

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001804/25
to the Commission**

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(5 May 2025)

Subject: Increased plastic pollution following the introduction of EU requirements on tethered bottle caps

The aim of the directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment ⁽¹⁾ is to curb plastic pollution, including by requiring that plastic caps remain attached to drinks containers. The Commission maintains that the aim is to prevent plastic caps ending up in the natural environment.

However, since the EU requirement was introduced in 2024, the number of plastic bottle caps found on the beaches of Sweden's west coast has tripled. According to data from the Keep Sweden Tidy Foundation, the number of plastic caps found per 100 metres of beach rose from 46 in 2023 to 144 in 2024. This is the first such increase in several years.

Local beach litter-pickers think the increase might be down to people expressing their frustration at the ridiculous requirements by pulling off the caps and using nature as a bin. The EU's rules are therefore potentially causing an increase in plastic pollution ⁽²⁾.

With the above in mind:

1. How does the Commission interpret data that show that stricter regulation correlates with an increase in plastic pollution?
2. What will the Commission learn from what has happened on Sweden's west coast, and will the counterproductive effect of the requirement on plastic bottle caps be taken into account when climate and environmental legislation is being prepared in future?
3. Is the Commission prepared to review, abolish or adjust the requirement on tethered caps now that it has been shown to be a factor in increasing rather than reducing littering?

Supporter ⁽³⁾

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Answer given by Ms Roswall on behalf of the European Commission
(27 June 2025)

The requirement of tethered caps and lids stems from Article 6(1) of the Single-Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) ⁽¹⁾, a directive which aims to lessen environmental and health impacts caused by unsustainable plastic use.

In line with the Better Regulation rules ⁽²⁾, a comprehensive assessment was done before adopting ⁽³⁾ the SUPD, based on a study conducted by external experts ⁽⁴⁾.

SUP beverage container caps and lids were among the most littered items on EU beaches, found more than twice as often as the containers.

By combining the tethering requirement with mandatory separate collection targets for SUP beverage bottles, as per Article 9, littering is expected to decrease significantly.

Member States provide data on beach litter via the Marine Strategic Framework Directive ⁽⁵⁾, which the Joint Research Centre (JRC) analyses for trends.

¹ Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

² <https://www.sverigesradio.se/artikel/trendbrottet-tre-ganger-fler-plastkorkar-vid-vastkusten>

³ This question is supported by a Member other than the authors: Sebastian Tynkkynen (ECR)

⁽¹⁾ Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, OJ L 155, 12.6.2019, p. 1-19.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation_en.

⁽³⁾ Summary of SUPD Impact Assessment: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/6e9b7f79-da96-4a53-956f-e8f62c9d7fed/library/466e246b-cfa3-4b3e-a3c7-fe78bb53ee0a/details?download=true>.

⁽⁴⁾ Supporting study — Assessment of measures to reduce marine litter from single use plastics: <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/6e9b7f79-da96-4a53-956f-e8f62c9d7fed/library/10fe4f5e-45cb-4604-8e8a-247d8d76f1f5/details?download=true>.

⁽⁵⁾ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/oceans-and-seas/eu-marine-strategy-framework-directive_en.

A recent JRC report ⁽⁶⁾ shows that marine SUP litter on EU beaches decreased by 40 % ⁽⁷⁾. As the tethering requirement entered into force less than a year ago, since 3 July 2024, continuous monitoring is needed first, before scientifically sound assessment of its impact can be conducted. A single study covering a specific region cannot be generalised to conclude that the measure is ineffective at EU scale.

In the study in question ⁽⁸⁾, it seems that the figures include caps from packaging other than beverage bottles. It also reports a surge of littered balloons, for which the reasons cannot be directly explained.

The Commission will evaluate the SUPD by 3 July 2027, based on available data and evidence to determine if its objectives and measures have been effectively met and implemented across Member States.

⁽⁶⁾ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/marine-litter-eu-coastline-down-almost-one-third-2025-02-04_en.

⁽⁷⁾ The amount of marine single-use plastic litter in the EU coastline has dropped by 40% between the baseline period (2015-2016) and the assessment period (2020-2021).

⁽⁸⁾ https://hsr.se/sites/default/files/2025-04/Skrapprapporten-2025-digital-uppslag-webb_0.pdf.