

LOCAL GUIDANCE FOR

IMPLEMENTING THE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS DIRECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION



The level of ambition with which Member States transpose and implement the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive may largely sit at the national or regional level, but local municipalities and cities often act as hubs to innovate and accelerate progress towards change.

This short guide has been specifically designed for municipality officials who are interested in and committed to successfully implementing the 2019 SUP Directive within their city or community. It has been designed as a supplement to the ‘Guide for National Decision Makers to Implement the Single-Use Plastics Directive.’ [1]

It contains advice and inspiration for policies and actions at the local level. Each of the ideas listed below can be applied in a variety of contexts found across Europe, but they will be most successful when they have been tailored and adapted to meet the specific needs of the city or community. This is most often achieved through the meaningful inclusion and engagement of local stakeholders throughout the policy design and implementation process.

Too often, the fight against waste and pollution is too narrow and focuses solely on the lower part of the waste hierarchy, specifically the collection and management of waste. We hope that this short guide can act as a catalyst for municipalities, increasing awareness and inspiring action to address the issue of plastic pollution further up the waste hierarchy, by implementing effective waste prevention and reduction policies that will turn the tide against the flow of single-use plastics into our streets, beaches and seas.

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[1] https://rethinkplasticalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019_10_10_rpa_bffp_sup_guide.pdf

HOW LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE AMBITIOUS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUP DIRECTIVE

To begin with, municipalities can take action that facilitates the reduction of available single-use plastics by enacting:

Total or partial bans on certain types of products, like plastic bags, cups and certain types of packaging. Municipalities can work with businesses and other local stakeholders to implement city-wide bans on certain products, or they can enact policies limited to the municipality's immediate jurisdiction, such as through its public procurement process and within all public buildings. Such measures could have a greater impact in coastal areas or popular tourist destinations, where it is harder to ensure the constant involvement of citizens in reducing their plastic use.

Compulsory rules on waste prevention for public events. Municipalities can play a key role in defining ambitious rules that align with the SUP Directive for any public event. For example, this could include placing restrictions on the use of certain single-use plastic items that can be used, as well as working with experts from local civil society groups and businesses to enact closed-loop reuse systems (e.g. reusables cups and containers with a deposit) and ensure effective waste collection and separation systems are in place for each event. For example, Vilnius is the latest EU capital to ban single-use plastics at public events.

Ambitious green public procurement guidelines. These guidelines should enforce the prioritisation of reusable products and services across all of the municipality's jurisdiction, in order to reduce and prevent waste further. They should also apply to all public buildings and services, including not just procurement conducted in administrative centres but in local schools and hospitals as well.

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Reductions in the availability of single-use plastic products by municipalities should be complemented and strengthened through the promotion of zero waste solutions, such as:

Develop capacity for free tap drinking water all over the city, either by installing a network of accessible water fountains or by encouraging shops, restaurants and others to distribute water for free [2] to consume or to be taken away in a refillable bottle.

Financial incentives and technical guidance to facilitate the growth of shops that offer products and goods in bulk. [3] Often done in support and collaboration with local businesses and civil society organisations, the range of action that municipalities can take differs from financial incentives for zero waste business models, to legal or entrepreneurial guidance that builds the capacity of entrepreneurs and business owners who want to open packaging-free shops;

Deposit return schemes [4] that incentivise reusable beverage containers and/or take away food containers for consumers. As an example, there is a growing amount of initiatives, both private and public-led, that showcase how reusable coffee cups are being successfully implemented [5] across Europe;

Social awareness programmes/materials, as well as small financial incentives, that encourage and promote citizens to use their own bring-in containers for food and drink to restaurants and shops, reducing the need for single-use plastic packaging;

Fun, informative and engaging challenges for citizens to minimize the waste they're producing, promoting their examples and rewarding them with discounts or offers to local initiatives. Zero waste challenges are widespread in several European countries, [6] both publicly and privately organized;

Workshops, events or trainings held within the community that highlight citizen-led initiatives which prevent waste from being generated, such as DIY make-up, cleaning products and home composting for example. Often the expertise to lead such workshops will already exist within the community or within a nearby network that local civil society groups can connect municipalities to.

[2] <https://refill.org.uk/>

[3] <https://zerowasteeurope.eu/2019/12/the-story-of-unverpackt/>

[4] <https://zerowasteeurope.eu/2019/07/deposit-return-systems-an-effective-instrument-towards-a-zero-waste-future/>

[5] https://rethinkplasticalliance.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/bffp_rpa_reusable_solutions_report.pdf

[6] <https://zerowastecities.eu/bestpractice/the-story-of-roubaix/>

Municipalities should supplement these reduction measures with an effective waste collection and recycling system, which includes:

Supporting the development and implementation of strong Extended Producer

Responsibility (EPR) schemes where possible, with both financial and operational support.

This can be effectively supported by municipalities collecting data on the costs they currently are required to pay for clean-up and waste management, responsibility which should ultimately sit with the producers;

Convening groups of local businesses and stakeholders to implement voluntary EPR schemes in certain sectors that are most relevant within your city or community;

Installing bins in public places for separate waste streams to encourage the separation and sorting of recyclable materials, such as plastic, outside of the household and business. This has the biggest impact when it is conducted together with widespread and accessible communications, informing citizens of the bins and what products can/cannot go in each;

Working with the local waste management company to develop efficient waste collection systems, such as pay-as-you-throw, that incentivise households and businesses to reduce the amount of waste they generate by charging more to those who generate the most waste;

Collaborating with local recycling and waste management companies to provide greater transparency and understanding on whether any material that has been sent for recycling or to be treated has been exported outside of the EU and/or Europe.

Communicating with the community

Regarding all of the measures that have been listed above, the impact and effect of each will be highly dependent on the implementation of accessible and informative communications. These should be created and delivered by the municipality, in partnership with other local stakeholders, to ensure that they not only contain the right information, but that this information is communicated in a manner which is easy to understand and reflects the diverse needs of community members.

Successful municipal-level initiatives require the active engagement of local stakeholders, often achieved largely through consistent and clear communications that explain the actions individuals should take and the benefits this will bring.

CONCLUSION

The Single-Use Plastics Directive is a landmark piece of legislation, signalling an important first step towards tackling the plastic pollution crisis and transitioning towards a zero waste future.

Cities and communities throughout Europe should recognise the active role they can and should play in ensuring the ambition of the SUP Directive becomes a reality, through the design and implementation of effective policies that engage the community in a collaborative approach.

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#breakfreefromplastic

#breakfreefromplastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution made up of 1,400 organisations from across the world demanding massive reductions in single-use plastic and pushing for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.

RETHINK PLASTIC

Rethink Plastic, part of the Break Free From Plastic movement, is an alliance of leading European NGOs, representing thousands of active groups, supporters and citizens in every EU Member State.



Zero Waste Europe is the European network of communities, local leaders, businesses, experts, and change agents working towards the elimination of waste in our society. Working to empower communities to redesign their relationship with resources, and to adopt smarter lifestyles and sustainable consumption patterns in line with a circular economy.