

Abstract

Plastics are an important material in our economy and are everywhere in our daily lives. However, they can present negative environmental and health impacts. The Commission is fully committed to making plastics "circular" as exposed in its European Strategy for Plastics. The Strategy proposes a vision of a plastics economy and sets a list of actions to:

- Improve the economics and quality of plastic recycling;
- Curb plastic waste and littering, including microplastics and single use plastics;
- Drive investments and innovation in the value chain;
- Call for global action to reduce plastics pollution.

To achieve these goals, we must transform the way plastic products are produced, designed used, and recycled, through a comprehensive life-cycle approach, and particularly early in the upstream part of the plastic value chain. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing the unsustainable use of natural resources, and decreasing our dependency on imported resources require a shift away from virgin plastics toward alternative feedstocks. At present, recycled materials are the best alternative we have.

Design for recyclability remains a cornerstone of our policy. For the end-of-life of products, and wherever technically feasible and economically viable, mechanical recycling should be prioritized, while chemical recycling plays a complementary role. The place of chemical recycling within the landscape of recycling technologies continues to be subject of debate.

Over the past few years, the Commission has adopted a series of initiatives contributing to achieving the goals of the Strategy. These include the single-use plastics directive, a policy framework for biobased, biodegradable and compostable plastics, the regulation to prevent plastic pellets losses, targets on recycled content in packaging and vehicles, an initiative for a global Plastics Treaty, among others.

Biography

Werner Bosmans is a Belgian national and bio-engineer from Ghent University, Belgium. He holds a Ph.D. in international economics from Montpellier, France, and a degree in Public Management. After some years in research, he worked as assistant to the heads of the Belgian and Flemish Ministry of Agriculture. He is also part-time professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

In 2005, he joined the Directorate-General Environment of the European Commission. He helped setting up the International Resource Panel with UNEP, co-authored the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe and initiated the work around the Circular Economy. The last years, he was the team leader on plastics. He developed policies such as the Plastics Strategy, the Directive on single use plastics, policy on biobased and biodegradable plastics and legislation on plastic pellet losses. On the 1st of

October, he was asked to become the team leader on the bioeconomy, contributing to the soon to be published bioeconomy strategy.