

Film screening: Dear Plastic – A toxic love story



Wednesday 26 April 2023, 18:30 – 20:30 CEST

Speakers:

- **MEP Catherine Chabaud**
- **Dorothée Adam**, “Cher Plastique” film director
- **Gordana Topić**, International Relations Officer, Member of the EU negotiating team for the global plastics treaty, DG ENV, European Commission
- **Angèle Prévile**, French Senator, Co-Author of Report “Pollution plastique: une bombe à retardement?” (“Plastic Pollution: A ticking time bomb?”)
- **Veronika Safrankova**, Head of Brussels Office, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- **Jacopo Pasquero**, Chair of the Ecosystem Working Group, North Sea Advisory Council



Panel discussion

Concerning **first reactions to the film**, **Ms. Veronika Safrankova** mentioned how striking it is to see the relationship we have with plastics; visualizing the issue makes it even more touching. **Ms. Dorothée Adam** added that it was very emotional for her also to make the film, and it was important to capture political views as well. In her initial intervention, **Ms. Gordana Topić** made three points; plastics is a transboundary issue, and there's a lot of science advising us on its impacts. Secondly, there is enough knowledge to know how we must act from now on; however, current actions are not enough; last but not least she mentioned that reuse and reduction are key. Moving on, **Mr. Jacopo Pasquero** took the floor highlighting the need to raise awareness. The toxic effect of plastics is there, but there is also no need to panic, since we can get closer to this complexity by engaging with users and consumers. **MEP Catherine Chabaud** said that she is currently focusing her work on better packaging through circular economy initiatives. People must also talk about plastic continents floating in the sea, and users must be part of the solution to reduce the use of plastics. **Ms. Angèle Prévile** talked about decreasing plastic production through circular economy solutions, too; the problem won't be solved by adopting these solutions, since other problems such as microplastics will persist over decades. Talking about developments in politics, Ms. Prévile informed the audience that a law on plastics has already been passed through the Senate in France, and now it is up to the National Assembly to vote.

Responding to some questions from the audience with regards to solutions ahead, **Ms. Dorothée Adam** stated that the first solution to this problem is to reduce plastics' consumption and production. In addition, a remark was made from the audience that not all plastics are the same, and each product must be recycled and collected in different ways; looking at the composition and materials of plastics is thus key. Furthermore, during the Q&A session, the role of science was underlined, mentioning that scientific solutions could assist us in moving away from a fossil-based economy and to possibly new and more sustainable solutions.

Coming back to the panel discussion, **MEP Catherine Chabaud** said it is important for generations ahead to **raise awareness about plastic pollution**, and reflected on how this issue will look like in the future.



Indeed, as plastics have been around for decades, it is time to **act now** and be conscious about this problem.

Ms. Adam added that the idea of the movie came from a scientist that went to Greenland and collected **microplastics in far-away areas**; thus, the decision was taken to address this problem in a movie. All in all, it is important to **create emotions** without being too pessimistic, according to Ms. Adam. In fact, she stated that we need to enhance the relationship we have towards plastic in the upcoming years. In order to do so, **politicians, scientists and sociologists** must come together and tackle this issue.

Representing DG ENV at the event, **Ms. Topić** underlined the **European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy** and the **Single Use Plastics Directive** as key policies against plastic pollution. Secondly, she mentioned the **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Systems** as crucial schemes towards addressing littering. In addition to the above, Ms. Topić highlighted the revised **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation** as a main driver to decrease plastic waste, underlining that reusable packaging options to consumers, and transparent labels will be crucial aspects within the Regulation. Moving on, a remark was made about **bio-based and compostable plastics**; although these do not represent a final solution, they will still help **reduce reliance on fossil-based sources**. Concerning **microplastics**, she added that banning products that use microplastics is a good step towards the right direction. Finally, Ms. Topić advocated on the **reduction of primary plastics**, by making products more **recyclable** and **transparent**, while countries should be obliged to **report on chemicals** used in plastic production.

Ms. Prévile stated that there is a need for **all actors** to stop pollution, since everybody is concerned. Plastic does not decompose in nature, because molecules do not break over time. As such, using more **circular economy packaging, new materials** and **recycling schemes** could be important to increase the disposal of plastics. Also, **consumers need to be involved** through awareness-raising campaigns, **education and public participation**.

Referring to the historical UNEA-5.2 resolution to develop and international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, **Ms. Safrankova** mentioned that intergovernmental negotiations have started with



INC-1 in November 2022 and discussions on the contents continuing with the upcoming INC-2 in Paris 29 May -2 June 2023. The instrument needs to be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the **full lifecycle of plastic** including design production and waste management, promoting **sustainable production and consumption**. The instrument should consider also capacity building, technical assistance, data monitoring and reporting. Moreover, involving **multiple stakeholders** including scientists, civil society, industry, will further boost efforts in tackling pollution, especially if action is taken from all levels – global, national, regional and local level.

Last but not least representing NSAC, **Mr. Pasquero** highlighted that **local stakeholders must be on-board** to tackle pollution in order to achieve the legally-binding targets on plastics reduction. Thus, engaging stakeholders at a local level is key. Highlighting the key potential of projects on reducing plastic pollution, Mr. Pasquero mentioned that the plastics negotiations are a fantastic opportunity to scale up and ensure the long-term sustainability of these project. This can be achieved by engaging more with local actors and **spreading knowledge**. For sectors like fisheries, the future Plastics Treaty needs to develop sectorial guidance to ensure effective implementation of global measures, taking into consideration all technical aspects of specific uses of plastics, such as fishing gears.