In addition to the impact generated by plastics throughout their life cycle, the problem is that we still don’t know how to deal with the millions of tons of plastic waste produced. Faced with the extent of the damage caused by plastic pollution, some “environmentally friendly” solutions and other alternatives are emerging. But when we take a closer look, their impact sometimes seems limited or even counter-productive: these are plastic fake outs.

We’ll highlight 3 of them, as well as some true solutions to tackle plastic pollution!
While recycling seems to be a good solution, in reality, few plastics are given a second life. Why can't we recycle ALL plastics?

There are several reasons for this.

This may seem counterintuitive, but virgin plastic costs much less than recycled materials.

To recycle plastic in a closed circuit, a whole host of expensive steps must be followed: collecting it, sorting it, cleaning and decontaminating it, crushing it into flakes that must be washed and then transforming them into pellets ready to be reused. At the end of the process, we don't recover large quantities of recycled plastic, and on top of this it is of lower quality. Either we are forced to add new raw material or we use it to integrate inferior quality products. This is called downcycling.

In Europe, almost half of the plastic collected for recycling cannot be recycled for health, safety, quality and contamination reasons.

Economics is ruthless and on the side of the industry, the equation is easy to solve: new plastic wins hands down!

Why can't we recycle all plastics? There are several reasons for this.

01 THERE ARE TOO MANY TYPES OF DIFFERENT PLASTICS.

Today, PET and HDPE from bottles and flasks are the easiest to recycle into other products: while there are ongoing developments in some European countries, to date, other plastics are generally not recycled:

Recycling plastic is NOT PROFITABLE

Recycled plastic

Virgin plastic

02 RECYCLING PLASTIC

Plastic is the result of a complex chemical process called polymerization. In simple terms, small molecules react with each other to form larger molecules with the addition of adjuvants and additives to form our various plastics.

Today, 6 types of plastics are used to manufacture the vast majority of our packaging. They all have different properties, integrate toxic additives and the same product may be composed of several different plastics and materials. These plastics therefore require separate treatments, which makes their recycling complex. In addition, the technology we have today does not allow us to collect recycled material of sufficient quality from all plastics.
The principle of the polluter paying according to responsibility.

In Europe, so-called extended producer responsibility was introduced to make producers responsible for managing their waste, which includes cardboard and paper (but also glass, steel, and plastic products containing plastic).

Producers that market such products are required to finance producer responsibility organizations. These focus their actions on raising the awareness of citizens on sorting and recycling, putting the responsibility on landfills or incinerating waste.

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For example, in the United States have fallen back as the United Kingdom and the United States, especially China.

Found with the accumulation of waste, especially cardboard, which was sent there - the most returned in July 2019 to the United States because their contents violated regulations on the import of hazardous and toxic waste.

From 2018 onwards, waste-exporting countries have been increasingly targeted in the context of the accumulation of waste.

In 2017, plastic waste from the United States was sent to Malaysia, with nearly 150 illegal recycling plants, which in 2018 accounted for only 1/2 of the plastic waste imported in the previous year.

In addition, the production and use of plastics have expanded. In this context, the European legislative framework does not yet encourage manufacturers to reduce their plastic production.

Recycling: rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Recycling is not optimal for plastic, but it is still very effective for other materials such as glass, steel or cardboard, which is still very effective for other materials.

There is too much plastic. We must reduce it at the source. This is the path taken by the European Union in its plastics strategy: coupled with a plastic reduction policy, recycling is part of the solution. This is the path taken by the European Union in its plastics strategy: coupled with a plastic reduction policy, recycling is part of the solution.

By 2030, all plastic packaging placed on the market in the European Union in its plastics strategy: coupled with a plastic reduction policy, recycling is part of the solution.

By 2021, a series of plastic products will be banned. By 2026, EU Member States will have to drastically reduce the use of single-use plastics, food containers.

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In the United States and Canada, waste-exporting countries have been increasingly targeted in the context of the accumulation of waste. In 2017, plastic waste from the United States was sent to Malaysia, with nearly 150 illegal recycling plants, which in 2018 accounted for only 1/2 of the plastic waste imported in the previous year.

