CommonSeas
Clean Blue Alliance

In partnership with

Clean Blue Greece

How to radically reduce problem plastics in your business

About Common Seas

Common Seas is a not-for-profit enterprise on a mission to quickly and significantly reduce the amount of plastic waste polluting our rivers and seas. Our goal is healthy seas for all.

Common Seas tackles the plastic pollution crisis by driving new policy, investing in the circular economy and catalysing a cultural shift in how we make, use and dispose of plastic. Our global team works across government, business and civil society to make this change happen.

For more information, please visit commonseas.com

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Become a pioneering Clean Blue Business today
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CommonSeas
Clean Blue Alliance

The Clean Blue Alliance

An initiative founded by Common Seas

Clean Blue Alliance partners with island communities to identify, test and scale systemic solutions to plastic pollution. Active in three countries (including Greece), this growing, global network of islands delivers on-the-ground demonstrations of the plastic circular economy.

As a result of the successful Clean Blue pilot on the island of Paros, we are creating tools for everyone to use to reduce their plastic waste.

Every business has a part to play, but those working in tourism have a particularly vital role. The café, accommodation and restaurant sector uses a lot of single-use plastics and is now facing an unprecedented demand to reduce its environmental impact. The tide is turning, and this guide is here to help you ride the wave!

Clean Blue Guidelines

These guidelines will help your business break free from plastic waste. Step-by-step, they help those running busy cafés, bars, restaurants, hotels and guesthouses to understand their plastic use, identify the quick wins to reduce it and develop the most efficient recycling practices.

The Plastic Problem

Although so many economies depend on tourism, it creates a huge surge in plastic pollution. This in turn creates a host of problems: it harms animals and damages ecosystems, it's increasingly linked to human health issues, and it ruins beauty spots – particularly beaches.

Tourism is essential to the Greek economy, providing €38bn (almost 20% of Greece´s GDP) in 2019. But, of the 237 kilotons of plastic packaging waste produced in Greece every year, less than 7% is properly recycled.

Stopping pollution will protect the environment, our health and people's livelihoods. The hotel, restaurant, and catering industries are key to reducing plastic packaging waste and have a huge opportunity to demonstrate leadership.

Change is here

Clean Blue Greece supports businesses to meet the requirements of the incoming European Union's Single-Use Plastics Directive, as implemented in Greek law from 2021. All EU businesses will be required to adapt operations to align with and meet the targets of these new regulations, which address the 10 single-use plastic items most found on European beaches, accounting for 86% of all single-use plastic items on beaches, and about half of all plastic marine litter.

Clean Blue business guidelines support your business to prepare for the following regulations:

- **Item bans by mid-2021**: Strict EU-wide bans on single-use plastic products that have suitable alternatives readily available, including cutlery (forks, knives, spoons & chopsticks), straws, beverage stirrers, plates (including paper plates with plastic lining), cotton buds, balloon sticks, expanded polystyrene food and beverage containers (including their caps and lids), expanded polystyrene cups for beverages (including their covers and lids) and any products made from oxo-degradable plastic. After mid-2021, businesses across the EU will not be able to produce, purchase or use these products.

- **By 5th January 2023**, government proposed EPR schemes should be implemented that target balloons, tobacco products, wet wipes and sanitary towels. Under these proposed EPR schemes, producers will have to cover the economic cost related to the environmental impact of the items during their entire lifecycle.

- **By 2025**, for products that are already covered by existing EU legislation, national governments and businesses are urged to strengthen existing interventions to reduce plastic pollution. The legislation proposes market restrictions, product design, marking/labelling requirements, awareness raising measures, EPR schemes, and separate collection. Several measures have already been established, for example, a target of 77% separate collection by 2025 and 90% separate collection by 2029 of beverage bottles with a capacity of up to three litres.

