

# RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS PLASTIC POLLUTION IN ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, GEORGIA, UKRAINE, AND UZBEKISTAN

The following recommendations aimed at governments and stakeholders are based on the conclusions and suggestions found in the national reports prepared during the project, as well as the results of discussions about plastic pollution conducted in the EECCA region. Consequently, they represent a strategy to address plastic pollution in the targeted countries. The recommendations encompass reducing plastic production, particularly single-use plastics, enhancing waste management, increasing recycling rates, minimizing plastic leakage into the environment, and shifting to alternatives to toxic chemicals in plastics. Additionally, the recommendations promote the expansion of recycling facilities, the implementation of digital systems to monitor plastic production and waste generation, and the encouragement of sustainable alternatives.

## Recommendations for governments

### Legislative and regulatory measures for managing plastic and plastic waste.

- Plastic market analysis: assess the plastic market to identify environmentally harmful products (commonly found in the environment; hard to recycle and hence accumulate in landfills; containing toxic substances)
- Safety standards: establish safety standards for disposing of plastic that is not suitable for reuse or recycling and for producing plastic products that can be easily separated and recycled.
- Enhance the legal and regulatory framework: refine existing waste management laws and implement new regulations to encourage separate waste collection and boost recycling rates.
- Best Available Technologies and Practices: create and implement guidelines for the best available technologies in managing plastic waste, with a focus on non-incineration methods.
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): implement EPR principles to hold companies accountable for the collection and recycling of their plastic products, thereby strengthening businesses' obligation to protect the environment.
- Plastic necessity criteria: establish criteria to assess the essential and non-essential requirements for plastic use across specific sectors of the economy, including the health sector; evaluate the availability of safe alternatives to plastic.

- Most damaging: identify the economic sectors where plastic use poses the most significant threat to the environment and human health, as well as the availability of safe alternatives for those sectors.

### **Implementing steps to lessen the production and consumption of single-use plastic items**

- Legally prohibit the production, export, import, and use of single-use plastic items and waste containing them, including but not limited to the following:
  - straws; stirrers; plates (including plastic-lined paper plates);
  - Cutlery and individual containers (forks, knives, spoons, sandwich picks, cups, glasses, cup lids, and bottles);
  - plastic cotton swabs; balloon and candy sticks; oxoplastic containers;
  - bags, pouches, including stuffing bags;
  - wet wipes;
  - all types of food and drink containers made from polystyrene and polyvinyl chloride (PVC);
  - Plastic packaging made of mixed materials, including multilayer and composite plastics.
- Set reduction targets for the production and use of single-use plastics not covered by the ban, ensuring that timelines are customized for various product categories.
- rigorously require manufacturers, importers, and retailers to meet mandatory collection and recycling targets for single-use plastics that are not covered by the ban, which should be regularly reviewed and updated;

### **Infrastructure development**

- Support for business initiatives: encourage businesses to eliminate single-use plastic products, reduce packaging for their goods, and use recyclable packaging options;
- Disseminating best practices: share effective strategies from retail chains and food delivery services for replacing all packaging with recyclable options, reducing the use of plastic packaging, developing a container pledge and return system, and introducing container pledge schemes.
- Enhance recycling collection points, invest in the development and upgrading of recycling facilities, particularly in high-consumption areas, and offer tax incentives, subsidies, and government support programs to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the recycling sector.
- Development of public-private partnerships (PPPs): Attracting private investment and expertise in waste management through PPP mechanisms can help to enhance infrastructure and boost waste management efficiency. This approach will facilitate the adoption of advanced technologies and elevate the quality of services offered.
- Mandatory reporting: Establish mandatory reporting and data sharing systems for plastic waste

production, recovery, and recycling to ensure accurate statistics are available and accessible to public authorities, the private sector, and research institutions.

- Digital monitoring systems: create and implement digital platforms for real-time data collection and monitoring of plastic waste management to ensure accurate statistics and effective planning.

## **Monitoring and Enforcement**

- Regular monitoring: establish ongoing monitoring and reporting systems to track progress and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements for the management of plastic waste generation and disposal.
- Impose penalties for non-compliance to ensure that regulatory requirements are fulfilled.
- Free plastic take-back: support the development of a system that allows the seamless return of plastic containers and packaging at no cost.

