use plastics; Annex II compiles different criteria to be introduced in public procurement for each of the key sectors of the guidelines; Annex III presents different examples to illustrate a variety of the steps and possible actions; and Annex IV provides definitions to some of the terms used in the guidelines.

Details for each of the above-mentioned step are hereunder presented.



## 2.1. Preliminary measures (steps 1, 2, 3 and 4)

### Step 1 Assess the current situation of single-use plastics in the organisation's procurements

Given that each organisation has its own way of contracting and organising supplies, the starting point should be to have a clear view of the type of single-use plastics purchased, used or managed in the organisation's operations, purchases and contracts.

An initial mapping and assessment of all plastic items and packaging used or generated in supplies, services and works should be conducted to identify where single-use plastics are present, what materials they are made of, what they are used for, how are they managed and what is the perception of staff and users. In this process contract promoters and managers, actual contractors and users/beneficiaries should be involved.

This will help to focus stakeholders' engagement activities to identify possible alternatives, to plan the measures to be implemented and even to set quantitative prevention targets and a baseline to monitor progress. This research could be coupled with awareness raising actions in order to pave the way before the adoption of the policy option.

#### Box I. Mapping plastic use in Fredrikstad (Norway)

The municipality of Fredrikstad mapped in 2018 all the areas that use plastic in the municipality in order to define the best measures to include in their Action Plan Against Plastic. The plan was developed by the Environment and Urban Development Agency and anchored in various departments, including the purchasing department.

More information [here](#) (in Norwegian)

### Step 2 Assess waste treatment systems and infrastructure

Apart from measures to minimise single-use plastic waste (through minimisation, reuse, etc.), some measures focus on selecting those materials that are more recyclable or compostable and by ensuring their appropriate segregated collection and treatment. The selection of one alternative or another will depend on the type of selective waste collection and waste treatment capabilities in the country or region, as well as the waste segregation system of the organisation. There is no use to prioritise measures on recyclable or compostable materials if there are no facilities to recycle or compost them, no segregated collection system is in place and no clear marking of plastics is enforced. Furthermore, it could aggravate the existing problem of plastic leakage and create problems for recycling. So, it is necessary to verify which materials can be properly treated in the region. The involvement of public facility managers, waste collectors and waste treatment infrastructure managers should be consulted in all the area to be covered by the policy option.





Compostable plastics are of particular relevance because they are designed to biodegrade under industrial (and in few cases under home) composting conditions, and thus a waste management system where organic waste is separated and treated is needed. In the absence of this system, compostable plastics will not solve the problem of plastic leakage into the environment. Currently, there is no plastic material, made from neither fossil resources nor bio-based, that allows for biodegradation in the natural environment within a reasonable period of time.

#### Box II. Plastics waste management in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro

The root cause of plastic pollution is found in the delays and gaps in plastic waste management in most Mediterranean countries. A recent study commissioned by SCP/RAC in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro addressing specifically food and beverage plastic packaging (FBPP)<sup>19</sup>, shows that large amounts of FBPP are not captured by existing waste management systems, leading to important amount of plastic packaging leaking into the environment. Additionally, the largest fraction of FBPP waste ends up in (often non-compliant) landfills, as mixed municipal solid waste. Despite increasing awareness and waste management infrastructure, particularly in urban areas, percentages of FBPP waste separated for recycling are almost negligible in the three countries. Albania features the highest recycling rate, mainly due to a large informal recycler system. In this context, measures should focus first on reducing the use and procurement of single-use plastic items and on promoting reusable alternatives, while a better waste management system is implemented.

In case a bio-waste management system is in place and it accepts bio-based plastics, green public procurement criteria should require these materials to be in conformity with biodegradable standards (e.g. EN 13432) to avoid false claims on biodegradability. In order to check the compliance with standards and norms, countries should ensure that appropriate human and technical resources are available to test biodegradable plastics. Capacity building and exchange could be promoted across countries.

#### Box III. Bio-waste management in the Mediterranean

At the Mediterranean level, only France and Italy currently count with a country-wide bio-waste management system in place, hence there are not enabling conditions for the introduction of compostable plastics in the region and measures should focus on other priority strategies rather than in the promotion of bio-based plastics items and packaging.

However, it would be necessary to build governmental and users' understanding in relation to the notions of biodegradability, since there are clear misconception and misunderstandings in many countries; and specially on the final disposal of these materials since compostable plastic packaging or items might be perceived as an environmental harmless option, thus misleading behaviour and resulting in increased littering. This may apply to other waste treatment and plastic-related issues depending on each national knowledge of the subject.

#### Step 3 Assess public procurement legal framework

How single-use plastics will be tackled through public procurement will depend, partly, on the country's public procurement legal framework. Some measures will consist on eliminating or replacing certain items from the start during the assessment of the procurement needs and the definition of the tender documents or purchase orders – for example to require reusable tableware in a catering service for a conference instead of disposable ones or to provide tap water in reusable glasses to speakers instead of individual plastic bottles

19. SCP/RAC (2019). Priority areas of intervention to curb marine litter from food and beverage plastic packaging in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. [http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/91113\\_priority\\_areas\\_final.pdf](http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/91113_priority_areas_final.pdf)

and glasses-. In those cases, the procurement legal framework will not pose a major problem. However, in other cases, criteria to reduce single-use plastics might not be defined as compulsory specifications but promoted through evaluation criteria, especially when we do not know how the market will respond or if we already know that there is not a big market offer and we want to encourage change and pull the market towards greener alternatives through procurement processes.

Therefore, it will be necessary to review the current procurement legal framework in the country to understand how it allows the introduction of environmental criteria in procurement processes, even when not specifically mentioned, and what amendments could be required to facilitate this process. This will also serve when defining the specific measures and GPP criteria to be implemented in Step 5 and 6.

In this process, it is key to involve the departments or agencies in charge of legislating/controlling/supporting public procurement, as staff involved in public procurement are traditionally cautious and conservative when it comes to introducing changes and innovations in the way goods, services and works are contracted. Hence, internal resistance might arise even when the legal framework allows it, but does not explicitly mention it. This research could be coupled with awareness raising actions too in order to smooth the way before the adoption of the policy option.

#### **Step 4** Engage with the market and other stakeholders to assess their readiness and identify and develop alternatives.

