



30.1.2025

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0841/2023 by L. B. D. (German) on banning disposable lighters

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner calls for a legal ban on disposable lighters. This is mainly justified by the environmental damage caused by disposable lighters. According to the petitioner, the current climate crisis and the problems with microplastics in the ocean and the environment demand action.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 29 November 2023. Information requested from Commission under Rule 233(5).

3. Commission reply, received on 30 January 2025

The Commission's observations

While the EU has not addressed disposable lighters directly, various existing or upcoming EU-level initiatives, policies and tools aim at tackling the unsustainable use of (plastic) products and the littering of (plastic) waste to reduce their negative impacts on the environment and human health.

The Directive on Single-Use Plastics ('SUP')¹, adopted in 2019, is a key instrument in the EU for addressing the problem of (plastic) marine litter. It covers those SUP products that have been found most often as litter on European beaches, fishing gear containing plastic, and all products made from oxo-degradable plastics. The SUP Directive introduces a mix of measures, including market bans for products made from oxo-degradable plastic and certain SUP products for which alternatives are easily available and affordable.

¹ Directive (EU) 2019/904

The Commission will evaluate the SUP Directive by July 2027 and assess whether amending it is appropriate. This assessment is planned to include an analysis of the plastic items most often found as litter on our beaches. In case there is evidence that disposable lighters are among the major sources of plastic products that are littered, an array of possible measures to minimize the negative environmental impacts will be analyzed in detail.

The fact that plastic lighters are not covered by the SUP Directive is not a bar to effective action against their littering. Already today, the Waste Framework Directive² enables Member States to include measures for disposable lighters as part of their extended producer responsibility schemes, which impose financial or financial and organizational responsibilities for the management of the waste on the producers of certain products. Such measures may include the acceptance of returned products at the end of their life cycle, the subsequent management of the waste and financial responsibility for such activities, as well as the obligation to provide publicly available information as to the extent to which a product is re-usable and recyclable.

In addition, the EU Action Plan 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil'³, adopted in May 2021, sets targets for the EU to reduce marine plastic litter by 50% and microplastics released into the environment by 30% by 2030. The Action Plan aims to strengthen the EU green, digital and economic leadership, whilst creating a healthier, socially fairer Europe and planet. It provides a compass to mainstream pollution prevention in all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps.

Finally, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation ('ESPR')⁴ is a central instrument in making sustainable products the norm. The ESPR is a framework legislation, setting out general objectives and empowerments, while leaving concrete measures in the form of information and performance requirements, to be laid down in a second stage, on a product-by-product basis. Such requirements do not include the possibility of banning of products, but they can, inter alia, include requirements that make them more durable and more suitable for reuse. Priorities for the rollout of the ESPR will be set in a multiannual working plan to be published by the Commission by 19 April 2025. The Regulation lists a number of product groups that should in principle be prioritised. Lighters are not among the listed product groups, although the Commission may deviate from the prescribed list where duly justified.

Conclusion

The EU has acknowledged and addressed the problems arising from an unsustainable use of plastic products and the harmful impact of littered plastic on the environment.

To ensure the efficiency of the measures tackling these issues, it is important to focus on those products that are the most relevant. Through the upcoming evaluation and possible review of the Single-Use Plastics Directive and the new rules under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation there are mechanisms in place to identify and address the products for which measures can generate the largest environmental benefits.

² Directive 2008/98/EC

³ [Zero Pollution Action Plan - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)