## **Plastic chemicals and transparency of chemical information**

- Priority chemicals of concern: Determine priority chemicals of concern in the plastics sector and its value chains.
- Phasing out hazardous chemicals: prioritize the elimination of persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic substances; implement the precautionary principle for both new and existing chemicals.
- Safer substitutes: promote investment in safer chemicals, products, materials and processes and encourage replacing hazardous chemicals in plastics with safer alternatives.
- Compliance with international conventions: ensure compliance with international chemical conventions, such as the Stockholm, Rotterdam, Basel, and Minamata conventions, which regulate the management of chemicals used in plastics.
- Toxic Substances in Plastic: Establish legally binding requirements to limit and prohibit toxic substances in the production of plastic and plastic products, promoting the development of technologies that recycle plastic into new, safe products free from harmful chemicals.
- Transparency of chemical information: establish national legislation to guarantee transparency regarding information on chemicals in plastics and ensure traceability of this information throughout the plastics life cycle; encourage initiatives for the development of non-toxic additives in plastics.
- Globally Harmonized System of Transparency and Traceability of Information: promote the development of a globally harmonized system regarding the transparency of information on the chemical composition of plastics and the traceability of this information in plastic products throughout their lifecycle.
- Treaty to Combat Plastic Pollution: support legally binding provisions in a new global treaty to tackle plastic pollution through mandatory disclosure of information regarding the chemical composition of plastics and ensure traceability of this information in plastic materials and products.
- Prohibit the use of recycled plastic in various products: establish legally binding requirements to prohibit the use of recycled plastic containing toxic substances in the production of children's products, clothing, food, or beverages.

- National registry and certification: establish a national registry of the chemical composition of plastics and ensure mandatory product certification; raise awareness of the dangers posed by toxic additives in plastic, including recycled plastic and plastic products.
- Products containing toxic chemicals: encourage the establishment of criteria and the development of a list of plastic products that include toxic chemicals and are subject to restrictions and bans.
- Sustainable Supply Chain Policy: develop and enforce policies and legally binding requirements to tackle priority chemicals of concern within plastics supply chains.
- Financial incentives for sustainable products: offer financial incentives and subsidies to companies that create sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics; promote research initiatives and establish national standards for sustainable materials.

## **Recommendations for specific chemical additives in plastics**

### Bisphenol A (BPA)

- Set the maximum allowable release dose of BPA from the container;
- Prohibit the use of bisphenol A in all food and beverage containers, as well as bisphenols F and S;
- Establish a legal requirement to disclose the presence of bisphenols in food and beverage containers;
- Continue to monitor this substance and take several precautions, as the rate of migration of BPA from containers depends on storage conditions, liquid composition, and usage history.

### Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs)

- Set the maximum allowable level of PBDE content in products to no more than 10 mg/kg.
- Under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, support PBDE levels not exceeding 50 mg/kg.
- Establish a legal requirement to disclose the presence of PBDEs in products, including those made from recycled materials.
- Implement a legal requirement to prohibit the manufacture of toys and food containers from recycled materials derived from waste.

### Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

- Comply with the requirements of the perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) amendments under the Stockholm Convention.
- Work towards a class-based approach for listing all PFAS for global elimination under the Stockholm Convention.
- Establish a legal requirement for mandatory labeling of products containing PFAS. Gaps in the disclosure of PFAS in products lead to their ongoing use, making consumer items that contain them a significant source of PFAS environmental contamination.
- In public procurement, prioritise PFAS-free items.
- Conduct regular monitoring of PFAS content in products, including imports.
- Perform regular monitoring of PFAS content in drinking water, water bodies, fish, and soil.

- Create a database of potential sources of PFAS, including consumer products and household waste landfills.