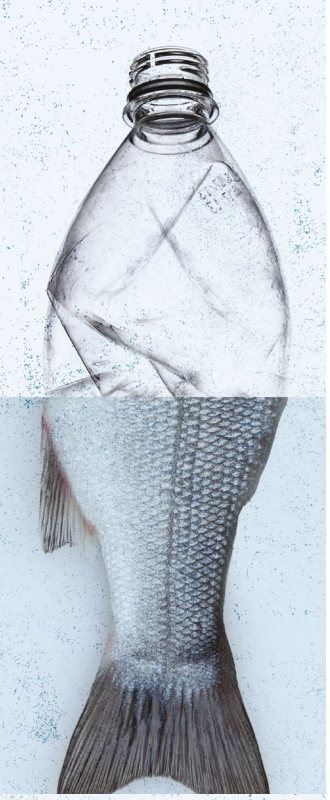
- **By 2026**, Member States will be obliged to significantly reduce the consumption of single use items that do not have readily available alternatives. These include food containers and beverage cups (including covers and lids).

- **By 2030**, all plastic packaging placed on the EU market must be reusable or easily recycled.

- Additional regulations are proposed and concern the national government more directly, but by being aware of these regulations you can best prepare your business for any upcoming national legislation to meet these targets.

With your support, Clean Blue Greece can become a lighthouse for our country to lead in breaking free from plastic.

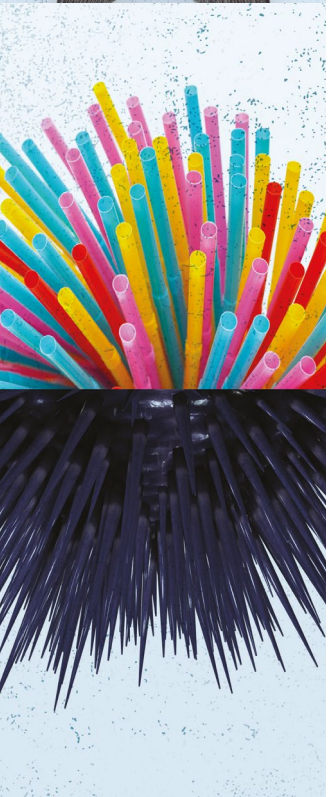
Will you join us?



Did you know:
666 million plastic water bottles are thrown away in Greece every year. That's the equivalent of 30 times the height of Mount Olympus!

Where do they end up?
Recycled if placed in the Blue Bin. If not they will remain in landfill - or the sea- for hundreds of years.

Solution:
Offer tap water or filtered water in reusable bottles.



Did you know:
An estimated 900 million plastic straws consumed each year in Greece. They are too small to be recycled.

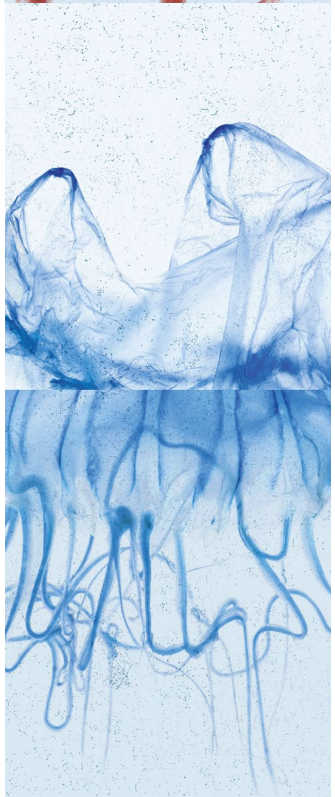
Where do they end up?
Landfill. Straws risk washing into drains and out to sea.

Solution:
Stop offering straws.
If requested provide paper or reusable metal.

Did you know:
Each year Greece produces an estimated 1,000 tons of wasted single-use cups. That is the equivalent to the weight of eight and a half blue whales.

Where do they end up?
Recycled if placed in the Blue Bin. If not they will go to landfill - or litter the natural environment.

Solution:
Incentivise customers to use a reusable cup.



Did you know:
Bags easily catch the wind and blow into the sea, where marine life mistake them for food - such as jellyfish.