Before any measure is put in place, it is important to engage and coordinate with different stakeholders to decide on the best approach, alternatives and market readiness to single-use plastics based on the national and organisational context, user/health/safety requirements, etc. Any public procurement process requires the coordination of both the demand (public entities) and the supply (contractors/suppliers) side of the market. These two aspects must go hand in hand and should be boosted equally for effective switch to alternatives to single-use plastics. In this process, innovative solutions might be encouraged and developed to achieve policy goals. This could be part of existing activities, mechanisms and economic instruments in the framework of existing Sustainable Development/Circular Economy/Green Growth strategies.

#### **Box IV. Finding alternative solutions to take-away packaging in the Hospital of Zumárraga (Spain – Basque Country)**

The hospital of Zumárraga is implementing different solutions to reduce the consumption of single-use plastic packaging by patients and visitors. In order to find alternatives to take-away plastic packaging used in the hospital canteen, the organisation entered into dialogue with the company providing the food service in the hospital canteen to find more recyclable alternatives. Through this dialogue the company proposed to replace the plastic packaging by paper/cardboard packaging, which is accepted in the bio-waste collection system in the Basque Country.

As already mentioned in the Guidelines to Phase out Single-Use Plastic Bags in the Mediterranean<sup>20</sup>, a controversial issue may be the type of alternatives that should be promoted in response to single-use plastics. There is not a one-fits-all solution. A good approach may be to use a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) approach to compare different options, especially when comparing alternative materials. However, LCA has limitations in how they incorporate certain impacts including littering. Notwithstanding, the more potential for minimising single-use plastics and increase reuse, the least impact it may have.

Furthermore, socioeconomic and institutional aspects should be analysed too in order to know how a measure would be implemented and the potential effects it may have on administrations, users/beneficiaries and industry/contractors considering the whole life cycle phases of the alternatives from their production to their end-of-life.

The different stakeholders to be involved include: finance and budget holders, end users/service beneficiaries, executive managers, procurement and technical departments, facility managers, waste treatment companies and private sector agents (both manufacturers as well as service providers).

20. SCP/RAC (2019). Guidelines to phase out single-use plastic bags in the Mediterranean. [http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/other-files/11\\_guidelines\\_supb\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/other-files/11_guidelines_supb_en_0.pdf). Adopted in the COP21 of the Barcelona Convention (Naples, 2-5 December 2019) as Decision IG.24/11: Guidelines: Adopt-a-Beach; Phase-out of Single Use Plastic Bags; Provision of Reception Facilities in Ports and the Delivery of Ship-Generated Wastes; Application of Charges at Reasonable Costs for the Use of Port Reception Facilities.

## 2.2. Adoption and implementation of public procurement options (steps 5, 6 and 7)

### Step 5 Adopt and implement specific public procurement options.

After these preliminary steps, the policy option can be designed, adopted and implemented, in consultation with the main concerned stakeholders.

From the experience of other governments, the most effective way is to adopt a specific policy/regulatory instrument to reduce the procurement and use of disposable plastics, which might be approved under the umbrella of an existing overarching green/sustainable public procurement (GPP/SPP) policy/plan/regulation if available. If such overarching GPP/SPP policy is being developed, single-use plastics could be included in it as a priority area to ensure that this aspect is properly addressed during policy implementation. This approach can be also used if an overarching policy to tackle single-use plastics or to promote a circular economy is being defined.



#### Box V. Different approaches in Slovakia and Belgium (Flanders region)

The Government of Slovakia has a third National Action Plan for GPP for 2016–2020 and in this framework, the Slovak Ministry of Environment adopted in 2018 a ministerial order to tackle single-use plastics. The order prohibits the purchase of bottled water for representation and other purposes by the Ministry and its public companies or agencies. Instead, tap water must be served in jugs, except in those circumstances where no tap water is available in the premises.

The region of Flanders (Belgium) has a Strategic Policy Plan on Public Procurement (2016–2020) with an objective to reach 100% SPP in the region. The Government uses this overarching policy for its SPP actions but it also includes GPP requirements in other relevant policies. For single-use plastics, the Flemish Government approved in 2019 a comprehensive policy to promote the circular economy in the region focusing on the sustainable management of material loops and waste, within which the government set strict objectives to reduce single-use plastics in catering-related services.

Having both GPP/SPP Policies, in Slovakia the Ministry adopted a ministerial order specific to tackle single-use plastics through procurement, while in Flanders the specific objectives were included in an overarching “circular economy” policy.

The policy/regulatory instrument might be either voluntary or mandatory, a combination of both or a progression. This will depend on, among other, the procurement legal framework, existing experience/policies on GPP/SPP, alternatives being put forward and market capacity and socioeconomic considerations. All the information gathered beforehand will help to decide which alternatives shall be prioritised and shape the policy content.



The government may consider the following elements:

- Public authorities subject to the policy.
- Type of contracts and purchases (product groups) covered by the policy.
- Measures/criteria/requirements to be implemented.
- Economic instruments to encourage the implementation of certain measures by users.
- Exceptions and implementation periods to be applied.
- Responsibilities and monitoring/control mechanisms.
- Enforcement level of the policy, bearing in mind the available enforcement capacity.

A master template for this kind of regulatory instrument is included in [Annex I](#) to the present document.

In this process, the implementation of pilot projects beforehand can help to better define the final option.

### Step 6 Elaborate green or sustainable public procurement criteria.

Either as part of the public procurement policy/regulatory instrument, or as separate document(s), governments should define the specific requirements to be implemented in prioritised product groups in order to support and facilitate implementation. Taking into consideration Step 4, GPP criteria should follow the waste management hierarchy provided in section 1.2, which prioritises by decreasing order:

- Elimination/restriction on the procurement and use of single-use plastics and oxo-plastics
- Use of reusable alternatives whenever possible or relevant
- Selection of more recyclable/compostable materials or materials with recycled content
- Effective segregated waste collection and treatment

A compilation of possible criteria are provided in [Annex II](#).

The criteria might include financial incentives/disincentives for final users (such as additional charging for disposable items or deposit-return schemes) to encourage behaviour change.

The elaboration of GPP criteria is useful also to

facilitate implementation by other public and private organisations interested in contributing to tackle single-use plastics, when they are not part of the policy scope.

