Support for WES-BCA PCs in the Mediterranean for the monitoring and reporting programs for marine litter prevention and mitigation

WES-BCA Activity: C1_REG-4

Regional Webinar on the Mediterranean monitoring and reporting programs for marine litter prevention and mitigation

Tuesday 3 February 2026
09:00 - 14:00 CET (Online)

Concept Note and Agenda

Introduction to the project

The "Water and Environment Support-Biodiversity and Climate Action (WES-BCA) in the Neighbourhood South region" project aims to improve the protection of the environment, the restoration of biodiversity, and the management of scarce water resources, while enhancing resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region. It seeks to strengthen the formulation and enforcement of relevant policies in the Partner Countries and support the two regional political frameworks, namely the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Barcelona Convention.

Implemented from November 2024 to November 2027, the project covers eight Partner Countries in the Middle East and North Africa and is funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG-MENA). Building on the experience and achievements of its predecessor projects (WES, SWIM-H2020 SM, SWIM SM, Horizon 2020 CB/MEP), WES-BCA ensures continuity while integrating new institutional, scientific, and technical developments. It promotes regional exchange of good practices and lessons learned, complemented by targeted national activities that address specific priorities.

The project is implemented through two complementary components: Component I, focusing on Water, Biodiversity and Environment, and Component II, dedicated to Communication and Outreach with an emphasis on Climate Action.

General background

The Mediterranean Sea, globally renowned for its biodiversity and cultural heritage, faces escalating pressure from marine litter pollution. This issue threatens not only the region's iconic coastal landscapes but also its deep-sea ecosystems. Even in pristine environments of the Mediterranean, such as coastal and marine protected areas (MPAs) and designated areas such as biosphere reserves (BRs), marine litter and plastic pollution is building up, threatening habitats and species and inhibiting sustainable development. Impacts vary from entanglement and ingestion to bioaccumulation and biomagnification of toxins in marine species released by marine litter, facilitation of introduction of invasive species and

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damages to benthic habitats, ultimately impacting human livelihoods and food security[1]. Plastics are the most common type of marine litter; particularly single-use items are a dominant contributor, disrupting multiple economic sectors that depend on a healthy marine environment[2].

Tourism and fisheries, two pillars of the Mediterranean economy, are especially vulnerable. Plastic litter reduces the aesthetic and recreational value of beaches, leading to decreased tourist arrivals and income losses for local businesses[3]. Marine litter also damages fishing gear and threatens commercial species, undermining the livelihoods of coastal communities. As microplastics infiltrate the food web, public health risks are also mounting[4].

The root causes of marine litter in the Mediterranean are the same as anywhere else in the world: a complex combination of unsustainable production and consumption patterns, weak solid waste management practices and misconceptions related to possible solutions, lack of adequate policy and legislative frameworks and poor implementation and enforcement of existing ones, ignorance and/or irresponsible behaviour of individuals and economic sectors, fragmented understanding of the problem due to the lack of fit-for-purpose data and inadequate monitoring and data collection.

In the last few years, considerable advances have been made in the Mediterranean to fill in the marine litter knowledge gaps via harmonized marine litter monitoring programmes within the framework of the UNEP/MAP Ecosystem Approach (Ecological Objective 10 – Marine Litter) and Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, as well as the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Descriptor 10 – Marine Litter). However persistent challenges continue to hinder comprehensive marine litter assessments. These include: insufficient long-term data on marine litter amounts, types, sources and impacts, limited capacity for harmonized monitoring, data collection and reporting; gaps in methodological guidance, quality assurance, and coordination among stakeholders.

Robust monitoring and reliable data are essential for informing and guiding effective policies and measures. Addressing these gaps has therefore become a priority for regional and international initiatives aimed at curbing plastic pollution. The European Union has advanced key policies such as the EU Plastic Strategy[5] and the Single-Use Plastics Directive[6], aimed at reducing plastic waste and fostering circular economy models. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) provides a regional framework for environmental action and sustainable development in relation to plastic pollution via its GreenerMed Agenda and its Sustainable Blue Economy Roadmap, while UNEP/MAP has been providing long-term support to the implementation of the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean through improved monitoring, knowledge-sharing, and best practice dissemination[7].

