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Regional Meeting on the Further Implementation of the Regional Plan
for the Management of Marine Litter in the Mediterranean

Tirana, Albania, 19-20 July 2016

Agenda item 3: Implementation of the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean

The DeFishGear project: a pilot project for coordinated and harmonized actions on the science-policy-society interface to tackle Marine Litter issues in the Adriatic Sea

Co-organized with the IPA-Adriatic funded project entitled “Derelict Fishing Gear Management System in the Adriatic Region” (DeFishGear)

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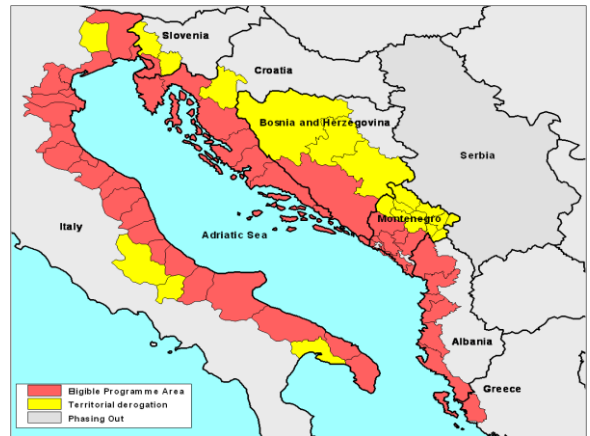
**The DeFishGear Project:
A pilot project for coordinated and harmonized actions on
the science-policy-society interface for a litter- free Adriatic Sea**

Project summary

The DeFishGear project at a glance

Marine litter -any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment- poses a major threat to wildlife and ecosystems, as well as, to humans and their livelihoods. Marine litter is a complex and multi-faceted issue with environmental, economic, safety, health and cultural implications. Marine litter knows no boundaries and represents a pervasive and persistent problem that expands beyond borders away from the source of origin. Coordinated and multi-sectoral action is key to combating marine litter.

The IPA Adriatic funded DeFishGear project aims to facilitate efforts for integrated planning to reduce the environmental impacts of litter-generating activities and ensure the sustainable management of the marine and coastal environment of the Adriatic Sea. Ultimately, the DeFishGear project will provide a strategic input to regional efforts in successfully achieving good environmental status in the Mediterranean Sea.



The DeFishGear expected results include the following:

- Improved knowledge on the occurrence, amounts, sources and impacts (including socio-economic impacts) of marine litter (including microplastics) in the Adriatic;
- Harmonized marine litter monitoring activities in the Adriatic region and enhanced collaboration as a building block for future actions;
- Strengthened & reinforced science-policy interface to support the integration of sound science into policy and decision making in effectively tackling marine litter;
- Joint, coordinated and/or complementary schemes to manage human activities generating litter in the Adriatic Sea and strengthened implementation of relevant policy frameworks (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, Ecosystem Approach, Maritime Spatial Planning, Integrated Coastal Zone Management, etc.)

Key project facts

Title: Derelict Fishing Gear Management System in the Adriatic Region

Funding instrument: IPA Adriatic Cross-border Cooperation Programme

Theme: Improving marine, coastal and delta rivers environment by joint management in the Adriatic area.

Project duration: 1 November 2013 – 30 September 2016 (35 months)

Project budget: 5.353.765 €

The DeFishGear | Addressing knowledge gaps and research needs to facilitate effective decision making against marine litter and its impacts

Marine litter threatens species and habitats, with impacts varying from entanglement and ingestion, to bio-accumulation and bio-magnification of toxics released from litter items, facilitation of introduction of invasive species, damages to benthic habitats, etc. Marine litter has a negative impact on vital economic sectors such as fisheries, aquaculture, navigation, energy and tourism, while it may endanger human health and safety.

Sound, shared scientific knowledge and coordinated and multi-sectoral action are key to combating marine litter. Marine litter related information in the Mediterranean, including the Adriatic Sea, remains limited, inconsistent and fragmented. Effective measures to tackle marine litter in the region are seriously hampered by the lack of reliable scientific data.

The DeFishGear project directly addresses the need for accurate, coherent and comparable scientific data on marine litter in the Adriatic region by taking up action along the following lines:

- Defining a joint monitoring and assessment approach for marine litter (monitoring protocols), through a participatory process;
- Carrying out surveys on beaches, the water surface, the seafloor and biota to enhance knowledge on amounts, composition and potential impacts of marine litter;
- Establishing a Network of Experts on marine litter;
- Building capacities to monitor marine litter in a harmonized way through reinforced exchange of experiences, techniques and know-how;
- Analyzing the socio-economic implications of marine litter on people, their property and livelihoods;
- Setting up a database to make marine litter data accessible to all stakeholders;
- Developing recommendations and policy options based on the project findings and accumulated knowledge to meet regional and national objectives regarding marine litter (MSFD, RPMLMM, EcAp, etc.).