### Step 7 Provide training for contract managers, procurement staff and all economic operators involved

Apart from the policy and the criteria to be implemented, personnel involved in public procurement (from technical units and procurement staff) as well as potential contractors, subcontractors and suppliers will probably require training, especially if little experience exists in the introduction of environmental criteria in public procurement. Therefore, training sessions and capacity building should be implemented. Those addressed to public authorities could be opened to all the public sector regardless of the scope of the policy/regulatory instrument to encourage further implementation, and providing for a strong signal to the market.

## 2.3. Accompanying measures (steps 8, 9 and 10)

### Step 8 Raise awareness, communicate and foster wider participation.

All actions that require a change of procedures or habits demand regular awareness raising, communications and participation to support ownership, avoid resistance and achieve good results, especially in sectors such as catering and hospitality sector in which, by definition, there will be users involved. For this reason, it is important to actively communicate and engage all stakeholders (including users/beneficiaries) in any policy being defined.

Such measures must be implemented in conjunction with the actual purchases and tendering processes. When it comes to implementation, some measures could be the provision of the GPP criteria and other resources through the website or setting up an email helpdesk or call centre to provide support. In order to promote smooth acceptance and good results, measures may include communication campaigns, distribution of reusable items, the organisation of workshops, seminars and trainings both for the public and private sector, as well as the promotion of voluntary action, agreements and initiatives to encourage other actors such as sub-national authorities, companies, non-governmental organisations and citizens to join and thus expand the demand and incentivise market transformations.

Communication can play an important role in conveying the message to all stakeholders, so they can feel concern and motivated to implement waste reduction practices. This communication could be based in the positive effects in terms of economic and environmental benefits rather than on the negative effects of single-use plastics.

#### Box VI. Support measures in the Decision to reduce single-use plastics at government departments, public bodies and schools in Ireland

In the Decision of 2019 of the Government of Ireland to reduce single-use plastics, the government foresees different support measures for the implementation of the decision. These include: i) the publication of resources through the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment website as they are developed; ii) the provision of an email helpdesk to support Departments' Facilities Staff charged with implementing the decision; 3) the organisation of a workshop for Facilities Staff; iv) and the consideration of other measures for those Departments that have a number of public bodies under their aegis are likely to require particular support in disseminating information about the decision.

#### Step 9 Improve waste management systems

As mentioned earlier, the improvement of selective collection and recycling rates is part of the strategy to decrease the leakage of plastics into the environment. Even if single-use plastics are eradicated, their reusable substitutes or alternative materials (such as compostable plastics) must be collected, managed and treated correctly to ensure reuse or recycling and avoid improper disposal.

Further collaboration between producers and recyclers should be boosted to ensure higher recycling rates. This might be supported by adopting packaging extended producer responsibility schemes in the country or enhancing them if they already exist.

If compostable plastics are regarded as a preferred alternative for some applications, a necessary condition

before promoting these new materials will be to ensure there is a waste management system to collect and treat this as bio-waste. Pilot projects on domestic and industrial composting could be implemented to assess its feasibility.

Therefore, in parallel to public procurement, actions should continue to be implemented to improve waste management, particularly in terms of separate collection and treatment, through extended producer responsibility schemes, deposit and refund schemes, selective waste sorting and collection systems, recycling facilities, among others. This will allow to increase the capacity to deal with single-use plastics from minimisation/prevention to recycling and final treatment.

#### Step 10 Monitor, review and adapt

Finally, it is important to establish a monitoring system based on clear key performance indicators to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of implemented measures in order to assess success, identify challenges faced and improve further implementation and progress. Specially for policy measures to monitor the progress made in the purchase of single-use plastic and the alternatives implemented over time (based on defined short-, medium- and long-term objectives).

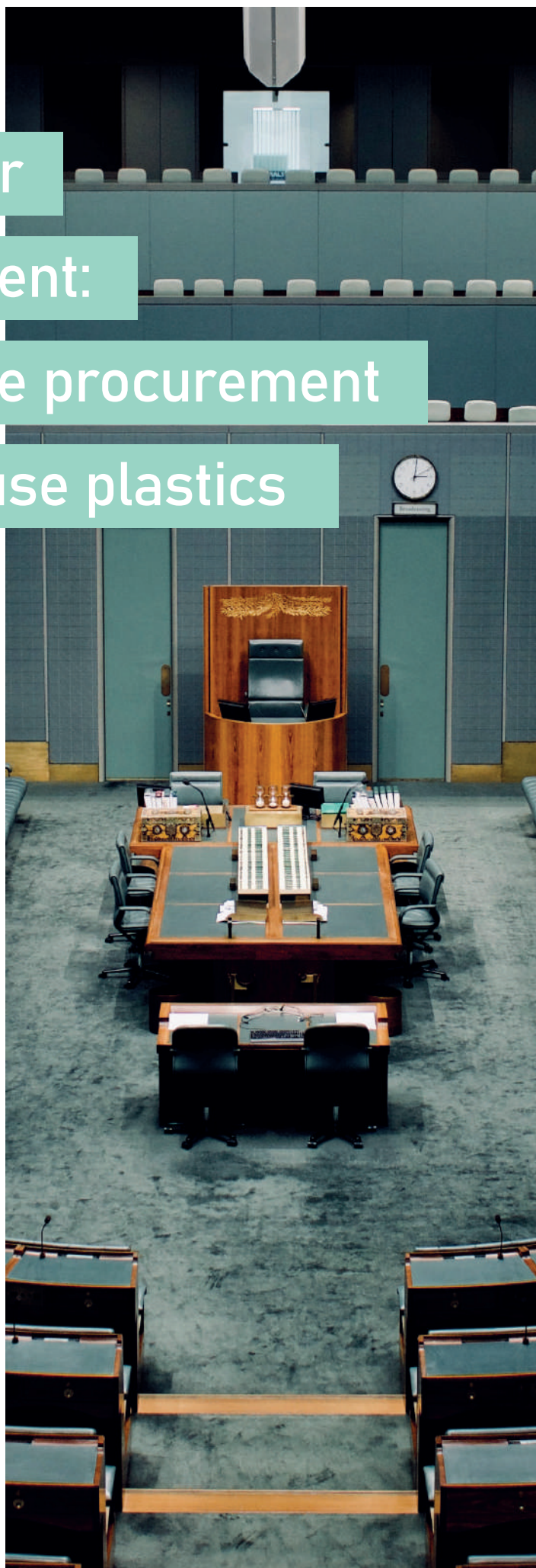
For example, public procurement departments may be required to report in a given time period about the tendering processes and acquisitions including criteria to reduce the procurement and use of single-use plastics in the contracts and agencies targeted by the policy. Based on this, if the objectives are not met, a review should be made to improve implementation, adopt additional measures or adapt approaches.