In January 2018, the Chinese authorities took a harder line on the import of hazardous and toxic waste, exporting countries such as Australia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom and the United States, especially China.

In 2013, filled with waste falsely called "plastic for recycling" diapers, were sent back in June 2019 after a long diplomatic battle.

In the Philippines, more than 69 Canadian containers sent in 2013, filled with waste falsely called "plastic for recycling" diapers, were sent back in June 2019 after a long diplomatic battle.

In Vietnam, a major terminal refused to accept new scrap after declaring in July 2019 that it was "not a garbage can" after discovering in the port of Sihanoukville nearly 83 containers of illegal waste from the United States and Canada.

In Cambodia, the main destination for plastic waste for more than 30 years, the Chinese authorities have been increasingly targeted in the context of the accumulation of waste. In 2017, plastic waste from the United States was sent to Malaysia, with nearly 150 illegal recycling plants, which in 2018 accounted for only 1/2 of the plastic waste imported in the previous year.

In Portugal, Pontoverde, an association of local authorities, has been asked by the government to support local authorities in organizing the collection and recycling of household waste.

In France, Citeo, is an obvious example of a partnership between local authorities and entrepreneurs, which is already present in some countries.

In Germany, Gruener-punkt, aims more ambitiously and sustainably reduce the plastic waste placed on the market in the European Union in its plastics strategy: coupled with a plastic reduction policy, recycling is part of the solution.

In Spain, Ecoembes, is an example of a clear concern for the environment and the recycling market, as it is not yet all of the plastic.

In the United Kingdom, ValPak, and its affiliates, prioritise its own plastic waste collection system.

With plastic production that is 10 times as fast as traditional recycling. In addition, the production and use of plastics must be reduced at all stages of the process.

To solve the problem of plastic waste, we need to sort our waste, but first and foremost limit your plastic consumption.

The true solution is to reduce plastic waste, but first and foremost limit your plastic consumption.

There is too much plastic. We must reduce it at the source.
What can we do?

1. Eliminate single-use packaging and plastics in their public procurement.
2. Ban or regulate the use of disposable plastic products in public places or events.
3. Facilitate access to single-use plastic alternatives.
   - Water fountains in public spaces,
   - Sharing of reusable dishes,
   - Promotion of retailers offering reusable packaging,
   - Setting up a local refund system for reusing packaging — etc.

To drastically reduce our plastic waste, we can act at the source and stop consuming it, this is the challenge of the zero-waste movement.

This means choosing products that are more sustainable within their lifetime, reusable or re/fillable, without packaging, and optimizing their end of life. No waste should be incinerated or sent to landfill and no toxic substances should end up in the soil, water or air.

Saying this makes sense, but how can we limit our plastic consumption when it is absolutely EVERYWHERE?

**At home**
- Fix things rather than throw them away. You can find tutorials on the internet or get help from an expert.

Where should I start?

The list of solutions is long, but here’s where to start:

- **Mobilize citizens to take up the zero-waste challenge at the local level.**

Plastic pollution is often reduced to a problem of incivility and waste management. However, the best waste is waste which is not produced at all. To solve the problem of plastic pollution, we must act at the source.

To achieve this, everyone can take their share of responsibility: companies, local authorities and ourselves, because we are all part of the solution.

Much of the world’s plastic pollution is generated by a handful of brands whose products we consume and packaging we throw away on a daily basis.

Every year, the Break Free From Plastic movement conducts an audit of plastic pollution documenting the brands found on plastic waste collected at clean-ups to hold plastic polluting companies accountable.

The more we change our purchasing behavior, the greater the impact on brands and players in the sector.

At the local level, authorities can experiment with alternatives to plastics and implement tangible solutions. If this involves rethinking certain habits and needs, it also encourages the development of local actors and contributes to rebuilding social ties.

**In Barcelona (Spain)**
in all municipal services, the use of single-use plastics must be replaced by sustainable alternatives such as water fountains and carafes.

