

SURFRIDER EUROPE'S REACTION TO THE EC'S PRESENTATION OF THE GREEN CLAIM DIRECTIVE

Strong ambition and objectives but calls for quick adoption and more measures to concretely address Ocean plastic washing– Surfrider Europe welcomes the last piece of EU circular economy package, the Green Claims Directive proposal.

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Surfrider Europe welcomes the European Commission's latest piece of proposed legislation under the circular economy package - its long-awaited proposal for a Green Claims Directive- which sets criteria and introduces new requirements to address greenwashing and unreliable environmental labels. This text had the potential to tackle ocean plastic washing if completed and further improved.

The European Commission has published today [its last piece of proposed legislation under the Circular Economy Package, a proposal for a Directive on Green Claims](#), expected since 2020 and previously announced for November 2022.

The proposed Directive provides an EU common approach to the provision of environmental information to consumers and is a highly welcomed step to limit the proliferation of unsubstantiated labels and misleading environmental claims. It introduces new requirements and criteria for the substantiation and communication of green claims and use of green labels and sets obligations and rules for an ex-ante verification mechanism, certification granting, surveillance, monitoring and the award of penalties by competent authorities. As such, the proposal released today can greatly help tackle ocean washing. Especially, complementary measures should be introduced to further improve the text and allow it to address ocean plastic washing and most used blue washing practices more concretely, in particular via further restrictions on certain well identified blue washing claims and practices. Finally, given the proposal is released close to one year ahead of the end of the institutions' term, Surfrider Europe calls for a robust yet quick examination to allow for its rapid adoption at EU level.

A welcomed EU-legislation on the topic

European consumers are increasingly subject to environmental messages and green claims which relate to Ocean protection and the pollution crisis it faces, in particular resulting from plastics. As more and more consumers are seeking alternatives to single use plastics and packaging and to products containing or releasing microplastics pending further legislation, a number of brands have oriented their marketing efforts towards the protection of the Ocean and the plastic impacts and footprint of their products. Sadly, many of these “blue claims” and associated blue labels cannot be verified or have proven to be false, misleading or unsubstantiated. In a recent briefing, Surfrider Europe exposed the most prominent and widespread blue claims on plastic pollution it has observed over its 30 years of existence, many of them clearly falling under or flirting dangerously with ocean washing practices when misused. These practices generate confusion, fatigue, and disillusion for consumers and are unfair to companies which deploy genuine efforts to make their business compatible with [Ocean](#) protection and communicate in a fair and proportionate manner. Most worryingly, ‘bluewashing’ also diverts attention away from real solutions and represents an obstacle to most-needed actions for [Ocean](#) protection.

Calls for further measures to address Ocean plastic washing

The same way the proposal as it stands, very positively tackles claims relying on carbon offsetting, Surfrider Europe calls for additional provisions and specific criteria to be respectively introduced and assessed to tackle ‘bluewashing’ and misleading blue claims such as marine edible plastics, ocean-bound plastics, plastic offsets and marine biodegradable plastics among others, in line with the recitals of the proposed Directive which highlight the many issues associated with plastic claims. On top of that, Surfrider Europe welcomes the fact that the text foresees rules and obligations for Member States and competent bodies to carry out verification and enforcement processes. We call on EU decision makers to improve the text further to make sure that authorities are equipped with additional resources to undertake these missions.

Gaëlle Haut, EU affairs coordinator at Surfrider Europe, says

“The proposal introduces key criteria and requirements that can help national authorities stop greenwashing and fake green labels. We call on EU decision makers to further improve the text and complement its provisions with concrete measures tackling ‘ocean plastic washing’ as unreliable, misleading blue claims have multiplied in recent years, and are hindering consumer and company action for ocean protection”

The proposed Green Claims Directive will be now submitted to the European Parliament and the Council (i.e. Member States) with

uncertainty on whether the Directive will be adopted by the end of the present mandate of EU institutions.

This proposal for a Directive is extremely positive and can be instrumental in protecting further consumers and the environment, including the Ocean. Meanwhile, Surfrider Europe would like to renew its calls to the private sector to deplastify with no further delay and raise their ambitions further in terms of commitment to preserving the ocean and invites decision makers to make sure that, beyond regulating claims and labels, consumers are only offered products which are sustainable and compatible with a healthy Ocean on the EU market.

ENDS

[Fifty shades of Ocean \(plastic\) washing briefing](#) – Surfrider Foundation Europe, Rethink Plastic alliance

[Proposal for a Directive on substantiation and communication of explicit environmental claims \(Green Claims Directive\)](#) - European Commission

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

Surfrider Foundation Europe, an NGO created in 1990, works to protect the oceans, the coastline, the waves and their users. For 30 years, with a team of experts and 50 volunteer branches in 12 European countries, the association has been working with stakeholders (citizens, private and public sectors) on several major issues: aquatic waste, coastal development, climate change, water quality and user health. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/> or via this [vidéo](#)

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