[1] https://wedocs.unep.org
[2] https://www.gesamp.org/publications/microplastics-in-the-marine-environment-part-2
[3] https://www.unep.org/resources/pollution-solution-global-assessment-marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution
[4] https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/stop_the_flood_of_plastic_med_report_final.pdf
[5] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A28%3AFIN
[6] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/904/oj
[7] https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/projects/MarineLitterMED-Plus

A key milestone in 2025 was the Nice Conference on Plastic Pollution (June 10), where 96 countries signed the "Nice Wake-Up Call for an Ambitious Plastics Treaty", highlighting the urgent need for coordinated global action8. At this event, Mediterranean stakeholders also agreed on a regional roadmap to reduce plastic waste and strengthen cross-border collaboration.

Over the years, several projects and initiatives have concretely supported monitoring, assessment, and prevention and mitigation actions in Mediterranean countries, including the UNEP/MAP Marine Litter MED I and II, UNEP/MAP Marine Litter MED PLUS, SWIM-H2020 SM, WES, the UfM-labelled Plastic Busters Initiative, Interreg Med Plastic Busters MPAs, ENI CBC Plastic Busters CAP, ENI CBC COMMON, TouMaLi, etc.

Objectives of the regional activity

This regional activity aims to support Mediterranean Partner Countries in enhancing the implementation of marine litter monitoring and reporting programmes across all environmental matrices, to improve the quality of data collection and inform effective mitigation measures in line with the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean under the Barcelona Convention.

Specific Objectives:

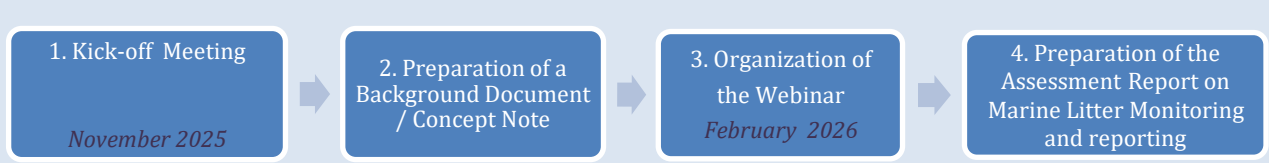
- Promote the wide uptake and implementation of the marine litter monitoring methodologies (for all marine matrices) that have been adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention;
- Facilitate, through a webinar, regional exchange of national experiences, case studies, and best practices related to marine litter monitoring and reporting as well as on mitigation strategies;
- Collect inputs, through a desk study and exchanges with PCs (before, during and after the webinar), and prepare an Assessment Report that compiles best practices, tools, and methodologies to support the implementation of regional and national marine litter monitoring and reporting programmes, enhancing informed decision-making and policy development.

Overall structure of the regional activity

This activity consists in the organisation of regional webinar.
Following the webinar, a comprehensive regional report will be prepared, compiling and analysing relevant initiatives, experiences, and good practices related to marine litter across the Mediterranean. The report will also include key recommendations, developed on the basis of feedback gathered from country representatives and expert deskwork.

The main components and implementation steps of this regional activity are outlined below and will be further detailed in the following sections.

[8] https://www.globalplasticaction.org/unoc



An important component of the activity, alongside the webinar and coaching process, is a Background Assessment to identify recent challenges, gaps, and priorities in marine litter monitoring and reporting. Feedback from Partner Countries has been collected through a short questionnaire. The Assessment has helped refine the regional webinar agenda, inform the Q&A sessions, and guide the selection of appropriate speakers. Following the webinar and coaching sessions, a synthesis report will be prepared to summarize the activity's progress, outputs, outcomes, and key lessons learned.

Objective of the Webinar

The Webinar will provide an opportunity and easily accessible way for the Partner Countries to clarify questions, address uncertainties, fill in gaps and resolve challenges related to the monitoring and reporting of marine litter. The main objectives of the regional webinar are to:

- Promote the wide uptake and implementation of the marine litter monitoring methodologies (for all marine matrixes) that have been adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention;
- Facilitate, regional exchange of national experiences, case studies, and best practices related to marine litter monitoring and reporting as well as on mitigation strategies;
- Strengthen outreach and participation of Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries
- Foster strategic collaboration and cross-basin mutual learning among regional initiatives and institutions.