Where do they end up?
Landfill or the natural environment.

Solution
If a bag is requested offer one made of paper, cotton or basket.

Four step approach

TO PHASE-OUT PROBLEM PLASTICS IN YOUR BUSINESS

1 Understand the types and numbers of problem plastics your business buys.

2 Identify the plastic items your business can reduce or stop buying.

3 Develop a plan to reduce plastics and evaluate success.

4 Know how best to manage your plastic waste.

Drinks bottles, straws, cups and bags are among the most commonly found plastic items on European beaches. This is one of the reasons, Greece has already banned several of these single-use plastic products in 2021.

...AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES FOR

CATERING

EASIER TO IMPLEMENT → HARDER TO IMPLEMENT

sometimes the easiest solutions are the most eco-friendly

WATER BOTTLES	Offer tap water to customers first.	Offer filtered water in refillable glass bottles.	Provide staff with a reusable bottle to refill.	Replace plastic with glass.
STRAWS	Consider which drinks require a straw.	Keep straws out of sight.	Train staff to phase out offering straws.	When requested offer a reusable metal or paper straw.
COFFEE CUPS	Incentivise customers to use a reusable cup.	Discount or free coffee on their tenth refill.	Ensure used coffee cups go in the Blue Bin.	Provide staff with a reusable cup.
BAGS	Encourage customers to bring reusable bags.	Don't offer bags.	When asked for a bag charge the 9c national fee.	
TAKEAWAY	Encourage customers to bring reusable containers.	Lend customers reusable containers for a deposit.	Switch to reusable cutlery and takeaway boxes.	Ask customers if they need cutlery rather than always providing.
OTHER	Ensure table cloths are reusable or recyclable. Paper ones are often lined with plastic.	Order in bulk to reduce packaging. Return packaging to supplier or recycle.	Use refillable condiment bottles.	Use blue roll and clingfilm sparingly. Wash clingfilm and put in Blue Bin.

...AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES FOR
HOTELS – BATHROOM

EASIER TO IMPLEMENT → HARDER TO IMPLEMENT

sometimes the easiest solutions are the most eco-friendly

MINIATURE TOILETRIES	Do not remove part-used toiletries during a guest's stay.	Switch to large refillable dispensers.	Remove miniature toiletries from rooms and make available upon request.	Switch to plastic-free solid shampoo and conditioner bars.
HAND SOAP	Do not remove part-used soap during a guest's stay.	Switch to large, refillable dispensers.	Provide/ charge for soap bars upon request.	Switch to soap bars with plastic-free packaging.
PLASTIC CUPS & WATER	Switch to glass cups.	Avoid plastic wrapping. Put glass upside down to indicate it hasn't been used.	Give guests option to purchase refillable water bottle.	Provide a refillable water bottle to guests for duration of stay.
TOOTHBRUSHES, TOOTHPASTE & RAZORS	Provide or charge for these items upon request.	Switch to bamboo/ wood toothbrush and razor alternatives.	Switch to plastic-free dental floss or toothpaste tablets	

...AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES FOR
HOTELS – BEDROOM

EASIER TO IMPLEMENT → HARDER TO IMPLEMENT

sometimes the easiest solutions are the most eco-friendly

HOT DRINKS SACHETS/ CAPSULES	Provide jars or reusable containers for sugar and/or sweetener.	If Nespresso machines are available, provide a small table-top bin for collection of Nespresso capsules.	Switch to loose-leaf tea and coffee.	Provide fresh milk on request in small jug or in glass bottles with screw tops.
CONDIMENTS & MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS	Provide a separate bin for glass collection in rooms to encourage proper disposal of drinks bottles by guests.	Provide complimentary condiments (e.g. honey and jam) to guests in glass or reusable jars.	Incentivise the return of condiments in glass or reusable jars, so they can be cleaned and reused for other guests.	Eliminate plastic wrapping from guest fruit baskets and source local ingredients
BINS & LINERS	Empty contents into larger bin bags to maximise lifespan.	Reuse bin bag until end-of-life, then recycle.	Remove all but one plastic bin liner from rooms for wet waste.	Provide separate bins for glass, recyclable, non-recyclable items and Nespresso capsules in rooms.
LAUNDRY & LAUNDRY BAGS	Replace plastic laundry bags with cloth bags for guest laundry collection.	Return guest laundry in a folded pile or in a cloth bag.	Upcycle old bed linen and towels into bags, kitchen rags or gardening sheets.	Promote less washing to reduce microfibre leakage from clothing, sheets and towels by offering incentives.