This can serve also to estimate benefits achieved and report them to stakeholders.

# Annex I

## Master template for regulatory instrument:

### Policy to restrict the procurement and use of single-use plastics





## NOTE

This Annex presents a master template to elaborate a policy to tackle single-use plastics in public authorities.

Each section of the regulatory instrument is explained in italics, and some specific wording is proposed. Text in brackets may be customized according to instrument promoter's needs.

This text has been drafted taking into consideration real examples from the following public authorities, included in Annex III:

- Agreement to reduce the use of some single-use plastic products at the Catalan Government, Spain, 2019 (in Catalan)
- Instruction in relation to bottled water and single-use plastic cups and other items at the municipal administration of Barcelona, Spain, 2019 (in Catalan).
- Policy to restrict the procurement and use of single-use plastic at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the Government of Canada, Canada, 2019 (in English).

## Foreword

*This section may contain information regarding the motivation and background for enacting the provisions detailed hereinafter, as well as the process of consultation and approval. This will fully depend on each national context.*

## Article 1. Objective

*This article may state the aim of the regulatory instrument. Generally, the objective of reducing single-use plastics should be addressed. The following wording is provided as example.*

This [name of the regulatory instrument] aims at adopting measures to reduce the procurement and use of unnecessary single-use plastic packaging and items in order to prevent the negative impacts that related plastic waste poses on the environment, society and economy.

## Article 2. Scope of application

*This article may determine the administrations and type of procurements where the provisions apply. If an overarching green or sustainable public procurement exists, reference to that might be included here. The following wording is proposed.*

This [name of the regulatory instrument] applies to all departments of the [name of the organisation] and its public sector bodies.

It requires the reduction of single-use plastic packaging and products in the facilities managed by the departments and entities mentioned above and the events organised by them. This includes:

1. Supplies needed for their regular operations and activities
2. Catering and vending services provided in their facilities
3. Meetings and public events organised by them

This applies to all facilities and acquisitions, managed or conducted directly and indirectly, except where specific public health, hygiene or safety issues arise.

The [name of the regulatory instrument] is issued under the [name of the overarching green or sustainable public procurement policy], which requires the [name of the organisation] to incorporate environmental considerations into its procurement processes.

## Article 3. Definitions

*This article shall include the definition of those concepts included in the regulatory instrument that are relevant for a clear understanding of the different types of plastics and measures included in it. Reference to any existing legal instruments containing relevant definitions for the scope of this instrument could also be included.*

[Reference to any existing legal instruments containing relevant definitions for the scope of this legal instrument]

- a) “Plastic”: material consisting of any of a wide range of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds that are malleable and so can be moulded into solid objects.
- b) “Single-use or disposable plastics”: products or packaging made of plastic that are generally used only once before being disposed of.
- c) “Unnecessary single-use plastics”: single-use plastics whose plastic composition and single-use nature are not necessary to comply with public health, hygiene or safety requirements.
- d) “Oxo-degradable plastics”: products or packaging made out of conventional plastic materials with chemical additives that fragment into small pieces.
- e) “Compostable plastics”: products or packaging made out of materials capable of being biodegraded at elevated temperatures in soil under specified conditions and time scales, usually only encountered in an industrial composter.
- f) “primary or sales packaging”: packaging conceived so as to constitute a sales unit to the final user or consumer at the point of purchase.
- g) “secondary or grouped packaging”: packaging conceived so as to constitute at the point of purchase a grouping of a certain number of sales units whether the latter is sold as such to the final user or consumer; it can be removed from the product without affecting its characteristics.
- h) “tertiary or transport packaging”: packaging conceived so as to facilitate handling and transport of a number of sales units or grouped packagings in order to prevent physical handling and transport damage.

## Article 4. Measures to reduce the procurement and use of single-use plastics

*This section may include the specific measures to avoid the procurement and use of single-use plastics. Different phases and different actions may be considered, as well as the exceptions. The following examples and wording are suggested, but the specific measures should be defined based on the national context. See Annex II for other possible measures and criteria.*

The following measures will have to be applied by all bodies in all purchases and contracts within the scope of this [name of the regulatory instrument] as defined in article 2:

1. [In all catering services, it is prohibited to supply drinks in single-use plastic packaging and to use disposable plastic tableware (cutlery, glassware, crockery), straws and stirrers. In these contracts alternative systems will have to be provided such as reusable jars for tap water, drink dispensers or products from or packaged in alternative materials such as glass, metal, cardboard or compostable materials.]
2. [In hot drink vending machine services, single-use plastic cups and stirrers shall not be supplied. Instead, machines will either supply paper cups or, when appropriate, allow to select the supply of no cup, for the use of reusable cups distributed to all staff. In these bimodal machines, the supply of cups will have a cost premium to incentive the use of reusable cups.]
3. [In cold drink vending machine services, bottled water will not be distributed or will only be distributed in bottles of at least one litre. For other drinks, glass or metal packaging should be prioritised to single-use plastic.]
4. [Appropriate waste collection bins will be installed nearby vending machine areas.]
5. [In all buildings (including meeting rooms), bottled water and single-use plastic cups will be avoided. They will be replaced by reusable bottles, jars and cups and water fountains connected to the tap water net available for both staff and visitors, with a design allowing the refill of the reusable bottles and jars.]
6. [In all frequent supply contracts, reusable and returnable tertiary or transport packaging will be promoted.]
7. [Finally, in all contracts, the use of oxo-degradable plastics are banned and measures to minimise primary and secondary packaging and/or promote the use of highly recyclable, compostable or recycled materials should be encouraged.]



## Article 5. Responsibilities and consequences

*The responsibilities for the regulatory instrument and type of in compliance and related consequences may be specified in this section. The responsibilities could fall under a department or agency but it could be also an existing or new steering committee specifically set up for this regulatory instrument. Other responsibilities might be mentioned here for example from the budget planning office, unit directors, human resources, etc.*

The supervision of the implementation of the [name of the regulatory instrument] is the responsibility of [name of the appointed department, agency or committee responsible for supervising its implementation].