**In Brussels (Belgium)**
the city has banned single-use plastics in festivals.

**In Freiburg (Germany)**
since 2016 the city has been providing retailers with returnable and reusable cups for hot drinks to take away. 26,000 “Freiburg cup” are now in circulation in the city’s 112 cafés.

**In Roubaix (France)**
organizes a Zero Waste Family Challenge. Since 2016, 500 Roubaix families have participated in the challenge and benefited from workshops and guidance.

To put pressure on businesses:

- At our scale, we can rethink the way we consume.
- Require our local authorities to take action.
- Put pressure on businesses.
- We can launch and support campaigns to get brands to react.

We refuse over-packaged products.
We prioritize reusable products and buy in bulk.
We can launch and support campaigns to get brands to react.
We inform ourselves on what we’re buying.
We don’t get influenced by marketing.
We boycott.

**In the Netherlands:**
the Virtual Repair Café is an online platform where people can trade in broken items and get them repaired, eliminating the need for new products.

**In Spain:**
the city of San Sebastián has implemented a zero-waste policy and is encouraging its citizens to participate in the movement.

**In Italy:**
the city of Venice has banned plastic bottles and is promoting the use of reusable water bottles.

**In the United States:**
the city of Santa Monica has banned single-use plastic straws and is promoting the use of reusable straws.

**In the United Kingdom:**
the city of Manchester has implemented a zero-waste policy and is promoting the use of reusable food containers.

**In Canada:**
the city of Vancouver has banned single-use plastic straws and is promoting the use of reusable straws.

**In Australia:**
the city of Sydney has banned single-use plastic straws and is promoting the use of reusable straws.

**In New Zealand:**
the city of Auckland has banned single-use plastic straws and is promoting the use of reusable straws.

**In India:**
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**In China:**
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**In Japan:**
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**In South Korea:**
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**In Brazil:**
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**In Mexico:**
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**In Argentina:**
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**In Chile:**
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**In Peru:**
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**In Colombia:**
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**In Ecuador:**
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**In Venezuela:**
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**In Czech Republic:**
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**In Russia:**
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**In Ukraine:**
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**In Turkey:**
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**In Egypt:**
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**In Jordan:**
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**In Lebanon:**
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**In Iraq:**
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**In Syria:**
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**In Iran:**
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**In Bhutan:**
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**In Laos:**
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To go further...

**Ocean campus’ tutorials**

**At the grocery store**
- Bring a reusable shopping bag so you don’t have to buy one.
- Avoid food waves by buying only what you need.
- Check food labels to see if the ingredients are locally sourced.

**At work**
- Bring reusable cups and containers for your coffee and lunch.
- Use your reusable bag for the coffee machine.

**Get coached to be motivated**
- The Ocean’s Zero application developed by Surfrider Europe is your personal assistant, which brings you through challenges towards a zero-waste way of life.

**Enjoy good books which can be borrowed from the library to adopt the tips of zero-waste experts**

**Support the NGOs, which amplify our voices:**

**At the global level:**
- The Break Free From Plastic movement brings together 1900 NGOs which demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis.
- The movement publishes an annual plastic pollution audit report which identifies the world’s top corporate plastic polluters.

**At the European level:**
- The Rethink Plastic Alliance brings together leading European NGOs to fight plastic pollution.
- The alliance has been particularly involved in the drafting of the European Directive on single-use plastics which must now be transposed into the national law of each Member State by July 2021.
- It has fought to inform on the dramatic environmental and health impacts of single use plastics, to demonstrate that alternatives are within reach, to justify the need for restrictive measures and to frame definitions so that they do not allow certain products to escape the regulation.

Rethink Plastic Alliance obtained key measures on all single-use plastics covered by the Directive, with no exemption granted for bioplastics.

For our part, we can convey their message to as many people as possible on social networks, support their campaigns, sign their petitions and take part in their actions.

**Sources**
- Surfrider Foundation Europe | Dalberg & WWF | WWF | Plastic Atlas | Conversio | National Geographic | ADEME | Break free from plastic | Rethink plastic alliance

**www.qqf.fr**

A Qqf infographic produced in partnership with

**RETHINK PLASTIC ALLIANCE**