The DeFishGear | Addressing the emerging threat of microplastics

Microplastics pollution (plastic particles with a diameter smaller than 5mm) is an emerging threat, widespread and ubiquitous throughout the marine environment. Understanding the sources (primary and secondary), quantities, distribution or possible solutions is very limited in the Adriatic region, as well as in the world.

The DeFishGear project takes up the challenge to address the emerging threat of microplastics in the Adriatic region by:

- Developing a harmonized methodology for monitoring and assessment of microplastics;
- Providing all collaborating partners with the necessary equipment and skills for monitoring;
- Carrying out research activities to improve the understanding of the quantities, types and sources of microplastics in the Adriatic Sea, as well as the their presence in marine biota;
- Undertaking studies to enhance knowledge on persistent organic pollutants adsorbed on microplastics.



*The project is co-funded by the European Union,
Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance*



The DeFishGear | Piloting measures to combat marine litter in the Adriatic MacroRegion

The DeFishGear project is developing and implementing concrete prevention and mitigation actions to tackle marine litter in the 7 countries of the Adriatic Sea. These are:

- ‘Fishing for litter’ initiatives undertaken by fishermen while performing their daily fishing activities, not only leading to removal of marine litter but also raising awareness on the issue within the fishing sector and the wider public.
- Targeted recovery of ‘ghost nets’ from the sea with the direct involvement of fishermen and divers. Ghost nets are accidentally lost fishing nets that continue to catch marine organisms as they keep on drifting in the sea, often for very long periods.
- Establishing derelict fishing gear management schemes to collect and recycle lost or abandoned fishing nets and other gear.
- Awareness raising and educational activities, including cleanups, workshops, summer schools, etc. to deepen public understanding on the issue of marine litter and catalyze change in their perceptions and attitudes towards waste.

The DeFishGear Partnership

The DeFishGear activities are implemented by a multi-disciplinary team comprising academia, research institutes, national and local authorities and NGOs from all seven countries of the Adriatic Sea, reinforcing and strengthening cooperation and fostering joint and harmonized actions towards a litter-free Adriatic.

LEAD PARTNER | National Institute of Chemistry (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

PROJECT PARTNERS | Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Rome, Italy) • Ca' Foscari University of Venice - Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage (Venice, Italy) • Mediterranean Consortium (Rome, Italy) • Regional Agency for Environmental Protection in the Emilia-Romagna region (Bologna, Italy) • Institute for water of the Republic of Slovenia (Ljubljana, Slovenia) • University of Nova Gorica, the Laboratory for Environmental Research (Nova Gorica, Slovenia) • Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries (Split, Croatia) • Hydro-Engineering Institute of the Faculty of Civil Engineering (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) • University of Montenegro, Institute of marine biology (Kotor, Montenegro) • Agricultural University of Tirana, Laboratory of Fisheries and Aquaculture (Tirana, Albania) • Regional Council of Lezha (Lezha, Albania) • Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (Athens, Greece) • Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (Anavysos, Greece) • Public Institution RERA SD for coordination and development of Split Dalmatia County (Split, Croatia) • Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (Lecce, Italy)

ASSOCIATE PARTNERS | PlasticsEurope AISBL (Brussels, Belgium) • Ministry for Agriculture and Environment, (Ljubljana, Slovenia) • Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (Rome, Italy) • Croatian Environment Agency (Zagreb, Croatia) • Fishing League (Rome, Italy) • Agency for watershed of Adriatic Sea Mostar (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Reference documents

- Marine Litter Monitoring in the Adriatic: A review of available data and applied methods, DeFishGear, 2014.
- Monitoring protocols for macro-litter on beaches, water surface, seafloor and in biota, DeFishGear, 2015.
- Monitoring protocols for micro-litter on beach sediments, water surface and in biota, DeFishGear, 2015.
- Guidelines on how to sample plastic pellets for POPs determination, DeFishGear, 2015.
- The Regional approach to modeling the transport of floating plastic debris in the Adriatic Sea, DeFishGear, 2016.
- The socio-economic implications of marine litter in the Adriatic Sea, DeFishGear, 2016.



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