

A globe made of plastic waste, including a red straw, a black fork, and a red spoon, set against a blue and purple gradient background.

PLANET PLASTIC

STOP THROW AWAY
MADNESS

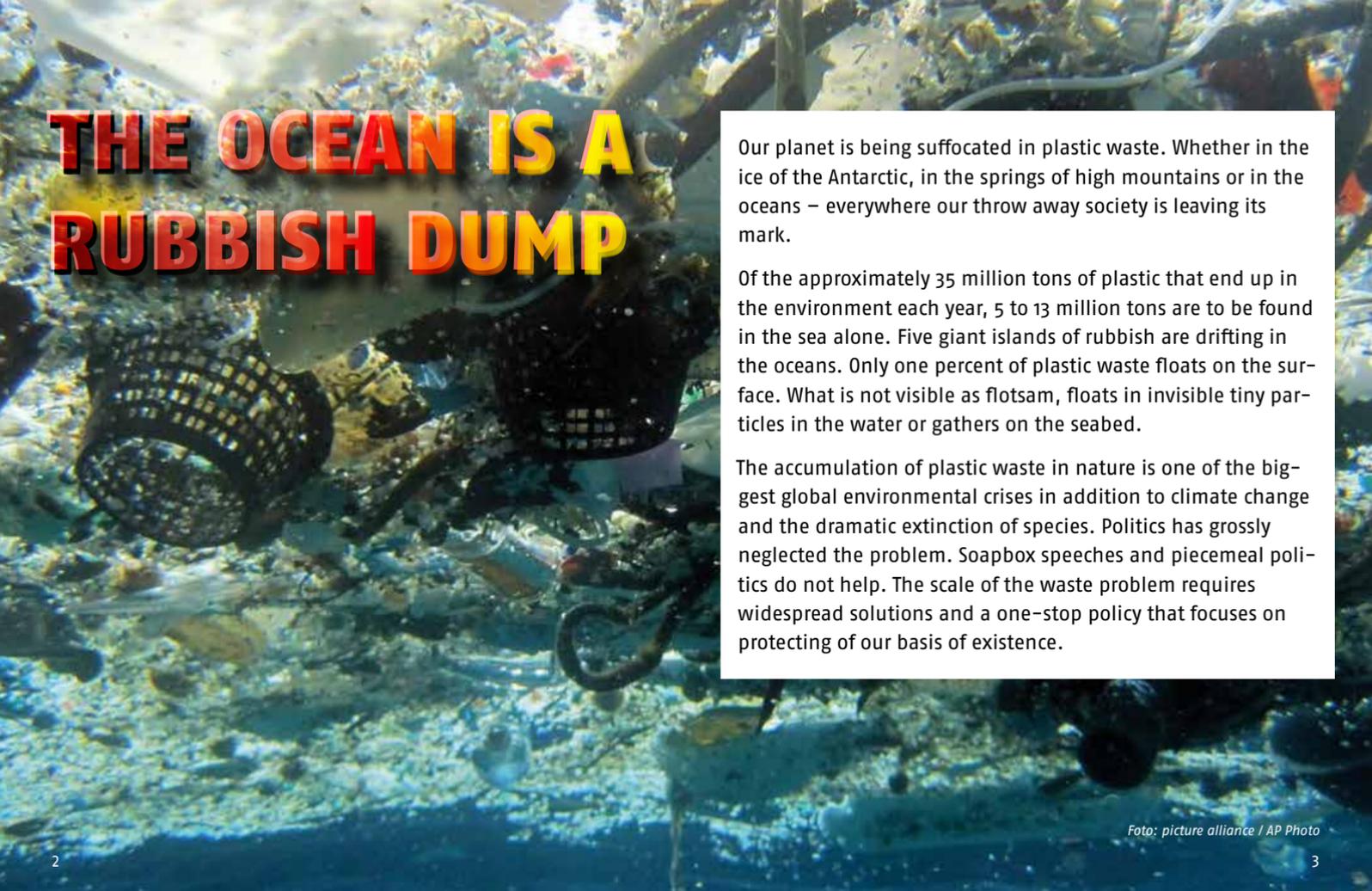
WE LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

**BÜNDNIS 90
DIE GRÜNEN**

BUNDESTAGSFRAKTION



www.gruene-bundestag.de

An underwater photograph showing a diver's legs and fins in the foreground, surrounded by a vast amount of plastic waste. The waste includes a large black mesh basket, a white plastic bottle, and numerous smaller pieces of debris. The water is clear blue, and the scene is brightly lit from above.

THE OCEAN IS A RUBBISH DUMP

Our planet is being suffocated in plastic waste. Whether in the ice of the Antarctic, in the springs of high mountains or in the oceans – everywhere our throw away society is leaving its mark.

Of the approximately 35 million tons of plastic that end up in the environment each year, 5 to 13 million tons are to be found in the sea alone. Five giant islands of rubbish are drifting in the oceans. Only one percent of plastic waste floats on the surface. What is not visible as flotsam, floats in invisible tiny particles in the water or gathers on the seabed.

