

## Zero Plastics to Landfill by 2025

September 2019

- **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 would prevent around 7.4 million tonnes per year of plastics from being landfilled. It would provide the necessary legal certainty for stakeholders to invest in new treatment facilities and help achieve future ambitious plastics recycling targets. The calorific value of the remaining plastics waste which cannot be sustainably recycled at this stage would be used to provide energy (electricity, heating or cooling) either to citizens or to industry, thereby saving fossil fuels.
- **Pursuing an ambitious goal**  
In recent years a significant reduction in plastics being landfilled in Europe has already been achieved, with the amount being reduced by 43% between 2006 and 2016. By significantly reducing the landfilling of plastics waste within less than 10 years, European countries with a landfill ban have shown that the goal is a realistic one. Nevertheless, the latest data from 2016 show that while eight Member States, as well as Norway and Switzerland landfill less than 10% of their plastics waste, eight others still landfill over 50%. This is the result of the combination of poor enforcement of the waste hierarchy, 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 plastics waste management data, diversion of plastics from landfill will first contribute to plastics recycling. However, more resource efficiency rather than recycling should remain the ultimate goal. While most plastics 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**  
In order to reach the ambitious recycling targets of the Waste Package by 2025 and 2030, Member States should endeavour to divert all recyclable and other recoverable post-consumer waste, in particular packaging, from landfill as early as from 2025.
2. **Support innovation in plastics recycling technologies**  
In order to further increase the potential of plastics recycling, innovation in recycling technologies is needed. One goal is to make chemical recycling viable for plastics, turning them back into their basic chemical building blocks.
3. **Efficient energy-from-waste should be part of Europe's energy strategy**  
Using certain plastic waste, until it can be recycled sustainably, as a secondary source of energy or recycled carbon fuels (as defined in the Directive 2018/2001) expands the diversity of the EU's energy supply, improves energy security and helps mitigate climate change. Without counting these fuels as recycled material (according to the Waste Framework Directive), using such waste as a resource has a role to play in the EU's (renewable) energy and resource efficiency strategies.