

EU tackles plastic and other waste ending up in the sea: Council approves agreement on port reception facilities

The EU is combating the dumping into the sea of plastic, derelict fishing gear and other rubbish from ships by **providing incentives for ships to discharge their waste in ports**. Member states' ambassadors today endorsed a reform which will also ensure the provision of **adequate waste reception facilities in ports** and clarify the rules to make sure member states interpret them in a more uniform manner. The presidency reached a provisional agreement with the European Parliament on the reform on 12 December.

This reform is crucial for ensuring cleaner seas. We are putting an end to any financial advantage ships may have had in dumping their waste into the sea.

Norbert Hofer, Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria, President of the Council

Under the new rules, ships will have to pay an **indirect fee**, which will give them the right to deliver their waste to a port, and which will have to be paid regardless of whether or not they deliver any waste. This fee will also apply to fishing vessels and recreational craft, which means that it will also help prevent end-of-life fishing nets and passively fished waste going directly into the sea. The fee will be based on the principle of cost recovery.

In certain cases, however, if a ship delivers an exceptional amount of waste, an additional direct fee may be charged to ensure that the costs related to receiving such waste do not create a disproportionate burden for a port's cost recovery system.

In contrast, a reduced waste fee will be applied for short sea shipping and for 'green ships', meaning vessels that can demonstrate reduced quantities of waste and sustainable on-board waste management.

In addition, the new directive will improve the efficiency of maritime operations in port by cutting red tape for industry and other stakeholders. Its provisions will also be more consistent with EU waste legislation, for example by stipulating that ports must have waste reception and handling plans. Finally, the new directive will align EU legislation with the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), which has been amended since the current directive was adopted in 2000.

Landlocked member states which do not have ports or ships flying their flag will not be obliged to transpose the directive or certain parts of it.

The proposal was presented by the Commission in January 2018 as part of the 'circular economy package'.

Procedure and next steps

The provisional agreement was endorsed by the meeting of ambassadors in the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee.

The agreed text will now undergo legal and linguistic finalisation. It must then be formally adopted, first by the Parliament and then by the Council. Following adoption, the regulation will be published in the EU's Official Journal. It will enter into force 20 days after publication. After that, member states will have two years to adopt national provisions to comply with the directive.

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