

Summary of Options Taken by Member States in Accordance with Article 4(1a) of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive

Article 4(1a) of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive requires Member States to take measures to achieve a sustained reduction in the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags (LPCBs) in their territory, either through the adoption of measures to ensure consumption does not exceed specified target levels as set in the Directive, or by prohibiting the provision of LPCBs free of charge at the point of sale of goods and services. The relevant text of the Directive reads as follows:

“1a. Member States shall take measures to achieve a sustained reduction in the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags on their territory.

Those measures may include the use of national reduction targets, maintaining or introducing economic instruments as well as marketing restrictions in derogation from Article 18, provided that these restrictions are proportionate and non-discriminatory.

Such measures may vary depending on the environmental impact of lightweight plastic carrier bags when they are recovered or disposed of, their composting properties, durability or specific intended use.

The measures taken by Member States shall include either or both of the following:

(a) the adoption of measures ensuring that the annual consumption level does not exceed 90 lightweight plastic carrier bags per person by 31 December 2019 and 40 lightweight plastic carrier bags per person by 31 December 2025, or equivalent targets set in weight. Very lightweight plastic carrier bags may be excluded from national consumption objectives;

(b) the adoption of instruments ensuring that, by 31 December 2018, lightweight plastic carrier bags are not provided free of charge at the point of sale of goods or products, unless equally effective instruments are implemented. Very lightweight plastic carrier bags may be excluded from those measures.”

In short, Option a) requires that Member States meet EU targets, but leaves the means by which they achieve this up to them, while Option b) does not require EU targets to be met, but does require Member States to implement a specific reduction measure (although with scope for variation in the details of that measure).

The measures taken by Member States (+Norway and the UK) are summarised in the tables below. Please note that ‘PCBs’ refers to plastic carrier bags and ‘VLPCBs’ refers to very lightweight plastic carrier bags with a wall thickness of less than 15 microns.

Table 1: Member States Taking Option a)

Member State	Measure taken	Exemptions
Austria	Ban on PCBs	Compostable VLPCBs; 'reusable' PCBs
Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia)	Ban on single-use PCBs	≥50 micron PCBs; certain bio-based, compostable PCBs used as primary packaging
Bulgaria	Tax on importers/producers (passed > retailers > consumers)	Certain ≥25 micron LPCBs; VLPCBs without handles; compostable LPCBs
France	Ban on single-use PCBs	Home compostable VLPCBs
Hungary	Environmental product fee on importers/producers Ban on 15<50 micron LPCBs	Lower rate for bio-based and 'biodegradable' bags 'Biodegradable' LPCBs exempt from ban
Malta	Ban on LPCBs	VLPCBs; compostable LPCBs; 'reusable' PCBs
Romania	Ban on LPCBs with a handle	LPCBs without a handle
Sweden	Tax on importers/producers (passed > retailers > consumers)	Lower rate for VLPCBs

Table 2: Member States (+ Norway and the UK) Taking Option b)

Member State (+ Norway and UK)	Measure taken	Exemptions
Belgium (Flanders)	Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs
Cyprus	Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging)
Czechia	Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs
Greece	Consumer tax on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging); compostable LPCBs; LPCBs from kiosks and open air markets
Ireland	Charge on LPCBs	PCBs used as primary packaging; PCBs for specified uses
Lithuania	Consumer tax on LPCBs	VLPCBs
Netherlands	Charge on LPCBs	LPCBs used as primary packaging
Poland	Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging)
Portugal	Consumer tax on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging)
Slovakia	Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging)
Norway	Charge on LPCBs (voluntary)	VLPCBs
United Kingdom	Charge on 'single-use' PCBs	VLPCBs; PCBs for specified uses

Table 3: Member States Taking Both Options a) and b)

Member State	Measures taken	Exemptions
Denmark	Producer/import tax Ban on 0<30 micron LPCBs Charge on ≥30 micron PCBs	VLPCBs without handles (primary packaging) exempt from ban and charge
Croatia	Producer/import environmental tax Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging)
Estonia	Option a) target Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from target and charge
Finland	Option a) target Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from target and charge
Germany	Option a) target Charge on PCBs (voluntary)	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from target and charge
Italy	Bans on non-compostable PCBs Charge on compostable PCBs	Compostable PCBs exempt from bans
Latvia	Producer/importer natural resource tax Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from charge
Luxembourg	Option a) target Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from target and charge
Slovenia	Option a) target Producer/import environmental tax Charge on LPCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) exempt from target and charge

Spain	Ban on non-compostable LPCBs 50% recycled content requirement on ≥50 micron PCBs Charge on PCBs	VLPCBs (primary packaging) and PCBs of ≥70% recycled content exempt from charge
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