

## Directive 2019/904/EU. The need to raise awareness on plastic misuse and consequences on health

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The EU Directive 5 June 2019, n. 904, aims to promote sustainable reusable products and systems in a circular perspective, reducing the production of disposable products and waste.

Abandoned plastics take decades to disintegrate, never disappearing completely from the environment, with serious consequences for human health. A study conducted by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has found that pollutants such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) or bisphenol A (BPA) can accumulate in microplastics, which are swallowed by humans as well as inhaled or ingested reaching lungs. For instance, it has been estimated that every week we ingest the same amount of microplastics as a credit card. Furthermore, plastic kills and damages biodiversity. Aquatic animals are the most affected, as they are either trapped in man-made plastic waste or they swallow plastics with serious damage to their and the humans' health that eat them. Dangerous are also nanoplastics that can penetrate cell walls and are chemically more reactive.

However, Directive 2019/904/EU does not eliminate the use of plastic, setting the percentages of recycled plastics to be used in the manufacture of disposable plastic products. For instance, beverage PET bottles must contain at least 25% of recycled plastic from 2025 and 30% from 2030.

Despite the Directive has provided elements for states to legislate in favour of a society that makes less use of plastics, today no zero-plastic society has been created. In order to achieve this 'zero' it is necessary to start from the citizens, raising their awareness through awareness-raising campaigns and the distribution of leaflets and posters on the consequences of the mismanagement of plastic waste (and microplastics) on their health and on the environment.

### Key messages:

- Raise citizens awareness on the consequences of the mismanagement of plastic waste (and microplastics) on their health and on the environment is fundamental.

- The importance of the creation of a zero plastic society thanks to the application of Directive 2019/904/EU at international level.