In instance of failure to comply with [name of the regulatory instrument], corrective measures may be requested from the respective unit or entity to ensure that the [name of the regulatory instrument] is respected and implemented.

## Article 6. Enforcement date

This section specifies when the regulatory instrument enters into force. It can have a single effective date or a progressive enforcement, where several authorities can be increasingly involved.

This [name of the regulatory instrument] takes effect on [date of enforcement of the instrument].





## Annex II

# Compilation of possible criteria to introduce in procurement processes

This annex presents different possible criteria to be introduced in public procurement for each of the key sectors of the guidelines:

**TABLE 1**

Criteria for food and catering services

**TABLE 2**

Criteria for vending services

**TABLE 3**

Criteria for packaging in general (applicable to a wide diversity of contracts)

For each of them, information on the type of intervention and practice is provided, together with some remarks to take into consideration when considering the criterion.



TABLE 1. CRITERIA FOR FOOD AND CATERING SERVICES

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	TYPE OF PRACTICE	CRITERIA	REMARKS
Reduce, prevent or eliminate	Eliminate certain products or materials	Avoid single-use items (tableware, straws, stirrers, paper tray protectors, etc.).	
		Provide tap water (with or without filtering system) instead of bottled water.	
		Provide other drinks from dispensers (in reusable cups or glasses) rather than in individual packaging.	
	Minimise packaging	Avoid the provision of condiments (sugar, salt pepper, sauces, etc.) in individual units.	
Reuse, repair or upgrade	Prefer reusable options	Require the use of reusable tableware (cutlery, glassware, crockery) and tablecloths.	
Recycle	Recycled materials	Require that reusable items or single-use items contain a percentage of recycled content.	If recycled materials aren't yet very widespread, it is recommended to introduce it as an award criterion.
	Select more recyclable or compostable materials	In cases where the use of reusable items is not possible or recommended, require the use of products (tableware, tablecloths and other items) which are compostable or based on renewable raw materials and that are not laminated.	This should be required only if the waste management installations can treat such materials (for further information see Step 2 of the guidelines). For compostability, require materials to be in conformity with standard EN 13432 or equivalent, to avoid false claims.
Waste management	Selective waste collection	Require contractors to do selective waste collection of waste produced during the service.	This might require to include also the provision of training to contract staff to ensure good results; and awareness raising on users.
Other	Other	Buy fresh and seasonal produce with minimal packaging.	
		Use open/functional specifications to describe the need. Example: canteen operation where guests can eat/drink outside the canteen with minimal use of plastic and reduced environmental impact associated with disposable items.	

TABLE 2. CRITERIA FOR VENDING SERVICES

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	TYPE OF PRACTICE	CRITERIA	REMARKS
Reduce, prevent or eliminate	Eliminate certain products or materials	Remove water bottle from vending machines and provide instead tap water through water fountains (with or without filtering system) connected to the water supply and that allow the refill of reusable bottles.	These actions might require the implementation of awareness raising campaigns and the distribution of reusable cups and bottles, as part of the contract or as a separate purchase.
		Replace spring water dispensers for water fountains (with or without filtering system) connected to the water supply and that allow the refill of reusable bottles.	
		Require hot drink machines to either don't deliver single-use cups or to allow to select with or without cup (being without the default option whenever possible) and with a cost premium for the cup.	
		Require coffee in full grain (not capsules).	
Recycle	Select more recyclable or compostable materials	Replace disposable plastic cups with cups from compostable or renewable raw materials.	This should be required only if the waste management installations can treat such materials (for further information see Step 2 of the guidelines). For compostability, require materials to be in conformity with standard EN 13432 or equivalent, to avoid false claims.
		Replace plastic stirrers with sticks from compostable, biodegradable or renewable raw materials.	
Waste management	Selective waste collection	Require the installation of cans and bottles recovery machines for reuse or recycling.	



**TABLE 3. CRITERIA FOR PACKAGING IN GENERAL  
(APPLICABLE TO A WIDE DIVERSITY OF CONTRACTS) (1/2)**

TYPE OF INTERVENTION	TYPE OF PRACTICE	CRITERIA	REMARKS
Reduce, prevent or eliminate	Eliminate certain products or materials	Avoid products supplied in individual portions or single units.	Require suppliers to label plastic types so that it is easier to identify these types.
		Avoid oxo-plastic packaging.	
		Avoid expanded polystyrene packaging.	
		Avoid PVC and other halogenated packaging.	
	Minimise packaging	Use concentrated products that can be diluted during use, if needed, in reusable containers.	For example, concentrated cleaning products that can be diluted on site and dispensed in reusable bottles.
Reuse, repair or upgrade	Prefer reusable options	Require reusable transport packaging in deliveries; or in contracts with high generation of packaging waste such constructions and works, require contractors to set a minimum and a target level for the use of reusable transport packaging/containers of materials.	
		Replace single use packaging for refillable alternatives.	
Waste management	Take-back systems	Require contractors to provide take-back schemes for their packaging.	
	Selective waste collection	Require contractor to do a correct management of the waste packaging generated during the contract by ensuring its selective collection and disposal.	This should be required only if selective waste collection and treatment are in place in the country or region.
	Mixed	In contracts with high generation of packaging waste such constructions and works, require contractors to set a minimum and a target level for packaging waste (to be achieved for instance through a system of take back, reuse and recycle of packaging).	

**TABLE 3. CRITERIA FOR PACKAGING IN GENERAL  
(APPLICABLE TO A WIDE DIVERSITY OF CONTRACTS) (2/2)**

Type of intervention	Type of practice	Criteria	Remarks
Recycle	Avoid composite materials	Require packaging (especially non-reusable one) to be of a single material.	
	Request easy disassembly	If packaging cannot be of a single material, ensure that packaging can be easily separated into its different materials without the use of tools to facilitate their sorting and recycling.	
	Ensure plastic marking	Require packaging to be labelled based on the materials it is made of to facilitate sorting and recycling.	
	Avoid harmful substances	Only phthalates that at the time of application have been risk assessed and have not been hazard classified or categorized may be used in the plastic packaging.	
	Select more recyclable or compostable materials	Require packaging not to be black or dark coloured (except when made from recycled material).	Require suppliers to label plastic types so that it is easier to identify those that can be managed.
		Require packaging to be made of materials compatible for recycling with common reprocessing technology in your country or region (cardboard, PET- Polyethylene terephthalate, PE-polyethylene, PP-polypropylene...).	Require suppliers to label plastic types so that it is easier to identify those that can be managed.
		Require compostable packaging.	This should be required only if the waste management installations can treat such materials (for further information see Step 2 of the guidelines). For compostability, require materials to be in conformity with standard EN 13432 or equivalent, to avoid false claims.
	Recycled materials	Require packaging made, at least in a percentage, of recycled material.	If recycled materials aren't yet very widespread, it is recommended to introduce it as an award criterion.

