

#exit plastic **now!**

THE MANIFESTO

*Our vision is of a world free of harms resulting from plastic. Together with the signatories of this manifesto, we as the civil society alliance Exit Plastik are advocating for social and structural changes to solve the plastics crisis. To **#exitplastic**. Now!*

Protecting the environment and health

Transitioning away from plastic means improving the health of ecosystems, oceans, people, and all living beings. We see the plastics crisis as a resource and pollution crisis – linked to the biodiversity and climate crisis – requiring us to strengthen joint solutions. We focus on protective and preventive measures for the health of all, as well as on efforts to preserve and restore (marine) ecosystems in order to provide relief for the environment, climate, oceans, and people. We advocate for:

- strong national and international regulations to prevent plastic from entering the environment and oceans, including the classification of microplastic pellets as hazardous goods during transport;
- effective measures for environmental and climate protection along the entire life cycle of plastic and close scrutiny of highly technical end-of-pipe approaches such as the purported large-scale removal of plastic from the oceans. We reject alleged technofixes such as CO₂ deposition (so-called CCS);
- the consistent implementation and regular review of existing regulations;
- significantly less production and use of plastic, and thus a reduction in the harmful chemicals and polymers used for plastic as well as in the emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants associated with it;
- pollutant-free and safe production of plastic and plastic products as well as transparency about the chemical ingredients and hazards;
- protection against harmful chemicals by banning the use of chemicals that are harmful to health and the environment throughout the entire life cycle of plastic, including those with persistent properties (e.g. PFAS) and endocrine disruptors (EDCs);
- special consideration of the different health effects on different genders.

Solution-oriented action and honest communication

Transitioning away from plastic means offering genuinely viable and sustainable solutions instead of deceptive and false ones. We support projects and economic practices that are sustainable and socially just. To protect the environment and consumers, we need transparency about plastic and its composition on the one hand, and about the actual impact of plastic production and use on the other. We advocate for:

- strengthening and appreciation of positive best practices, sustainable behaviour and consumption patterns, and success stories;
- exposing greenwashing: We reject greenwashing with product labels such as “climate-neutral”, “environmentally neutral”, or “ocean plastic”;
- a positive evaluation and promotion of measures to reduce plastic as well as meaningful and motivating incentives for lifestyles that conserve resources and limit the use of plastic;
- transparency and information on chemicals in products and materials as well as regulations and bans;
- awareness-raising and education about the plastics crisis and our ability to act;
- the unmasking of sham debates and technofixes that go hand in hand with unfeasible technical and economic approaches and massive risks for people and nature, while at the same time distracting from real solutions and preventing systemic change.

Prioritising prevention and a genuine circular economy

Transitioning away from plastic means recognising that we cannot recycle our way out of the crisis. This transition includes designing products sustainably and safely, using them for a very long time, and managing them in resource- and energy-saving, toxic-free cycles: Sharing, leasing, reusing, and repairing are the new normal. Plastic is avoided, especially in short-lived applications. When products are no longer usable, their product design ensures high-quality and toxic-free recycling. Plastic is no longer incinerated in waste incineration plants and cement factories, producing harmful emissions and toxic slag, but instead only end up in mechanical recycling. Chemical recycling processes are not used on a large scale, especially not for packaging. Plastic waste exports are a thing of the past. We advocate for:

- implementing waste prevention and reuse as well as the high-quality mechanical recycling of materials in the order of priority defined nationally and on the EU level by the Waste Hierarchy;
- recognising the limits of recycling: Every recycling process costs energy and results in irretrievable material losses;
- a reduction in plastic production without falling back on the development of infrastructure for unsustainable technofixes such as CCS/CCU, chemical “recycling”, and “bio” plastics on a large scale;
- an expansion of the infrastructure for waste prevention and reuse in a circular economy, instead of maintaining the current linear system by means of sham debates;
- the promotion of genuine renewable heating instead of the expansion of waste incineration capacities.

