

## Marine Litter: EU Actions for the Future of our Oceans

13.10.2020, 15.15 – 16.45 CEST

CleanAtlantic project is an INTERREG Atlantic Area project which aims at improving capabilities to monitor, prevent, and remove marine litter in the Atlantic Ocean, but also works to raise awareness on this environmental problem. Being such a hot topic as marine litter is, there are many initiatives ongoing at all levels to tackle this challenge. This event aims at showing how the project connects with the EU work to tackle marine litter and ensuring that its results are transferred into useful information to EU decision makers.

### Welcome addresses

**Pierre Karleskind**, Member of the European Parliament, President of the PECH Committee, Vice-Chair of the SEARica Board for Marine and Maritime Research, opened the event by thanking CPMR, SEARica and CleanAtlantic for organising this meeting. He underlined three central aspects of the project: a) By tackling the issue of marine litter, the project shows how Europe is attentive to citizens' concerns and illustrates the need for transnational cooperation to address this transboundary issue; b) the project shows how the fishermen contribute to seas and oceans protection, when they are often described as the main polluters ; c) the relevance of scientific research like the recent [Mission Starfish 2030](#) presented by Pascal Lamy, that sets objectives for restoring our ocean and waters by 2030. Karleskind concluded his intervention by stressing the importance of a common vision for tackling the issue of marine litter.

**Tonino Picula**, Member of the European Parliament, President of the SEARica Intergroup, speaking on behalf of the SEARica Intergroup, which gathers 107 MEPs, from 23 Member States and 6 political groups, united in the mission to support the development of a strong maritime dimension, highlighted that marine litter is a global challenge that effects all the oceans and sea basins. He mentioned that the European Parliament is in the process of discussing the next INTERREG budget and CleanAtlantic clearly represents the added value of the INTERREG programme. He stressed the importance of combining terrestrial and maritime policies at all governance levels. He referred to the need for Ocean literate citizens and as well ocean aware policy makers, researchers, communities. He affirmed his appreciation for the project's studies, policy recommendations and mapping tools and emphasised the value of the project's achievements for policy makers, stressing that CleanAtlantic possesses all the preconditions to be one of the EU success stories.

### Results of the CleanAtlantic project

**Paloma Rueda**, Managing Director of CETMAR - Lead Partner of CleanAtlantic, introduced the session by underlying the importance of tackling marine litter via a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach. She summarised CleanAtlantic's aim, which was to improve capabilities to monitor, prevent and remove marine litter and most importantly raise everyone's awareness, as we are all part of this problem and we hope to be also part of the solution. Lastly, she introduced and gave the floor to the project partners to present some of the project's results.

**Tiziana Luisetti**, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) - Partner of CleanAtlantic project, presented the studies conducted in the framework of CleanAtlantic about the socio-economic impacts

of marine litter on different sectors (tourism, fisheries and aquaculture). She described the case studies, which investigated the preferences of the public for policy actions towards marine litter removal from beaches, and the preferences of fishermen to support actions to remove marine litter from the ocean. She also presented the results of the survey conducted by Ardit in Madeira, concerning the impact of marine litter on aquaculture, which showed that 96% of respondents (staff from aquaculture facilities), considered litter as a threat to the sector. In conclusion, she underlined that these results could help decision makers to co-design future interventions.

**Vicente Pérez**, University of Santiago de Compostela - Partner of CleanAtlantic project, presented the models developed by CleanAtlantic to predict the movement of marine litter and map hotspots, and explained the difficulties faced by and the opportunities derived from the elaboration of these models. Pérez specified that models could be used at large or small scale to analyse different scenarios. He showed the simulation videos of litter accumulation in the Atlantic and underlined that this evidence could help decision makers to establish cleaning strategies, control sources of litter, and ultimately reduce the impact of marine litter on the marine environment.

**Marisa Fernández**, CETMAR - CleanAtlantic Project Coordinator, presented CleanAtlantic's capitalisation strategy and results. She underlined that CleanAtlantic addressed marine litter using a holistic approach by working on different but complementary areas of knowledge. She described how the project produced tangible outcomes, such as operational tools, databases, software, guidelines, apps, and awareness raising materials, and capitalises on this knowledge by sharing results with ongoing initiatives. She outlined the actors involved and the end-users of the project (policy makers, private sector, scientists, NGOs, society) and explained how CleanAtlantic ensured the uptake of project outcomes by a) participating in the activities of the OSPAR Commission, Atlantic Strategy Group Meetings, Marine Strategy Framework Directive technical group, SEARICA Intergroup meetings, and other external events and b) sharing knowledge through the CleanAtlantic Knowledge Tool, which is an online database compiling projects, organisations, and resources on the topic of marine litter.

