



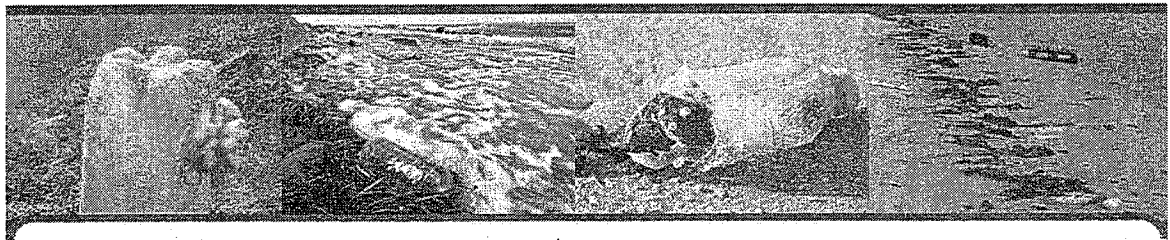
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# **Issue Paper to the "International Conference on Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas"**

**- Version for discussion at the Conference -**



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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report which are not otherwise assigned are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the European Commission or by the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA).

## Executive summary

The role of the present Issue Paper to the "International Conference on Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas" is to establish for the conference's participants a common "starting point", from where discussions can be taken forward to approach the conference's main goal: facilitating the establishment or further development of Regional Action Plans (RAPs) on marine litter in the regional seas or Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) of European waters.

To accomplish this role, the Issue Paper was designed partly as an "open document" - a factual part describing

- the political background of the conference and its embedding into international obligations and strategies (Chapter 1),
- the up-to-date knowledge about impacts, amounts, consistency and sources of marine litter in European waters (Chapters 2.1 and 2.2),
- overall aims and principles of combating marine litter (Chapter 2.3), and
- the existing framework for actions and initiatives to reduce marine litter inputs into the marine environment (Chapter 3),

- is followed by the presentation of a "toolbox", presenting successful actions, measures and initiatives, which will be expanded before, during and after the conference (Chapter 4 and Annex I); and by a sections which suggests possible questions - regarding the data situation in the respective regional sea, and possible steps to be taken to get closer to a RAP on marine litter, such as possible operational targets and concrete measures and actions - to be discussed at the conference (customized to each regional sea/Regional Sea Convention) (Chapter 5).

The aim of this last chapter is not to impose certain steps, operational targets and measures upon the participants (RSC representatives, CPs, stakeholders, NGO), but to show which steps could be taken to take the issue of preventing and reducing litter in the marine environment further. As such, it is envisaged that fruitful discussions and common understandings will be facilitated.

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## Acronyms

CP(s)	Contracting Party (Parties).
EcoQO	Ecological Quality Objectives.
GES	Good Environmental Status.
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission.
ICG ML	Intersessional Correspondence Group Marine Litter.
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
IMO	International Maritime Organization.
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature.
IUU fishing	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities.
KIMO	Kommunenes Internasjonale Miljøorganisasjon (Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation).
MEDPOL	Program for the Assessment and Control of Pollution in the Mediterranean Region.
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding.
MS	Member State(s).
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
OSPAR	Previously named Oslo (dumping at sea) and Paris (land-based sources of marine pollution) Conventions
QSR	Quality Status Report.
RAP(s)	Regional Actions Plan(s).
RSC(s)	Regional Sea Convention(s).
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
TSG ML	Technical Subgroup on Marine Litter.
UNEP/MAP	UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan.

## 1 Background and role of the Issue Paper

The present Issue Paper to the "International Conference on Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas" was developed jointly by the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA), the European Commission (EC) and their respective consultants (InterSus - Sustainability Services; Fresh-Thoughts Consulting, Milieu). The authors were supported by representatives from the four European Regional Seas Conventions (RSCs), from HELCOM for the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea Convention for the Black Sea, OSPAR for the North-East Atlantic, and from UNEP/MAP for the Mediterranean.

The Issue Paper evolved over the course of several rounds of commenting, eliciting the expert knowledge of the RSCs, and will be finished after another round of commenting in the wake of the conference itself. The paper will be submitted to the EU Marine Directors in May 2013.

The Issue Paper serves as input to the conference, and proposes questions to be discussed there. Hereby, the focus lies strongly on supporting a) the establishment or b) further development and achievement of coherence of Regional Action Plans (RAPs) on marine litter for the regional seas. It furthermore collects best practice examples and commitments to reduce the input of marine litter into the sea, or to reduce the amount of litter already present in the marine environment. Through this the conference supports RSCs in the identification and implementation of programs of measures specifically aiming at combating marine litter.

It is envisioned that the Issue Paper and the conference itself help to practically move ahead with reducing marine litter in the marine environment, and reduce its inputs.

As such, the Issue Paper supports EU Member States (MS) and Contracting Parties (CPs) to the RSCs in the implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and contributes to implementing the Honolulu Strategy. It further facilitates the development of an EU contribution to the Rio + 20 obligation:

*"We further commit to take action to, by 2025, based on collected scientific data, achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment."*

Last not least, it is envisaged that the Issue Paper, and the conference, create new connections and bonds between people, and in doing so supports various actors and stakeholders in the fight against marine litter.

## 2 Marine Litter in European Waters/Understanding the problem

The Issue Paper follows the MSFD Task Group 10 report's definition of marine litter (European Commission/JRC/Ifremer/ICES 2010):

*"Marine litter is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment...Marine Litter consists of items that have been made or used by people and deliberately discarded or unintentionally lost into the sea and on beaches, including such materials transported into the marine environment from land by rivers, draining or sewage systems or winds. For example, marine litter consists of plastics, wood, metals, glass, rubber, clothing or paper etc. This definition does not include semi-solids remains of for example mineral and vegetable oils, paraffin and chemicals that sometimes litter sea and shores".*

In this Issue Paper, the terms "marine litter" and "marine debris" are used interchangeably.

### 2.1 Impacts of Marine Litter

#### Ecologic impacts of marine litter

To follow up on considerations carried out by the MSFD GES TSG Marine Litter in their 2011 report (JRC IES 2011), establishing and isolating the extent of harm caused by marine litter at a population, community or ecosystem level will be difficult to confirm because of the wide range of factors affecting this level of biological organization. Nevertheless it seems inevitable that especially the broadly documented impacts of entanglement and ingestion will alter the biological and ecological performance of individuals. A number of negative effects have been reported, including compromising an individual's ability to capture and digest food, sense hunger, escape from predators, and reproduce as well as decreasing body condition and compromising locomotion, including migration. Ingestion of microplastics is also of concern as it can provide a pathway for transport of harmful chemicals (CBD 2012). Hence it is essential to consider harm at the individual level, and estimating the numbers of individuals affected is likely to offer the most feasible and representative conclusions about biological impacts. Further input from known sources and items regularly found should be prevented, although current knowledge about harm on biota as outlined below should be applied in order to prioritize and target actions.

The majority of reported encounters by individual marine organisms were with plastic litter. This

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