Know your products

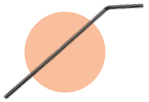
5 trillion plastic bags are produced every year. Side by side, they could encircle the world seven times.

- Best option.
- Recyclable
- Last resort- not recyclable or retains little value through recycling.

Drinks containers

MATERIAL	**Reusable**	**Glass**	**Aluminium**	**PET**	**Carton** (Tetra Pak)
WHICH BIN?		Glass bell bin	Blue Bin		
WHERE THEY END UP	Reuse infinitely	Recycled			
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Metal lasts forever. Use 15 times to breakeven environment-ally with a plastic bottle	Glass is refillable and infinitely recyclable	The average aluminium can is made from 68% recycled content	PET bottle can be recycled into a new bottle	Tetra Pak holds little value through recycling due to layers of paper, metal and plastic

Straws

MATERIAL	**Metal**	**Paper/Straw**	 **PET**
WHICH BIN?		Blue Bin	
WHERE THEY END UP	Reuse infinitely	Compostable and biodegrades	No value to recyclers. Often found littering the environment
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Metal straws are easy to clean and dishwasher safe	Ensure paper straws do not have plastic lining	Plastic straws were banned by the Greek government on 3rd July, 2021

Cups

Lids

MATERIAL	**Reusable**	**PET or PP**	**Paper with plastic liner**	**Paper and PLA liner** (e.g Vegware)	**Expanded Polystyrene**	**Poly-styrene**
WHICH BIN?		Blue Bin		Grey bin		Blue Bin
WHERE THEY END UP	Reuse infinitely	Recycled	Recycled if clean otherwise landfill	Landfill		Often in landfill or environ-ment
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Consider offering a small discount to incentivise customers with reusable cups	If placed in the Blue Bin can be recycled back into cups and bottles	Hold little value when recycled	The materials cannot be separated through recycling	Economically unviable to recycle: **avoid at all costs**	Due to small size often gets lost in recycling

Cling film or stretch wrap

MATERIAL	**PPVC / PVDC**	
WHICH BIN?	Clean = Blue Bin	Dirty = Grey bin
WHERE IT ENDS UP	Landfill or recycled if clean	

Bags

MATERIAL	**Cotton**	**Plastic**
WHICH BIN?	Grey bin	Blue Bin
WHERE THEY END UP	Biodegrades in landfill	Recycled
THINGS TO CONSIDER	May be sprayed with a resin which will reduce degradability. Look for FSC certification	Use as many times as possible before putting in the Blue Bin

Cutlery

MATERIAL	**Bamboo**	**Wood**	**Expanded Polystyrene**
WHICH BIN?	Grey bin		Blue Bin
WHERE THEY END UP	Reusable and then biodegrades		Recycled if placed clean in the Blue Bin
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Degrades over time in the natural environment. Look for FSC certification.		Has very little value when recycled. Plastic cutlery was banned by the Greek government on 3rd July, 2021.

Takeaway packaging

MATERIAL	**Stainless steel**	**Aluminium**	**PET**
WHICH BIN?		Blue Bin	
WHERE IT ENDS UP	Reuse infinitely	Recycled if placed clean in the Blue Bin	
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Consider offering reusable containers at a small hire charge.	Typically goes to landfill because customers don't wash clean after use.	

