

Plastic pollution: Surfrider Foundation Europe and Rethink Plastic alliance fightback plastic fakes out



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With more than 400 million tons of plastic produced each year worldwide and our Blue planet drowning in plastics, Surfrider Foundation Europe together with the Rethink Plastic alliance alert on the risks posed by initiatives presented as “magic bullet” solutions.

As part of its "[Break the plastic wave](#)" campaign, and in collaboration with the Rethink Plastic alliance, Surfrider Foundation Europe releases today and in the next two weeks on the occasion of this plastic-free July, new infographics developed together with the media [Qu'est-ce qu'on fait](#) on false solutions to plastic pollution. These infographics illustrate the problems posed by three initiatives with alarming data and highlight instead true ideas for action.

"The only solution to plastic pollution is to reduce plastic production and consumption at source. For it to happen, **we need to fight plastic fakes out that are diverting us all away from cutting plastic**", says Diane Beaumenay, one of the two coordinators of the 'Break the Plastic Wave' campaign at Surfrider Foundation Europe.

9.2 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced since the 1950s and more than half have been produced since 2000.

With an average of 8 million tons of plastic reaching the ocean every year (1), there is no longer any doubt today about the plastic crisis we're facing and the **urgency to act**.

The solutions to stop the flood of plastics are known and within reach but are often **overshadowed by initiatives presented as silver bullets while their impacts are limited and sometimes even counterproductive**. They create **confusion** at the expense of the environment and of citizens' will to buy and consume more responsibly. False solutions, yet, contribute to plastic pollution as they **perpetuate the belief we can continue producing again and again more plastics**. They contribute to rampant greenwashing around the plastic pollution issue so for companies not to stop their plastic production and mask the reality that this **plastic should not be there in the first place**.

The infographics shed light on 3 initiatives - **recycling, bioplastics and cleaning-up the ocean** - that are, to varying degrees, ineffective in the face of the scale of plastic pollution. For some, claims they echo are not accurate, in other cases the 'solutions' they bring are inexistent, increase the issue, and are not proportionate to the problems:

1. **Recycling** alone will never be able to take care of all the plastics we produce and throw away. Of the 29 million tonnes of plastic waste collected annually in the European Union, we have only been able to recycle one third (2).
2. **Bio-based and biodegradable plastics** only have bio as a prefix and cause severe damage to the environment. Plastics which are bio-based are not fully oil-free while the biomass used to produce them are mostly dependent on intensive farming, which is particularly harmful to the environment. On the other side, biodegradable plastics can only degrade within a reasonable timeframe under very specific conditions (e.g. industrial composting). In nature or the ocean, they have major impacts on animals and habitat.
3. **Cleaning**: it is unrealistic to think that we will be able to clean the ocean from all the plastics dumped into it over the last 60 years. In addition to not solving the problem at the source, there is no technology today that can collect the plastic from the ocean without causing damage to the ocean fauna and flora. Only 1% of this plastic waste would float, the rest would be beneath the surface. In such circumstances, it's hard to think we can do a clean sweep.

We can all contribute to solving the plastic crisis: **industries** by rethinking their products and systems, **decision-makers** by adopting measures supporting real solutions and **citizens** by changing their consumption patterns and calling on companies and decision-makers to drive change.

Links to the infographics prepared with Qu'est-ce qu'on fait

[Infographics on plastic fake out #1 / Recycling](#)

[Infographics on plastic fake out #2 / Bioplastics](#)

[Infographics on plastic fake out #3 / Cleaning](#)

Notes

1. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean, Jambeck et al., Science, 2015: <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/347/6223/768/tab-pdf>
2. Plastics The Facts 2018, Plastics Europe: https://www.plasticseurope.org/application/files/6315/4510/9658/Plastics_the_facts_2018_AF_web.pdf

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Notes

Surfrider Foundation Europe is a European not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the protection and enhancement of Europe's lakes, rivers, ocean, waves and the coastline. It was created in Europe (Biarritz) by a group of surfers who wanted to preserve their playground. It currently has over 13,000 members and is active across 12 countries through its volunteer-run chapters. For 30 years, Surfrider Foundation Europe has been taking action as a recognized authority in 3 areas of expertise: marine litter, water quality and health, coastal management and climate change. Surfrider Foundation Europe is one of the founding members of the Rethink Plastic alliance.

Rethink Plastic, part of the Break Free From Plastic movement, is an alliance of leading European NGOs including: Center for International Law (CIEL), Client Earth, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), European Environmental Bureau (EEB), European Environmental Citizen's Organisation for Standardisation (ECOS), Greenpeace EU, Seas At Risk, Surfrider Foundation Europe, and Zero Waste Europe. Together they represent thousands of active groups, supporters and citizens in every EU Member State working towards a future free from plastic pollution.

Break Free From Plastic is a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. Since its launch in September 2016, nearly 2,600 organizations from across the world have joined the movement to demand massive reductions in single-use plastics and to push for lasting solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. These organisations share the common values of environmental protection and social justice, which guide their work at the community level and represent a global, unified vision.



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