

A comparison of plastic bag usage in the EU (per capita / year)

Portugal

Plastic carrier bags are still free in Portuguese supermarkets. Certainly the main reason for the country's extremely high consumption rate. The same is true in many Eastern EU states.

466

Italy

Italy's focus is on bags made from bioplastic. Whilst this material is controversial, plastic bag usage has dropped as a result. There's a simple explanation for this: bags made of bioplastic are more expensive.

181

EU average

The EU target is for each person to use a max. 90 bags every year by 2020. By 2026, this figure should have dropped to just 40 bags. We are still a long way off from this goal.

175

Germany

German consumers have had to pay for more robust plastic bags for many years now. Retailers should avoid handing out thin disposable bags to customers free of charge from April 2016 onwards. This is a voluntary agreement between the trade association and the Federal Environment Ministry.

64

Ireland

In 2002, retailers had to start charging customers an environmental tax of 22 cents on each carrier bag. Consumption of plastic bags has fallen by more than 90% since then.

18

4

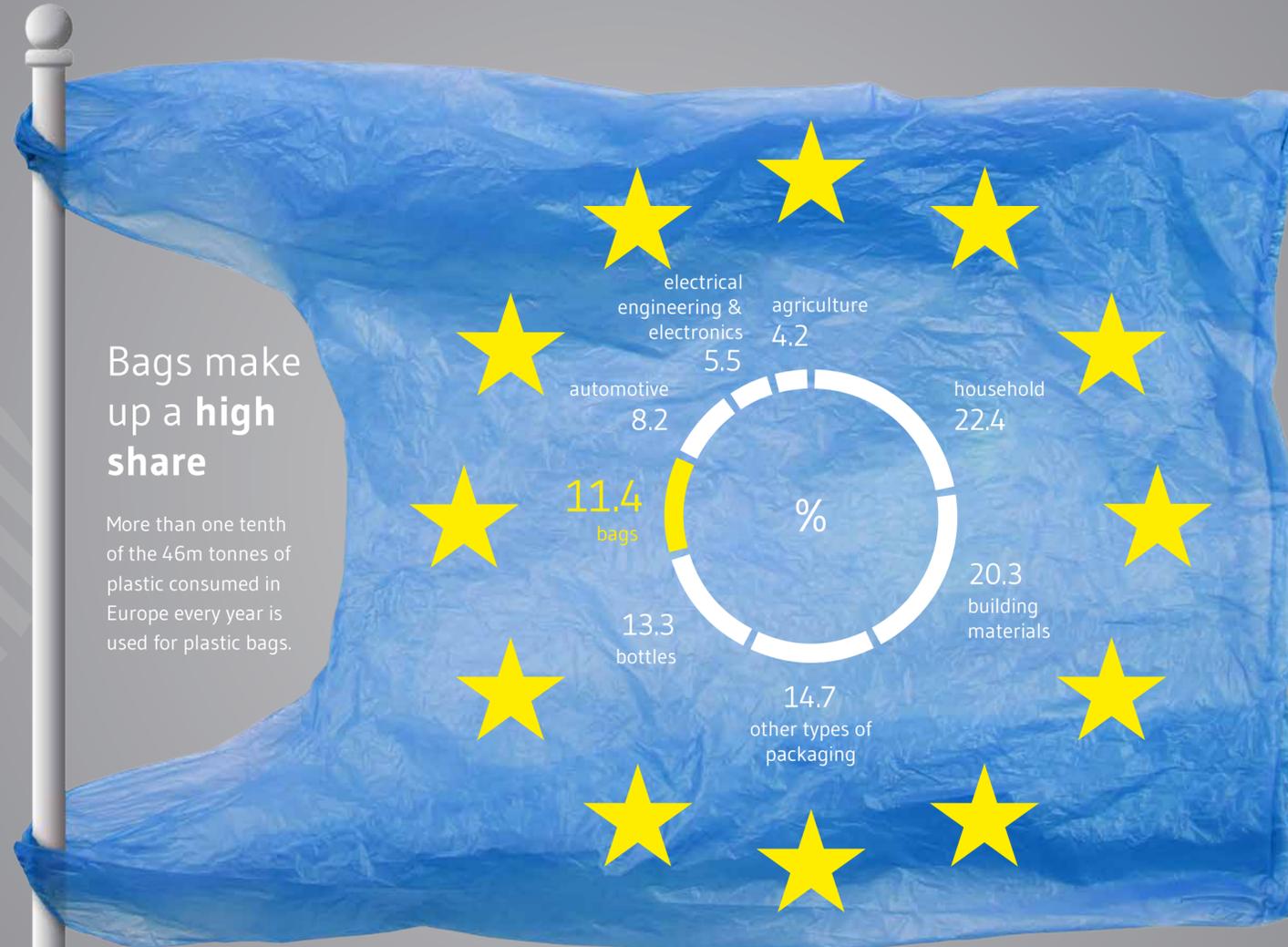
Denmark

Denmark has a long tradition of charging tax on plastic bags. A levy was first introduced back in 1994. As a result, the country has the lowest consumption of bags – together with Finland.



Plastic bags – an indigestible problem for our planet

Plastic bags – in particular those made of thin plastic – are a prime example of how harmful this material can be for our environment. For the most part, these bags are used only once before being thrown in the bin or – far worse – simply discarded as litter. And this can have serious consequences. An EU directive aims to significantly reduce our consumption of plastic bags.



Bags in our oceans

Plastic litter – carelessly thrown away into our rivers and seas – is swept along by ocean currents, creating huge areas of waste. The majority of this waste is plastic bags and bottles.

Endangered species

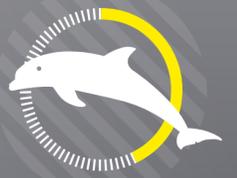
The following animals are particularly at risk from the plastic in our oceans as they can choke on it, get entangled in it or starve to death because their stomachs are full of plastic particles.



86%
sea turtles



44%
seabirds



43%
marine mammals

An imported problem

Most of the thin plastic bags used in the EU are produced outside Europe.



70%
of which are imported into the EU

Poor recycling rates

Only a tiny fraction of the plastic bags used in Europe every year are recycled. There is much room for improvement here.

8%
end up as litter

6%
are recycled



36%
are incinerated

50%
are sent to landfill