Plastic lined card	**Bioplastic liner**	**Expanded Polystyrene Foam** (EPS)
	Grey bin	
	Landfill	
The plastic and paper are not separated	Bio (plant-based) plastic only degrades in industrial composters, which do not exist in Greece	Many cities are banning EPS due to the materials chemical absorbing properties and the harm it causes in the environment. The Greek government banned these on July 3rd, 2021.

There is no 'away'. Plastic breaks down into tiny particles, which remain in the environment forever.

Make a change

INCENTIVISE CUSTOMERS TO BRING REUSABLE CONTAINERS. CONSIDER STOCKING BRANDED REUSABLE CONTAINERS AND CHARGE A SMALL HIRE FEE OR DEPOSIT.

Make a change

PROVIDE A REFILLABLE WATER BOTTLE TO GUESTS FOR DURATION OF STAY.

A plastic bottle can take hundreds of years to break down in the sea, eventually becoming millions of microplastics.

Bathroom products

MATERIAL	**PET miniature toiletry bottles**	**Plastic hand soap bottles**	**Refillable dispensers**	**Paper wrapped or plastic-free soap bars**
WHICH BIN?	Blue Bin	Bottle - Blue bin Pump - Grey bin		Paper packaging - Blue Bin
WHERE IT ENDS UP	Recycled		Reuse infinitely	Recycled
THINGS TO CONSIDER	PET bottles can be recycled into new bottles.	Pumps are often difficult to recycle, so separate and dispose of pump in the grey bin.	Buy products in bulk to refill dispenser. This is often cheaper whilst also reducing plastic.	Consider purchasing locally produced shampoo, conditioner and regular soap bars to support local businesses and showcase your commitment to reducing plastic.

PET or PP cups	**Glass cups**	**Reusable water bottle**	**Plastic toothbrush**	**Bamboo toothbrushes**
Blue Bin	Glass bell bin		Grey bin	
Recycled		Reuse infinitely	Landfill	Reusable and then biodegrades in natural environment.
PET and PP cups can be recycled into new cups and bottles.	Glass is refillable and infinitely recyclable.	Metal lasts forever. Use 15 times to break even environmentally with a plastic bottle.	Consider providing/ charging for toothbrush only if requested by guest.	Bristles of most brands are not made of recyclable or compostable material, so the head should be separated from the brush before disposal.

Bedroom products

MATERIAL	**Plastic sachets for tea, coffee, sugar, sweetener**	**Concentrated milk in mini aluminium containers**	**Refillable glass jars**	**Nespresso capsules**
WHICH BIN?	Grey bin	Blue bin	Glass bell bin	Collect in-house
WHERE IT ENDS UP	Landfill	Recycled		Return to supplier for industrial composting
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Not recyclable and have little or no economic value from recovery. Will end up in landfill.	Milk containers must be cleaned before disposal in blue bin.	Glass is refillable and infinitely recyclable.	Use small, table-top bins to collect used capsules in bulk before returning to supplier.

Plastic bin liners	**Plastic laundry bags**	**Cloth laundry bags**
Grey Bin		
Landfill		Upcycled into new items
Not recyclable and have little or no economic value from recovery. Will end up in landfill.	Not recyclable and have little or no economic value from recovery. Will end up in landfill.	Reuse as many times as possible then donate for upcycling.

Over 11 billion plastic condiment sachets are sold globally every year and end up up in landfill.

Make a change

PROMOTE LESS WASHING TO REDUCE MICROFIBRE LEAKAGE FROM CLOTHING, SHEETS AND TOWELS BY OFFERING INCENTIVES

Communicating your plastic-free journey to your team

Communicating with your team

As you begin or continue your plastic-free journey, it is important to talk to your staff about your commitment and why it matters. Here are some ideas for how to inspire and inform your employees – and get them fully on board with your mission.

1. Dedicate time during staff meetings or before shifts to run through the initiative:

- **a.** Help your team understand which changes you have decided to make and why
- **b.** Support your team to speak with confidence and pride to customers about the changes:
  - **i.** Provide them with facts and figures about plastic
  - **ii.** Showcase your results – such as how many plastic cups you've saved.

