

Zero Plastics to Landfill by 2025

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- **Resource efficiency starts with using waste as a resource**
Using waste as a resource is key to becoming more resource efficient. Landfilling is a waste of resources and should therefore be banned for both *recyclable* and *other recoverable* post-consumer waste, i.e. waste which can be used in order to save fossil fuels as well.
- **Plastics: too valuable to end up in landfills**
Stopping the landfilling of recyclable and other recoverable post-consumer waste by 2025 will provide legal certainty and prevent around 8 million tonnes per year of plastics from ending up in landfills. According to a recent impact assessment carried out by PlasticsEurope, diverting plastic waste from landfill by 2025 would lead to an annual additional amount of over 5 Mt of plastic recycling. The remaining plastic waste which cannot be sustainably recycled at this stage together with other associated recoverable waste could generate around 330 TWh of energy annually. This energy would provide 30 million people with electricity, heating and cooling and would save 70 million barrels of oil consumed by the industry, for instance to produce cement. It would also create close to 300,000 additional jobs related to waste sorting, plastics recycling and energy recovery plants.
- **A challenging but realistic goal**
In recent years a significant reduction in plastics being landfilled in Europe has already been seen, with the amount being reduced by 38% between 2006 and 2014. By significantly reducing the landfilling of plastic waste within less than 10 years, European countries with a landfill ban have shown that the goal is a realistic one. Nevertheless, while seven Member States as well as Norway and Switzerland landfill less than 10% of their plastic waste, eleven Member States still landfill over 50%. This is the result of the combination of poor enforcement of existing EU waste legislation, insufficient infrastructure and landfilling being the cheapest option.
- **More resource efficiency overall should be the overarching objective**
As shown by the past years' evolution of plastic waste management data, diversion of plastics from landfill will first contribute to plastics recycling. However, it is key to understand that more recycling is not the goal - resource efficiency is. While most plastic waste can technically be recycled, recycling is not always the most eco-efficient waste management option. Recycling plastics beyond an optimum level will result in higher costs or low quality recycling with little or no environmental benefits.

Key recommendations:

- 1. The landfilling of recyclable and other recoverable post-consumer waste should be stopped by 2025**
The Circular Economy package proposes to restrict the landfilling of municipal waste and to ban the landfilling of separately collected waste. Policy-makers should strive to divert all recyclable and other recoverable post-consumer waste from landfill. This includes packaging waste for which separate collection should be made mandatory.
- 2. Efficient energy-from-waste should be part of Europe's energy strategy**
Using plastics, which cannot be recycled sustainably, as a secondary source of energy, thereby saving fossil fuels, expands the diversity of the EU's energy supply, improves energy security, and helps mitigate climate change. Using such waste as a resource should have a role to play in the EU's energy and resource efficiency strategies.
- 3. Support innovation in plastics recycling technologies**
In order to further increase the potential of plastic recycling, innovation in recycling technologies is needed. One goal is to make feedstock recycling viable for plastics, turning them back into their basic chemical building blocks.