# Annex III

## Compilation of examples from public authorities

The examples compiled in this annex have been organized in the following categories:

- III-1. Initial assessment
- III-2. Policies
- III-3. GPP criteria
- III-4. Procurement of catering services
- III-5. Procurement of vending services
- III-6. Procurement linked to the organization of events
- III-7. Procurement of cleaning services
- III-8. Initiatives, awareness raising and communication

For each of them, information on the responsible organization, country, year of implementation and short description is provided, together with links to more information whenever available. Furthermore, information on the type of intervention applied in each case is also provided based on the following icons:



Prevention/ minimization



Reuse/Repurpose/Retrofit



Recycling/Recycled





## III-1. Initial assessment

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### Fredrikstad municipality's action plan against plastic

Fredrikstad | Norway | 2018

The municipality has mapped all the areas that use plastic in order to establish concrete measures. The plan was developed by the Environment and Urban Development Agency and anchored in various departments, including the purchasing department.

More information [here](#) (in Norwegian)

## III-2. Policies

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### Policy to prohibit the purchase of bottled water

Government of Slovakia | Slovakia | 2018



Since 1 November 2018 the Slovak Ministry of Environment has adopted a ministerial order which prohibits to purchase bottled water for representation and other purposes by the Ministry and its public companies or agencies. Tap water must be served in jugs instead, except in those circumstances where no tap water is available in the premises.

### Agreement to reduce the use of some single-use plastic products at the Catalan Government

Government of Catalonia | Spain | 2019



The Catalan Government has passed an internal regulation to reduce the use of single-use plastic products and packaging in the Government departments and agencies, in their buildings and public events through public procurement. This includes the ban to supply beverages in disposable plastic containers or using single-use plastic products such as cutlery, cups and stirrers; the use of other distribution systems or alternative materials; and the supply of bottled water in bottles of at least one litre or more.

More information [here](#) (in Catalan)

### Decision to reduce single-use plastics at government departments, public bodies and schools

Government of Ireland | Ireland | 2019



The Government passed on 3 January a decision which stated that Government departments would not purchase, directly or indirectly, single use plastic beverage containers, cutlery or straws. This restriction will also apply to all public bodies including state agencies and schools unless specific public health, hygiene or safety issues arise.

### Other similar examples:

- [Instruction in relation to bottled water and single-use plastic cups and other items at the municipal administration of Barcelona, Spain, 2019](#) (in Catalan).
- [Policy to restrict the procurement and use of single-use plastic at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of the Government of Canada, Canada, 2019](#) (in English).
- [Articles 5.3.12.1 to 5.3.12.3 on conditions for the use of catering material within the Decision of the Flemish Government on the sustainable management of material loops and waste, Flanders-Belgium, 2019](#) (in Dutch).

### III-3. GPP Criteria

#### General criterium on packaging for different tendering processes

Government of Flanders | Belgium | 2019



Taking into consideration that a lot of goods are packaged for transport and delivery, which can have a significant environmental impact, the Government of Flanders has developed a guiding general GPP criterium on packaging to be included in contracts that include the delivery of goods.

The criterium, that should be adapted on a case-by-case basis, gives preference to the minimization of packaging as much as possible and to the use of reusable packaging when packaging is unavoidable. If single-use packaging has to be used, the criterium promotes monomaterial packaging or non-attached materials that can be easily separated by hand, those from plastic should be from plastic types with high recycling rates in the region (PET, PP, HDPE, LDPE or PS – both bio-based and fossil based) and those from paper/cardboard should be made from at least 70% sustainably managed forests and/or recycled.

More information [here](#) (in Dutch)

#### General criterium on packaging for non-medical supplies

Healthcare organisation Barrualde-Galdakao – Basque Country (Spain) | 2019



In their efforts to integrate GPP in all their purchases, the healthcare organisation Barrualde-Galdakao developed internal GPP criteria for several product groups. One of those is for the supply of non-medical goods and products (including furniture, shoes, detergents...). The criteria defined, are award criteria and foresee to give points if: 1) products are package with recyclable packaging, and for that, they have to have the Green Dot mark that ensures that the company is part of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for packaging; and 2) if the packaging is made out of recycled material or from sustainably managed forests. For the first one, the packaging has to include the Möbius circle with the % of recycled content. For sustainable forestry, they have to be marked with the FSC, PEFC or similar ecolabel.

#### EU GPP criteria for food, catering services and vending machines

European Commission | 2019



The European Commission has developed GPP criteria for the food, catering services and vending machines. In reference to packaging in catering services, the following criteria are established among others: ordering non-perishable products in bulk, selecting recyclable and compostable packaging, returning packaging for reuse, avoiding items with unnecessary or excessive secondary packaging, and putting condiments and food servings in refillable containers.

More information [here](#) (in English at the moment but in all EU languages soon)

#### Other similar examples:

The European Union and other countries have also developed GPP criteria for various product groups that may include criteria on single-use packaging and items. A review of the different criteria could be conducted to identify those that are more relevant for each authority.

## III-4. Procurement of catering services

### Eco-Schools program

Government of Slovenia | Slovenia | 2016



An international project has been implemented in primary and secondary schools with the aim of improving the nutrition of students, reduce the amount of wasted food, reduce the use of packaging, promote shorter supply chains, school seed banks and gardens, etc.

More information [here](#) (in Slovenian)

### Serving more organic and nutritionally-balanced food in schools

Municipal administration of München | Germany | 2018



The tender for the school food catering framework contract includes a requirement to avoid packaging material as far as possible, with priority given to reusable packaging. In addition, disposable packaging must be recyclable and reusable containers must be made available for transport to the facility, without deposit or billing, and must also be collected.

