The European Union To Ban Single-Use Plastics By 2021

European Union lawmakers recently voted 571 to 53 for a complete ban on 10 single-use plastics including plates, cutlery, straws, balloon sticks, cotton buds straws, cutlery, and coffee stirrers. These plastic products are said to have readily available alternatives. Other plastics not included in the ban were said to have no alternatives available, but will still have to be reduced by 25% in each country by 2025 and will have to be recycled at a rate of 90%. The EU recycles only a quarter of the plastic waste it produces yearly.

The rules also state that at least 50% of lost or abandoned fishing gear containing plastic is retrieved. Fishing gear accounts for 27% of the waste found on Europe's beaches.

Amendments were tacked on for cigarette filters. Cigarette manufacturers will have to reduce their plastic waste by 50% by 2025 and 80% by 2030.

> *We have adopted the most ambitious legislation against single-use plastics. It is up to us now to stay the course in the upcoming negotiations with the Council, due to start as early as November. Today's vote paves the way to a forthcoming and ambitious directive. It is essential in order to protect the marine environment and reduce the costs of environmental damage attributed to plastic pollution in Europe, estimated at 22 billion euros by 2030." – Frédérique Ries*

The EU's final rules still need to be approved in talks with member states. Some of the states are indicating resistance, stating that it would be too difficult to implement the changes.

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