The accumulation of plastic waste in nature is one of the biggest global environmental crises in addition to climate change and the dramatic extinction of species. Politics has grossly neglected the problem. Soapbox speeches and piecemeal politics do not help. The scale of the waste problem requires widespread solutions and a one-stop policy that focuses on protecting of our basis of existence.

MICROPLASTIC IS EVERYWHERE

Microplastic is a major problem. These tiny plastic particles are formed by the disintegration or shredding of plastic. They remain as a waste product, as plastic does not degrade. Microplastics are specifically used in cosmetics or body care products among other things due to their special properties such as their cleaning effect. Microplastics pollute nature even in the most remote places on earth. In Germany they are also to be found almost everywhere in rivers and soils. By means of microorganisms they get into the food chain and we breathe microplastics in the air – with unexplained consequences for our health.

It is downright absurd to shred expired foodstuffs together with their packaging and process them into „compost“ in biogas plants, which is also common practice in Germany. Every year, microplastic particles are spread on green areas, in gardens and on fields. The amount corresponds to a quantity of up to 612 million plastic bags.



Foto: picture alliance/Stein/JOKER

TRADED BELOW VALUE

It is not about demonising plastic completely. For many applications for example in the home and for construction, it is a useful and important material. It is however absurd to use extremely durable and long lasting plastic products where they are only in use for a few days or even minutes. This is the case, for example, with disposable packaging and other disposable products. In Germany alone, more than 220 kilograms of packaging waste are collected per capita each year. This places Germany bringing up the rear in avoiding packaging waste in Europe.

This versatile material has degenerated into a cheap disposable product. The price of plastic should not be kept artificially low anymore. We want plastic prices to tell the ecological truth and provide incentives for a respectful use of our resources.

Foto: Sylvie Tittel-unsplash

AVOIDING HAS PREFERENCE OVER RECYCLING

What we have to end is our disposable plastic lack of culture! Avoiding plastic waste wherever possible is the watchword. Everyone can make a contribution. For example, whoever goes shopping with shopping baskets or fabric bags does something for the environment and also saves money because many retailers have already given plastic bags the push. The disposable cup for a coffee on the go is a real environmental sin, a re-usable cup, however is a clean solution. Especially manufacturers have to rethink. Unnecessary, oversized packaging must disappear from the market. This also saves money: If less waste is produced, the costs of disposal are reduced. In addition, we must significantly improve our recycling and reprocessing systems. We need products with a long useful life, which can also be recycled through an effective recycling system. Our goal is a real recycling economy, in which no resources are lost.



The Dual Systems do not work well:

over 60%
of the collected plastic waste ends up in

THE REUSABLE WAY IS THE RIGHT ONE

Ex and Hopp – Disposable bottles are catastrophic for the environmental balance. Around nine billion litres of mineral water are sold in disposable bottles over the counter each year in Germany. That equals 110 litres of plastic bottles per person. The rapidly growing mountain of disposable PET bottles, beverage cans and mini-cans is increasingly polluting the environment. Economically speaking, this development threatens the medium sized companies that use our traditional and actually very well functioning reusable system. Politicians must therefore establish incentives to increase the share of reusable packaging, which saves resources and the climate.

First of all, we want to put an end to the deposit chaos that has been irritating consumers for years at the return machines in supermarkets. One way deposit should apply to all disposable PET bottles, regardless of their content. This will help us to establish clarity and achieve better results in collecting and recycling.

RECYCLING WORLD CHAMPIONS? YES, PLEASE!

Yellow, black, brown, blue bins – we separate the rubbish and call ourselves recycling World champions. But this title is fit for the bin. As the dual systems which are responsible for the disposal and recycling of packaging, do not work well. Too many recyclables are not even recorded at all. Of the plastic waste collected, over 60 percent ends up in incineration, with only 38 percent being re-used. The new packaging law does create first approaches for more ecological packaging and more recycling. However, there is still a lack of impulse for a genuine and innovative recycling economy. We will not give up in our efforts to initiate effective change here.

This includes, for example, the introduction of a Germany-wide collection of recyclables. It should not only cover packaging but also other plastic and metal. This makes waste sorting easier overall, and we can also gain up to 450,000 tonnes of recyclable materials for recycling.



Toxins such as the hormone effective plasticisers phthalates and bisphenol A have no place in packaging and other plastic products.

TOXINS ARE NOT POSSIBLE

The starting materials for the production of most plastics are finite fossil raw materials such as petroleum. For the plastic to get its desired properties, further additives must be mixed in: Plasticisers and stabilisers, flame retardants, UV filters and fillers. These additives can easily enter the environment and many cause problems.

Toxins such as the hormone effective plasticisers phthalates and bisphenol A have no place in packaging and other plastic products. Harmful substances being hidden in many everyday products can not be allowed to continue. Here, the precautionary principle must apply.

MAKE SOMETHING NEW FROM SOMETHING OLD

In order to create real cycles of re-use, more and above all better recycling is required. Around 72 kilograms of plastic waste per capita accumulate in Germany every year, about half of which is plastic packaging. Only a fraction of the total plastic waste is actually recycled and re-used. Often the quality of the recycled plastic is insufficient for high quality further processing. We do not make the best use of our technical possibilities.