More information [here](#) (in English)

### Preparation and delivery of healthy and sustainable school meals

Municipal administration of Ottignies | Belgium | 2019



In the tender for municipal school catering several sustainability criteria were introduced. Some of the criteria refer to minimise the use of single-use plastics: the awarded company was required to favour the most environmentally friendly packaging and should give priority to products packaged in large volume and in returnable packaging. In addition, fresh tap water should be served to children and no bottled beverages are allowed.

More information [here](#) (in English)

#### Other similar examples:

- [Monitoring low carbon](#), sustainable catering services, Municipal administration of Turin, Italy, 2018 (in English).
- [Hospital eco-catering service](#), Municipal administration of Piedmont, Italy, 2018 (in English).
- [Reusable cups in the beach stalls](#), Municipal administration of Barcelona, Spain, 2018 (in Catalan).





## III-5. Procurement of vending services

### Sustainable, climate friendly catering

University of Basel | Switzerland | 2016



The University of Basel has introduced refill zones where users can refill their hot and cold beverages in multi-use containers. In order to promote the measure, in cafeterias and the shop they sell reusable coffee cups and bottles).

More information [here](#) (in English)

### Eco-innovative vending machines

University of Turin | Italy | 2018



The University of Turin has rethought its vending requirements in order to stimulate eco-innovation. Some requirements include the provision of water dispensers to allow users to fill their own bottles; award proposals for efficient waste management and for recovery or reuse of coffee grounds; award the use of water bottles from recycled plastic bottles (rPET) or bio-based PET; and award the use of instantly ground coffee machines (full grain machines).

More information [here](#) (in English)

### Vending machines at the Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona

Municipal administration of Barcelona | Spain | 2018



According to the tender for vending machines at the Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona, hot drink machines should have the option to offer the service with or without cup, with added cost for the cup in order to favour the use of reusable glasses.

More information [here](#) (in Catalan)

Other examples:

- [Purified water sources connected to the network and reusable containers at Mutualia, Spain, 2018](#) (in Spanish).



## III-6. Procurement linked to the organization of events

### Green activities on 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship

Government of Slovakia and the Championship Organizing Committee | Slovakia | 2019



The Slovak Ministry of Environment in collaboration with the Organizing Committee of the 2019 IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship provided reusable cups and biodegradable tableware instead of single-use plastic items in cafeterias and snack bars. Organizers had also placed in total 580 containers for waste separation with information about the proper separation.

### Reusable cups in festive events organised in Barcelona

Municipal administration of Barcelona | Spain | 2018



Barcelona has been working for a long time in improving the sustainability of its festivities and for years the reusable plastic glass has been implanted (using a deposit-return scheme). It is estimated that in 2018 1,004,500 reusable glasses have been used (this is also implemented in other municipal facilities such as the zoo, the amusement park or the sports hall that hosts concerts).

More information [here](#) (in Catalan)

### Replacement of water bottles for paper cups in races

Municipal administration of Barcelona | Spain | 2019



In the tenders for the organisation of several races supported by the municipality, the Barcelona Sports Institute has required the replacement of water bottles for paper cups. It is estimated that in 2018, waste of 64,000 single-use plastic bottles has been avoided.





## III-7. Procurement of cleaning services

### Green procurement of cleaning products

Municipal administration of Ghent | Belgium | 2017



In the framework agreement for the supply of cleaning products and sanitary supplies, the municipal administration of Ghent introduced environmental criteria such as the use of refillable packs and that the supplier must provide evidence that the material taken back is recycled. Furthermore, extra points were awarded if the supplier intensifies its efforts or applies innovative methods for reducing and/or minimising waste. As a result, the recycled content and recyclability of waste was greatly improved: packaging used was 85% recycled cardboard, plastic bottles were made of 100% recyclable PEHD and 10% was recycled PEHD, while those made of PET were 100% recyclable and made from 81% recycled materials.

More information [here](#) (in English)

### Procurement of cleaning products and services with reduced packaging

Municipal administration of Lolland | Denmark | 2011



The municipality of Lolland framed their procurement of cleaning services on operational needs. In order to improve resource efficiency, cleaning products were reduced by 30-50% and therefore, this optimization is expected to reduce packaging.

More information [here](#) (in English)

### Green cleaning products and services

Government of Estonia | Estonia | 2019



The cleaning products and services tender of the Estonian Police included requirements such as the use of refillable containers (including spray bottles), the minimization of the amount of waste generated, the use of dosing devices and the use of low environmental impact cleaning products based on existing ecolabels.

More information [here](#) (in English)





## III-8. Initiatives, awareness raising and communication

### GPP website to promote environmental aspects in public procurement

Government of Croatia | Croatia | 2018



The Government of Croatia has a web page to communicate and promote green public procurement criteria, and to make known good practices. Many of these criteria takes into account plastic aspects of products.

More information [here](#) (in Croatian)

### “Plastic Free” initiative

Government of Italy | Italy | 2018



The Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea Protection has launched a campaign to apply the 4Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) in its departments, agencies and buildings. Some of the measures included were the installation of water dispensers connected to the water network, free distribution of recycled aluminum bottles to employees and the replacement of plastics cups by paper ones and of plastic stirrers by wooden ones in hot drinks distributors.

More information [here](#) (in Italian)

### “End to disposable plastic cups”

Government of Cyprus | Cyprus | 2018



The Department of Environment invited all companies which offer drinks in a disposable plastic cups to apply new methods to reduce the consumption of disposable plastic (encourage customers to buy reusable cups or bring their own giving them the incentive to take their beverage at a discount, among other measures).

### Other examples:

- Your free waste festival: zero waste handbook for festival and event promoters, published by the civil association Punkt with financial support from the Green Education Fund of the Slovak Environmental Agency, Government of Slovakia, Slovakia, 2018.
- [Campaign to promote the reduction of waste of glass and plastic bottles in the hostelry sector](#), Municipal administration of Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain, 2006 (in Spanish).
- [Project “Plastika naša vsakdanja”](#), Government of Slovenia, Slovenia, 2018 (in Slovenian).
- [Campaign in favour of tap water](#), Government of Slovenia, Slovenia, 2019 (in Slovenian).

## Annex IV

## Terminology



## General terms

### Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP)

Process whereby public organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life cycle basis. This means generating benefits not only to the organization, but also to society and the economy, whilst significantly reducing negative impacts on the environment<sup>21</sup>.