## **Informing and educating the population**

- National information campaigns: Support large-scale information and education initiatives focused on conscious consumption, the significance of reducing waste, separate waste collection, practical solutions for reuse, and existing systems for reusing plastic goods. Support NGO and media initiatives in this sector;
- Openness of information: promote transparency regarding the risks posed by plastics, including toxic substances associated with them, to both humans and the environment. Additionally, implement awareness campaigns about these harmful substances among consumers.
- Public and worker involvement: ensure that both the public and workers participate in decisions related to the management of chemicals and plastic waste.
- Meaning of labelling: inform the public about the meaning of labelling plastic products to enhance the collection of plastic waste and, in turn, boost the percentage of recycled plastic.
- Label development: encourage the creation of plastic product labeling that helps consumers make informed choices based on health and environmental factors, while avoiding misleading information;
- Labeling should not be misleading: avoid labeling plastic goods in a way that may mislead buyers, such as labels that claim “compostable” or “bioplastic,” which create confusion because these types of plastic are not suitable for disposal in organic waste or for home composting. The same applies to other products, like “compostable” organic (bio) coffee pods. The ambiguous use of the term “bio” also complicates the distinction between plastic goods and bio-based packaging versus biodegradable products. Furthermore, the term “bioplastic” is particularly problematic because it suggests environmental friendliness, which is not the reality.
- Labels on plastic products: Labels on plastic products should primarily clarify the following points:
  - Environmental footprint of products throughout their life cycle, including potential disposal risks;
  - Potential health risks considering all additives, with especially clear labeling for particularly vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children;
  - Intended use and potential risks of misuse (for example, synthetic fiber wet wipes should not be flushed down the toilet);
  - Clear labeling for proper product disposal (which garbage bin should it go in?) and a method to separate items to facilitate easier recycling later (e.g., collect plastic caps separately from plastic bottles).
- Enhance public access to separate waste collection: promote the accessibility of separate waste collection to the community;
- Community Plastic Waste Collection Programs: promote a program aimed at collecting plastic waste from the community for recycling.
- Return of consumer products: provide clear information on proper waste disposal and the return of no-longer-needed consumer goods (e.g., where to dispose of unwanted plastic products that can be reused).

- Integrate environmental education: integrate environmental awareness, resource management, and conscious consumption into school curricula and vocational education and training.

### **Protection of vulnerable groups**

- Sanitary zones: to protect the public, ensure the creation of sanitary protection zones around plastic and plastic product production and processing facilities.
- Immediate actions for high-risk communities: Ensure the safety of high-risk communities living near manufacturing and processing facilities for plastics and products, as well as workers exposed to hazardous chemicals related to this industry, by providing early warning of toxic releases and discharges; establishing specific timeframes for remediation; and holding those accountable for associated risks.

## **Recommendations for manufacturers of plastic products**

### **Sustainable production**

- Alternatives to single-use plastic: Minimize the production of single-use and non-recyclable plastic products and accelerate the transition to alternatives.
- Utilize recycled materials: Integrate post-consumer and post-industrial recycled plastics into production processes to lessen the reliance on virgin plastic.
- Safety of recycled raw materials: When using recycled plastic, ensure that it does not contain toxic substances harmful to human health and the environment. If you cannot confirm that the recycled plastic is free from toxic substances, refrain from using it in the production of children's products and food containers.

### **Product design and innovation**

- Eco-friendly product design: Create products with sustainability as a priority, utilizing materials that are more readily recyclable and have a reduced environmental impact.
- Opting for eco-friendly materials: Select materials that are environmentally friendly and less harmful to human health.

### **Waste reduction and management**

- Lean Manufacturing: Implement lean manufacturing principles to minimize waste by optimizing production processes and eliminating unnecessary costs.
- Waste Management Practices: Establish and implement effective waste management practices to minimize plastic waste in the manufacturing process.

### **Extended producer responsibility (EPR)**

- Product take-back programs: Implement take-back programs for plastic products to ensure they are recycled or disposed of properly at the end of their life cycle.
- Implementation of a deposit system for consumer packaging: Developing and implementing a deposit system for collecting and recycling consumer packaging will boost the recovery of

secondary material resources and lessen the amount of waste sent to landfills. Additionally, it will establish a framework for tracking material and financial flows related to packaging, enhancing transparency in waste management.

## Recommendations for consumers

### Reduce, reuse, recycle

- Minimize waste: Reduce waste by using reusable items such as cloth napkins, ceramic plates, glasses, and silverware.
- Reusable bags and containers: Bring reusable shopping bags and use glass containers to store food and beverages.
- Eliminate plastic from your daily life: Refuse plastic wherever possible
- Know before you throw plastic away: Find out what types of plastic are accepted in your local recycling programs and recycle accordingly; actively participate in separating plastic waste
- Recycle plastic bags and film: Check for local recycling programs that accept plastic bags, wrappers, and film, as these items are frequently not accepted in household recycling bins.
- Spread the word: Inform others about the importance of reducing plastic waste. Get involved in local cleanup events and promote better waste management practices.
- Social media: Utilize your social media platforms to raise awareness about the dangers of plastic on human health and the environment.

## Contacts

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More information about the project:  
[www.hej-support/eecca-plastic](http://www.hej-support/eecca-plastic)