### Reactions from the panel

**Catherine Chabaud**, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of the SEARICA board for Climate & Governance, started her intervention by expressing her endeavour to bring issues connected to the sea into the political debate at the EU level, and explained the systemic approach that needs to be followed, based upon four axes: knowledge of the marine ecosystem, protection and restoration of the marine ecosystems environment, sustainable blue economy, European and international ocean governance. She recalled her current role as rapporteur of a report on 'the impact of marine litter on fisheries'. She referred to the work done at the EU level to tackle marine pollution and mentioned the Single-Use Plastics Directive. She concluded by underlying a) the need for an effective legislative framework and a coordinated and holistic maritime strategy, b) the importance of developing a circular economy in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and c) the involvement of European citizens, EU institutions, and regional and local communities to tackle marine pollution.

**Michel Sponar**, Deputy Head of Unit - DG ENV - European Commission, started his intervention by mentioning the holistic approach just recalled by Ms Chabaud and presented the following EU legislative initiatives tackling marine litter:

- a) The European Plastic Strategy that led to the adoption of the Single-Use Plastics Directive, which aims at preventing litter, by banning plastics items and placing responsibility on the producers. Compulsory responsibility schemes for fishing gear were also put in place in each Member State and should act as an

incentive for fishermen to bring old gear back to port rather than disperse them at sea. He stressed the European Commission was working on the implementing acts to make the Directive operational;

b) The European Commission efforts to tackle microplastics both ‘non-intentional microplastics’, such as those deriving from plastic pallets, textile, and tyres, and ‘intentionally added microplastics’, as for instance the ones found inside paint and cosmetic products;

c) The Waste Framework Directive, which required Member States to develop waste strategies, including specific actions to fight marine litter;

d) The Marine Strategy Framework Directive, which included new threshold values for marine litter in the water and on the seabed;

e) The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, on which the European Commission is now preparing an impact assessment to evaluate options to better capture microplastics and to clean the sludge that can be used in agriculture.

Sponar concluded by underlying the relevance of the collaboration between the project, the OSPAR Commission and the working group on marine litter within the MSFD, which ensured that CleanAtlantic results contribute to the implementation of EU legislation.

**Pedro Sepulveda**, OSPAR Commission, explained the importance of CleanAtlantic for the work of OSPAR, in particular for Actions 48 (harm caused by cigarette filters), 55 (maps and modelling of litter hotspots) and 44 (reduction of plastic bags) of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan (RAP). He emphasised that the studies and data provided by the project helped the OSPAR Commission to further implement, evaluate and improve their actions and constituted valuable material especially in this moment, in which they are working on the new Regional Action Plan. He mentioned also the project [OceanWise](#), specifically addressing Action 49 of the RAP, which represented another good example of cooperation addressing the issue of marine litter in the Atlantic.

**Rüdiger Stempel**, Executive Secretary of HELCOM, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, underlined the many similarities existing between the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean in terms of marine litter, as well as the similar approaches taken by the HELCOM and OSPAR Commissions to tackling this issue. He referred to the HELCOM Marine Litter Action Plan, which was at that moment under revision. He mentioned two projects that address the issue of marine litter in the Baltic Sea, namely [MARELITT](#) concerning the mapping of hotspots of lost fishing gear and [FanPLESStic-sea](#) tackling microplastics. He concluded his intervention by recalling the current work carried out by HELCOM for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, which should be adopted in October 2021.

**Zita Pels**, Regional Minister on Circular Economy from Noord Holland Region, recalled the importance of understanding the complexity of marine litter. She underlined that Noord Holland was an active member of the CPMR North Sea Commission and that marine litter was one of its top priorities. She explained the actions taken by Noord Holland Region to address the issue of marine litter, which focused on rivers, and mentioned that the region will host a river clean event with all relevant actors in 2021. She stressed the fact that there is a need to work and to take actions together to be effective and that cooperation across national boundaries and across various levels of governance is also needed. She emphasised the need for circularity, investment in design, and better regulation, and underlined that the CPMR North Sea Commission was working on accelerating the circular use of valuable resources.

## Conclusions

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**Manuel Pizarro**, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of the SEArca board for the Atlantic, underlined how CleanAtlantic strongly contributed to finding concrete solutions to the issue of marine litter, which could be used by policy makers and could guide the implementation of policies on the ground. He referred to the importance of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors for the development of the Atlantic Strategy Action Plan - despite few references in the Commission's proposal - and pointed out how CleanAtlantic involved those sectors and worked together with fishermen, who should be our allies in the fight against marine litter. He then touched on the Atlantic Action Plan 2.0, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the negotiations for the MMF 2021-2027 underlying that all these initiatives need to work together. He reminded participants that all the actions aimed at protecting the ocean were linked to environmental, economic, and social consequences, which constituted essential pillars of the Common Fisheries Policy. He concluded by recalling the necessity of finding concrete solutions and by reaffirming that CleanAtlantic was a good example in this direction.

**Catherine Chabaud**, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of the SEArca board for Climate & Governance, thanked CPMR and SEArca Intergroup for organising the event and closed the session by underlining how everyone was applying a systemic approach to tackle the issue of marine litter.