### Green Public Procurement (GPP)

Process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured<sup>22</sup>.

### Circular economy

Looking beyond the current “take, make and dispose” extractive industrial model, a circular economy aims to redefine growth, focusing on positive society-wide benefits. It entails gradually decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources and designing waste out of the system. Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural and social capital. It is based on three principles: design out waste and pollution; keep products and materials in use, regenerate natural systems<sup>23</sup>.

### Life Cycle Analysis (LCA)

Also referred to as life cycle assessment, is a technique to assess environmental impacts associated with all the stages of a product’s life from raw material extraction through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling. The most important applications are these: (i) analysis of the contribution of the life cycle stages to the overall environmental load, usually with the aim to prioritize improvements on products or processes; (ii) comparison between products for internal use<sup>24</sup>.

### Extended producer responsibility (EPR)

Policy approach under which producers take responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products. Assigning such responsibility could in principle provide incentives to prevent wastes at the source, promote product design for the environment and support the achievement of public recycling and materials management goals<sup>25</sup>.

## Common definitions regarding plastics

### Plastic

Material consisting of any of a wide range of synthetic or semi-synthetic organic compounds that are malleable and so can be moulded into solid objects. Plastics are typically organic polymers of high molecular mass and often contain other substances. They are usually synthetic, most commonly derived from petrochemicals, however, an array of variants are made from renewable materials such as polylactic acid from corn or cellulose from cotton linters<sup>26</sup>.

### Single-use plastics

Often also referred to as disposable plastics, are generally used only once before being discarded or recycled. These include, among other items, food packaging, plastic bags, straws, bottles, containers, lids, coffee stirrers, cups and cutlery, for which plastic is widely used due to its lightness, low cost and practical features<sup>27</sup>.

### Microplastics

Small pieces of plastic, less than 5 mm in length, that occur in the environment as a consequence of plastic pollution. Microplastics come from a variety of sources, including from larger plastic debris that degrades into smaller pieces. In addition, microbeads, a type of microplastic, are very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic that are added as exfoliants to health and beauty products, such as some cleaners and

21. Definition adopted by the 10 YFP SPP Programme from: UK Sustainable Procurement Task Force (2006). Procuring the Future. UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

22. EC (2008). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 16 July 2008 on Public procurement for a better environment.

23. Ellen MacArthur Foundation 2017, What is a circular economy? A framework for an economy that is restorative and regenerative by design <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>.

24. Muralikrishna I. & Manickam V. (2017). Life Cycle Assessment. In Environmental Management (pp. 57-75). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

25. OECD (2001). Extended Producer Responsibility: A Guidance Manual for Governments. Paris: OECD Publishing.

26. SCP/RAC (2019). Guidelines to phase out single-use plastic bags in the Mediterranean. [http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/other-files/11\\_guidelines\\_supb\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/other-files/11_guidelines_supb_en_0.pdf).

27. UNEP (2018). Single-use plastics: a roadmap for sustainability. <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/25496>



toothpastes. These tiny particles easily pass through water filtration systems and end up in the ocean. Microplastics are also present in synthetic clothing<sup>28</sup>.

### Bio-based plastics

Bio-based plastics are derived from biomass such as organic waste material or crops grown specifically for the purpose. Some polymers made from biomass sources, such as maize, may be non-biodegradable<sup>29</sup>.

## Common definitions regarding packaging<sup>30</sup>

### Primary or sales packaging

Packaging conceived so as to constitute a sales unit to the final user or consumer at the point of purchase.

### Secondary or grouped packaging

Packaging conceived so as to constitute at the point of purchase a grouping of a certain number of sales units whether the latter is sold as such to the final user or consumer or whether it serves only as a means to replenish the shelves at the point of sale; it can be removed from the product without affecting its characteristics.

### Tertiary or transport packaging

Packaging conceived so as to facilitate handling and transport of a number of sales units or grouped packaging in order to prevent physical handling and transport damage. Transport packaging does not include road, rail, ship and air containers.

## Common definitions regarding the biodegradation of polymers<sup>27</sup>

### Biodegradation

Biological process of organic matter, which is completely or partially converted to water, CO<sub>2</sub>/methane, energy and new biomass by microorganisms (bacteria and fungi). The conditions under which "biodegradable" polymers will actually biodegrade vary widely. For example, a single-use plastic shopping bag

marked 'biodegradable' may require the conditions that commonly occur only in an industrial composter (e.g. between 50°C and 60°C) to breakdown completely into its constituent components of water, carbon dioxide, methane, on a reasonable or practical timescale.

### Biodegradable

Capable of being biodegraded.

### Compostable

Capable of being biodegraded at elevated temperatures in soil under specified conditions and time scales, usually only encountered in an industrial composter (standards apply).

### Oxo-degradable plastics

Conventional polymers, such as polyethylene, which have had a metal compound added to act as a catalyst, or pro-oxidant, to increase the rate of initial oxidation and fragmentation. They are sometimes referred to as oxy-biodegradable or oxo-degradable. Initial degradation may result in the production of many small fragments (i.e. microplastics), but the eventual fate of these is poorly understood. As with all forms of degradation the rate and degree of fragmentation and utilisation by microorganisms will be dependent on the surrounding environment. There appears to be no convincing published evidence that oxo-degradable plastics do mineralize completely in the environment, except under industrial composting conditions.

### EN 13432

European compostability standard for biodegradable packaging designed for treatment in industrial composting facilities and anaerobic digestion, requiring that at least 90% of the organic matter is converted into CO<sub>2</sub> within 6 months, and that no more than 30% of the residue is retained by a 2 mm mesh sieve after 3 months composting. Standard EN 14995 describes the same requirements and tests, however it applies not only to packaging but plastics in general. The same holds for ISO 18606 "Packaging and the environment – Organic Recycling" and ISO 17088 "Specifications for compostable plastics".

28. NOAA (2018). What are microplastics?, National Ocean Service, viewed 14 October 2019.

<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/microplastics.html>

29. SCP/RAC, Guidelines to phase out single-use plastic bags in the Mediterranean. [http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/11\\_guidelines\\_supb\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://www.cprac.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/11_guidelines_supb_en_0.pdf).

30. Directive 94/62/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 1994 on packaging and packaging waste. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A31994L0062>

