

## *MISSION: Plastic Free Ocean*

Science & Innovation

for a Healthy Ocean

10.04.2018, 09:00 – 12:00

European Parliament Brussels

PHS 5B001



Being a mass-product for only about 60 years plastic has changed the world. As a light and durable material, it plays an important role in our daily lives in food packaging, electronics, furniture or insulation of buildings. However, every year only in Europe there are 25.8 million tonnes of plastic waste generated but only 30 per cent of it is recycled. Instead 150.000 to 500.000 tonnes of it enter the ocean only in the EU. Worldwide, about 8 million tons of plastic get into the ocean per year, equivalent to 35 shipping containers filled with plastic being dumped every hour.

The consequences are dramatic. Already today, researchers found 38 million pieces of plastic waste on an uninhabited island in the South Pacific and marine litter in 100 per cent of marine turtles species, 59 per cent of whale species and 40 per cent of seabird species. No matter if plastic beverage bottle, food packaging or plastic bags, the items we can find today at our beaches will remain for hundreds of years in the ocean. Plastic does not decompose, over time it breaks down into little pieces so called microplastic. This has major consequences and only recently researches started to study the impact of microplastics and found already traces in fish or sea salt. As approximately 80 per cent of marine litter is land-based, these microparticles originate not only from plastic bottles and bags but also from clothes, car tyres and paint.

Therefore, Prof Mariana Mazzucato suggests in the EC report '*Mission-Oriented Research & Innovation in the European Union*' to reduce within five to ten years the plastic entering the marine environment by 90% and collecting more than half of the plastic currently present in our oceans, seas and coastal areas; an enormous task considering the surface of 350 million km<sup>2</sup> and a volume of 1300 million km<sup>3</sup> of our oceans and seas.

The European Parliament Intergroup Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (SEArICA) supports an ambitious European agenda to tackle the challenge of plastic pollution and has taken the initiative to host the exhibition Ocean Plastics Lab (<http://oceanplasticlab.net/>), a joint initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the German Marine Research Consortium and the European Commission, Directorate General for Research and Innovation, on the Esplanade Solidarność from 9-19 April to raise further awareness of the problem but also possible solutions.

In the context of this exhibition this conference will discuss the important role of science and innovation to achieve a healthy and a plastic free ocean. With programmes such as Horizon 2020 the EU has the unique chance to take up the challenges of our time in a cross-sectoral and cross-border manner based on the knowledge and creativity of its excellent researchers and innovators.

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**09:00 - 09:30 Welcome Breakfast**

**09:30 - 9:40 Welcome remarks by Ms Gesine MEISSNER, MEP, President of the European Parliament Intergroup Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (Searica)**

**09:40 - 09:55 Opening Presentation: James HONEYBORNE, Executive producer of Blue Planet II**

**09:55- 10:45 Keynote Statements**

**Ms Signe Ratso**, Deputy Director-General, DG Research & Innovation

**Mr Michael Meister**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research

**Ms Melati WIJSEN**, Co-Founder Bye Bye Plastic Bags, winner of the Indonesian Heroes 2018 award

**Ms Olga MIRONENKO**, Founder of Holy Jelly, winner of the Green Talents 2017 Award

**Feedback round from Vice-Presidents Heidi HAUTALA and Searica MEPS**

**10:45 - 11:15 5-min pitch presentations: Tackling a 'Mission Plastic Free Ocean through Science & Innovation**

**Mr Andy BOOTH**, Coordinator of the JPI Oceans PLASTOX project, Norway

**Ms Irene DIÉZ RUIZ**, Upcycling the Oceans/FUNDACIÓN ECOALF, Spain

**Mr Erik VAN SEBILLE**, Coordinator of TOPIOS - Tracking of Plastic in Our Seas, Netherlands

**Ms Julia SCHNETZER**, Scientific Coordinator Ocean Plastics Lab, Germany

**11:15 - 12:00 Panel Discussion**

**Introduced and moderated by Lieve Wierinck**, Member of the ITRE Committee

Diplomacy and the Ocean:

**Mr Alan BOWMAN**, Deputy Head of Mission, Mission of Canada to the EU

Science and the Ocean:

**Prof. Martin VISBECK**, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel, Board Member of the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM)

EU Policy and the Ocean:

**Ms Ulrike Rodust**, MEP, rapporteur on the Common Fisheries Policy

# INTERGROUP SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS



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**12:00 Closing remarks by Ms Gesine MEISSNER**

**Following the Conference: Opening of the Ocean Plastic Lab exhibition and guided tour**

*Participants are kindly requested to register as soon as possible on [www.searica.eu](http://www.searica.eu) in order to guaranty and organise the access to the EP. The day of the conference, participants are kindly requested to present themselves at **08:30** in order to avoid delays.*