**EC proposed a Directive on the reduction of the use of plastic products**

On 28 May 2018 the European Commission presented a proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment.

The presented initiative fulfils the commitment given in the European strategy for plastics to address the wasteful use of plastics and the plastic waste through legislative actions, which was welcomed by the European Parliament, the Council, citizens and stakeholders. The proposed measures will contribute to Europe’s transition to circular economy, the attainment of EU climate objectives and the fulfilment of the aims of its industrial policy.

The EU focuses its attention on 10 single-use plastic products and fishing gear which collectively represent 70% of marine litter in Europe. The new rules envisage the following measures:

* prohibition of the use of plastic in certain products when there are alternatives available at affordable prices;
* reduction of the use of plastic containers for food products and plastic cups;
* obligations for producers to cover the expenses for waste management and cleaning, as well as measures to raise awareness regarding containers, packets and wrappers of food products, beverage containers and cups, tobacco products with filters, wet wipes, balloons and lightweight plastic carrier bags;
* Member states will be obliged to collect 90% of single-use plastic bottles by 2025.

As regards fishing gear, which constitutes 27% of all beach litter, the proposal complements the existing legal framework by introducing liability regimes for producers of fishing gear containing plastic. Producers will be obliged to cover the expenses for waste collection in port reception facilities and their transport and treatment.

Negotiations on the proposal commenced during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Until now discussions showed that despite the general support expressed by member states, there are still open questions such as the availability of alternatives to the products whose release on the market is proposed to be prohibited, and whether these alternatives would have a lower ecological footprint.

The Austrian Presidency declared the proposal for a Directive to be one of the key priorities in its Programme and will seek to attain a common approach on it by the end of the year.