Stakeholders invited to the Webinar

This activity will target national a diverse audience, including:

- National focal points for marine litter and pollution prevention from Ministries of Environment and other relevant departments.
- Regional organisations and national FPs (eg. UNEP/MAP, MEDPOL, SPARAC, etc.)
- Representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), NGOs, and youth networks
- Academia and research institutions.
- Local and coastal authorities involved in waste and beach management
- Private sector actors, especially from tourism and waste management
- Media and environmental communicators

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AGENDA

09:00-09:30	**Connection to the platform** Participants join and test audio/video connections
09:30-09:50 20 min	**Opening remarks** ▪ **Prof. Michael Scoullos,** Team Leader, WES-BCA ▪ **Dr. Youssef Tadros,** Programme Manager, DG MENA, European Commission
09:50-10:00 10 min	**Introduction to the WES-BCA project and activity overview** ▪ **Mr. Anis Ismail,** Environment Key Expert, WES-BCA
10:00-10:40 40 min	**Session 1: Overview of marine litter policy advances in the Mediterranean** ▪ **Mr. Patrick Wegerdt,** Directorate-General for Environment, European Commission ▪ **Ms. Alessandra Sensi,** Head of Sector, Environment, Green and Blue Economy, UfM ▪ **Ms. Olfat Hamdan,** MED POL Programme Management Officer, UNEP/MAP- MEDPOL **Q&A**
10:40-11:50 70 min	**Session 2: Sharing regional and national experiences on marine litter monitoring and reporting** ▪ Perspective from the World Bank on Marine Plastic Pollution in the MENA Region through PROBLUE and Related Initiatives by **Ms. Delphine Arri**, Senior Environmental Engineer, World Bank ▪ From Pilot Monitoring Actions to Participatory Science on Marine Litter: The EU SWIM-H2020 SM, WES, and other Mediterranean showcases by **Dr. Thomais Vlachogianni,** PhD, Senior Environmental Chemist and Ecotoxicologist, WES-BCA Invited Speaker ▪ UfM labelled Plastic Busters CAP: Insights and Tunisia Case Study by **Ms. Sana Ben Ismail,** Senior Researcher in Marine Sciences, WES-BCA/INSTM ▪ UfM labelled TouMaLi Project by **Dr. Mirco Haseler**, Senior Marine Litter Researcher, Postdoc Scientist, WES-BCA/IOW & Egypt case Study by **Dr. Gasser Hassan,** Associate Professor in Fluid Mechanics and Energy Resources, Local Project Manager, AASTMT-Egypt ▪ MedMarine Litter+ in Tunisia by **Dr. Noureddine Zaaboub**, Professor in biogeochemistry, researcher, National FP Marine Litter, INSTM- Tunisia **Tour de table followed by Q&A**
11:50-12:10	**Healthy Break**

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12:10-13:10 60 min	**Session 3: Advancing regional best practices:** Generating fit-for-purpose data for the Quality Status Reports for the Mediterranean ▪ **Mrs. Olfat Hamdan**, Programme Management Officer, UNEP-MAP MEDPOL ▪ **Ms. Lobna Ben Nakhla**, Programme Officer, SPA/RAC ▪ **Dr. Christina Zeri**, Research Director, Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR) Institute of Oceanography, Greece ▪ **Mr. Abdeslam Abid**, Head of Water and Waste Pollution Analysis Department, National Laboratory for Pollution Studies and Monitoring (LNESP), Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Morocco ▪ **Dr. Camille Lacroix**, Head of Aquatic Litter Monitoring and Studies Department, CEDRE, France **Open discussion**
13:10-13:40 30 min	**Session 4: Data availability and integration for decision-making:** Connecting policies, institutions, and stakeholders across local, national, and regional levels ▪ The IMAP Reporting in the framework of the Barcelona Convention: Data collection and MAP Data Policy by **Arthur Pasquale**, INFO/RAC Deputy Director **Open discussion**
13:40-14:00 20 min	**Conclusion & way forward** ▪ Prof. Michael Scoullos, Team Leader, WES-BCA

For more information: www.wes-bca.eu