2. Develop talking points for your staff to communicate your mission, for example:

- **a.** "We're committed to protecting our local environment and have switched to bamboo toothbrushes to reduce single-use plastic waste."
- **b.** If you are changing to only providing plastic items upon request: "I'll happily provide you with miniature toiletries. We have implemented an "only if requested" policy to reduce our plastic footprint and become more sustainable."

3. Suggest some key habit changes you'd like your staff to keep in mind, such as:

- **a.** Avoiding using plastic straws to taste drinks during creation
- **b.** Only providing a straw if a customer requests one
- **c.** Never providing two straws for one drink
- **d.** Avoiding garnishes that use plastic, such as wrapped toothpicks or umbrellas

Communicating your plastic-free journey to your guests

Communicating with your guests

Communicating your plastic waste-free initiative to customers is a vital part of your journey. That's why we ask every Clean Blue business to display their certification where the public can see it. This will help you build better relationships with your guests, enhance your business' reputation, and even inspire wider behaviour change. Your customers will appreciate the effort you're going to and support your approach.

1. **Communicate the plastic-free changes you're making on your website, social media, additional platforms (TripAdvisor etc.) and on printed items - such as menus, table tents, on blackboards or in room guides.**
   - **a.** "We are proud to partner with Clean Blue Alliance to reduce our use of single-use plastics and protect our beautiful island!" (You could showcase some of the changes you are making here).
   - **b.** "Missing the [plastic item] in the [location]? We've switched to [solution] because we don't want to contribute to marine plastic pollution."
   - **c.** Use your own messaging to make it even more personal!
2. **Use graphics (printable or handmade!) to showcase key facts about plastic or the savings you've made. These can be used online, around your place of business and/or in rooms. You might like to place a graphic next to a 'missing' plastic item.**
3. **Create a personalised note for customers to explain why you are on this journey to become plastic waste-free. Highlight some of your main changes or achievements.**

Terminology

Biodegradable: Items that decompose when in contact with bacteria or other living organisms. Some items decompose differently on land as they do in the sea, as the physical and chemical conditions required for decomposition vary. Biodegradable plastics are included in the list of items banned by the Greek government on July 3rd, 2021.

Bioplastics: Umbrella term for plastics derived from renewable biomass sources, such as vegetable fats and oils, corn starch or microbiota. Not all bioplastics are biodegradable. PLA is one type of bioplastic.

Blue Bin: Collects recyclable packaging.

Circular economy: The circular economy is a sustainable alternative to the traditional linear economy (take, make, use, dispose). In a circular economy, resources are kept in use for as long as possible, rather than being discarded straight after their first use. After products have been re-used to their limit, they can be recovered and regenerated into new products, or recycled as appropriate.

Compostable: Materials capable of degrading into a nutrient-rich compost under specific conditions. Compostable materials should be certified (EU 13432). These materials are often only suitable for commercial composting, not home composting.

Downcycling: The process of recycling waste where the resulting product is of lower quality and functionality than the original material. Often this is due to the accumulation of impurities.

Home compostable: Capable of fully degrading in a compost heap, as opposed to a commercial compost facility.

Grey bin: General waste, which goes to landfill.

PET: Polyethylene terephthalate. Crude oil derived plastic commonly used to make drinks bottles and food containers. If managed, can be recycled.

PLA: PLA is a plant-based material made from renewable sources e.g. vegetable fats, corn starch, straw. It degrades at around 60 degrees and therefore requires an industrial composter, which currently doesn't exist in Greece.

Recyclable: Able to be reprocessed into another product.

Recycled: Waste that has been converted into a reusable material.

RPET: Recycled polyethylene terephthalate. Plastic derived from recycled PET plastic.

Upcycling: The process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless, or unwanted products into new materials of better quality or for better environmental value.

Notes

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