Packaging-free and reusables – always and everywhere

Transitioning away from plastic means that non-toxic reuse systems and packaging-free solutions will become ubiquitous, easily accessible, affordable, and inclusive for everyone. They will be routinely used in everyday life instead of disposable packaging and products. Politics and businesses have recognised their responsibilities and are promoting these solutions and systems. We advocate for:

- offering packaging-free products and limiting unnecessary packaging;
- reusable solutions in all situations, that are accessible, simple, suitable for everyday use, and inclusive;
- reuse targets in all sectors and penalties for non-compliance;
- alternative business models and systems that serve the common good and minimise resource consumption instead of harmful subsidies: Packaging-free stores and sections in supermarkets, nationwide reusable pool systems, rental stores, public drinking fountains, and the natural filling and refilling of your own containers (“bring your own”) with products, food, drinks, and tap water;
- raising awareness about sustainable consumption: shared use instead of individual ownership.

Implementing a global plastics treaty

Transitioning away from plastic means generating a binding and ambitious global plastics agreement within the framework of the United Nations to tackle the plastics crisis. A reduction in the production of new plastic products and their fossil fuel-based raw materials would be at the heart of the agreement. We advocate for an agreement that is effective and fair both socially and on a global level. This includes:

- an ambitious target to reduce the production of new plastic products and their fossil fuel-based raw materials;
- a ban on harmful substances and problematic plastics such as PVC. Chemicals in materials and products are disclosed in a globally harmonised system and it is possible to track them throughout the product life cycle;
- the promotion of systems for reuse and support for the transition away from consumption patterns that rely heavily on the use of plastic;
- the commitment to phase out subsidies that contradict the goals of the agreement. An Extended Producer Responsibility ensures that those responsible bear the financial costs of the plastics crisis;
- safeguarding the interests of groups in vulnerable situations and involving them in the design and implementation of the agreement;
- majority decisions instead of consensus procedures with individual states having the right to veto in order to prevent blockades;
- a mechanism that excludes groups with economic conflicts of interest from the negotiations and future conferences of the parties;
- an international fund to financially secure the implementation of the agreement;
- verifiability of the implementation of the agreement through compliance mechanisms;
- a Gender Action Plan anchoring gender justice.

In February 2024, the German civil society alliance Exit Plastik organised a round-table for NGOs and a public conference on solutions to the plastics crisis. Experts from science, business, politics, and civil society took part. The key points for this manifesto, which addresses solutions to the plastics crisis, were jointly developed during the events and subsequently elaborated by Exit Plastik members. This manifesto contains the key elements to **#exitplastic**. Now!

The following values are the foundation and guiding principles for our actions:

HEALTH as a non-negotiable good and the only desirable state for ecosystems, oceans, humans, and all living beings.

COMMON GOOD as a politically, economically, and socially supported value and guideline for all activities.

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES as the recognised available space in which our lives unfold and against which all economic activity is measured.

PRECAUTION as an essential principle that places the holistic protection of the environment and health at the centre of decision-making.

RESPONSIBILITY as the foundation of all socially relevant action that recognises and eliminates exploitation and oppression locally and globally and holds to account those responsible for damages to the environment and health, as well as their social consequences.

Based on these values, we work politically along three principles:

TRANSPARENCY as a core element of political processes and, at the same time, a basic prerequisite for comprehensive and accessible information on the dangers of plastics and plastic chemicals.

EFFECTIVE REGULATIONS as a necessity in order to have a political framework at the national, European, and global levels for the protection of people, the oceans, and the environment as well as for a sustainable society.

SYSTEMIC AND SOCIALLY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY JUST as a strengthening of sustainable systemic solutions and business models oriented towards the common good – instead of investments in pseudo solutions and harmful subsidies – and as the promotion of a value framework that enables everyone to live in a resource-conserving and healthy way.

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April 2024

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April 2024. Sign here:

www.plastikwende.de