Products and packaging that can be easily and cleanly separated into their components are the basis for further processing and a real material cycle. That is why we want to establish recycling economy right from the product design. All plastic products must be reusable and recyclable.



ACTION ON ALL LEVELS

In order to master the mountains of packaging waste and to end the plastic plague in the oceans, non-binding plans of action and kind words are not enough. Other countries are far ahead of us. Some countries impose targeted bans on micro-plastics in cosmetics or plastic utensils. Others have drastically reduced their sales with mandatory levies on plastic bags. The EU Commission has also recognised the signs of the times. The European plastics strategy and a proposal for a directive banning certain disposable plastic items are leading the way.

The Federal Government is now under obligation to act. It must finally push ahead with waste prevention strategies and the expansion of recycling capacities. Germany has to catch up and deal seriously with the plastic problem. In order to stop the littering of the environment and the seas with plastic, we must act nationally and at the same time find international solutions. That is why we call for a plastic convention under the auspices of the United Nations.



Foto: Getty

OUR DEMANDS:

We want to avoid plastic waste wherever possible and prevent microplastics from entering the environment. Our goal is to achieve a resource efficient recycling economy with long lasting, reusable products. To end the entry of plastic waste into the oceans as quickly as possible, we call for a UN plastics convention that obligates Member States to action.



1. AVOID PLASTIC WASTE:

- » Prohibit unnecessary packaging
- » Increase the share of reusable packaging and introduce a uniform deposit for all disposable PET bottles



2. IMPROVE RECYCLING AND RE-USE:

- » Among other measures, to launch a Germany-wide collection of recyclables for packaging, plastics and metal
- » Make it a fixed feature of product design that products are able to be separated into their components for recycling



3. STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION:

- » Specify more stringent limits in the Fertiliser Ordinance
- » Ban toxins in everyday products

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

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READ MORE:

- » gruene-bundestag.de » Subjects » Environment » Nature conservation
- » Protecting the oceans (Flyer 18/68)
- » Plastic Fantastic? (Postcard 19/11)

PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS:

- 19/1966 Microplastics – Danger to the environment and health (small enquiry)
- 19/1073 Cosmetics without microplastics – Following the model of Sweden (proposal)
- 19/344 Packaging waste generated since 2013 (small enquiry)

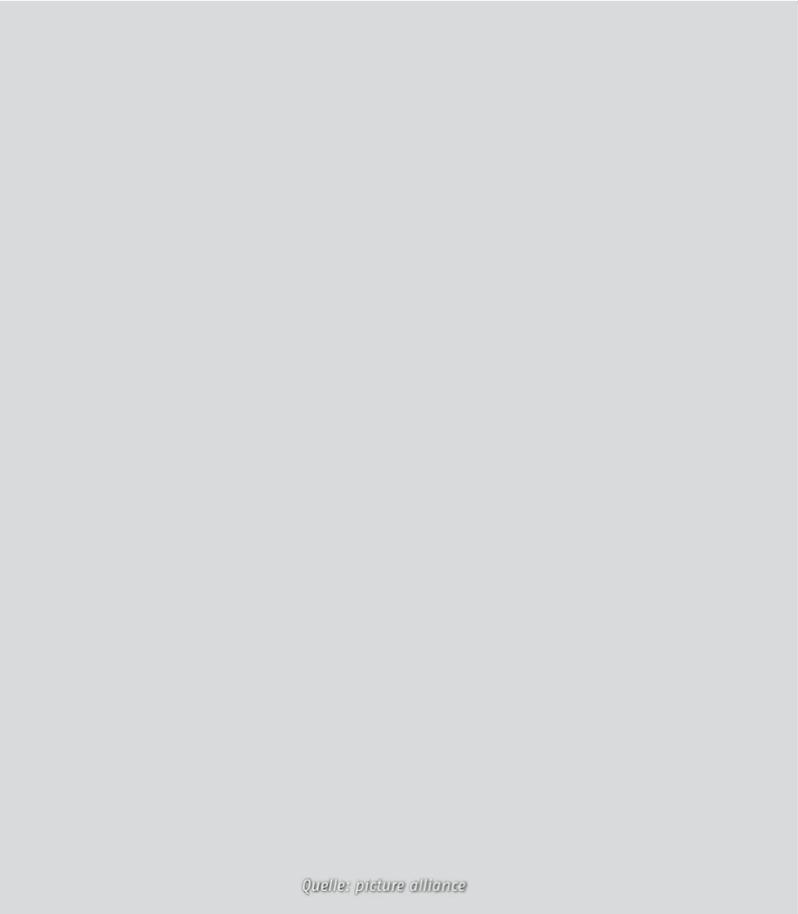
Imprint:

Alliance 90/The Greens Bundestag parliamentary group, Platz der Republik 1, 11011 Berlin

Design: St. Kaminski, Revision: August 2018







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