



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

**Regional Webinar on the
“Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks for
Plastic Pollution and Circular Economy
Alignment”**

WES BCA, 22 July 2026



From 2014 onwards

Plastic pollution: not only an environmental issue

- Sustainable consumption and production
- circular economy
- sustainable trade and investment
- tourism competitiveness
- fisheries and coastal economies
- public health
- biodiversity
- green jobs and innovation
- etc

The UfM Environment agenda |

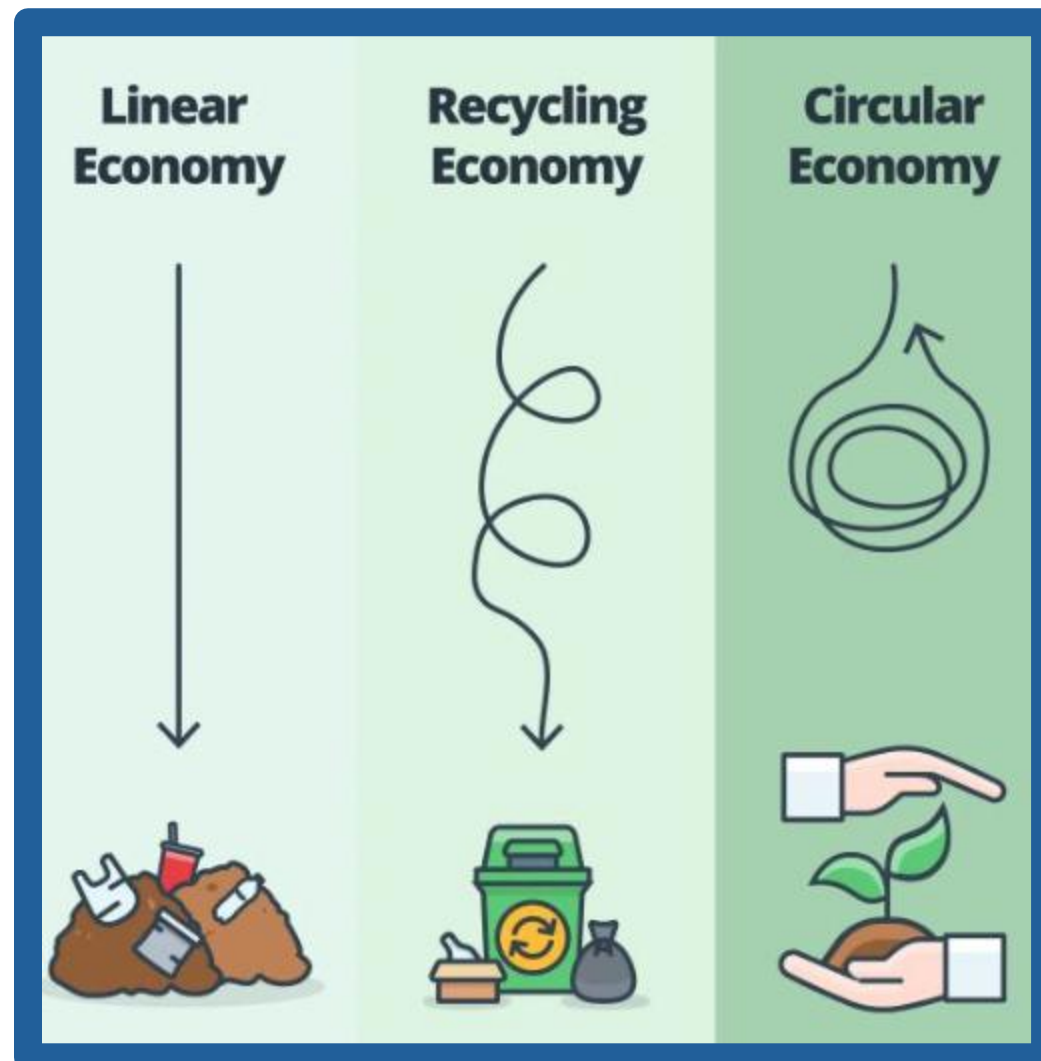
2014

1st UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change

- De-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (wastewater, municipal waste; industrial pollution; *marine litter* and hazardous waste)
- Sustainable Consumption and Production (Pollution Prevention)
- Climate Change

+ ecosystem protection, *integrated maritime policy/blue economy*, ICZM, education sustainable development

**‘Med Green Economy’
Package**



The UfM Environment and Green, Circular Economy agenda

2021

2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action

- Reinforcement of the Green, Circular Economy package, with a focus on pollution prevention
- Sustainable Consumption and Production to be applied to value chains, *plastics & marine litter*
- *Nature Restoration Law/Ecosystem Restoration*

MINISTERIAL DECLARATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

- ✓ 1st UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy, November 2015
- ✓ 2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, February 2021

10 Ministerial priorities:

1. Governance & the future of sea basin strategies
2. Marine research, innovation, skills, careers & employment
3. Sustainable food from the sea: fisheries & aquaculture
4. Sustainable, climate-neutral & zero-pollution maritime transport & ports
5. Interactions between ML & the blue economy
6. Coastal & maritime tourism
7. MSP&ICZM
8. Marine Renewable Energy
9. Maritime Safety & Security
10. Sustainable Investments

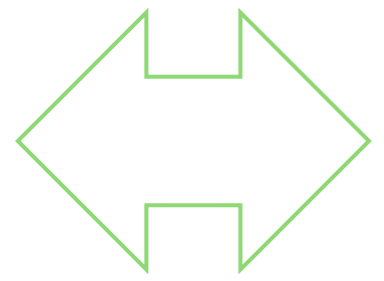


2021 UFM MINISTERIAL DECLARATIONS

- ✓ 2nd UfM UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment (Green Economy) and Climate Action - October 2021
- ✓ 2nd UfM UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, February 2021



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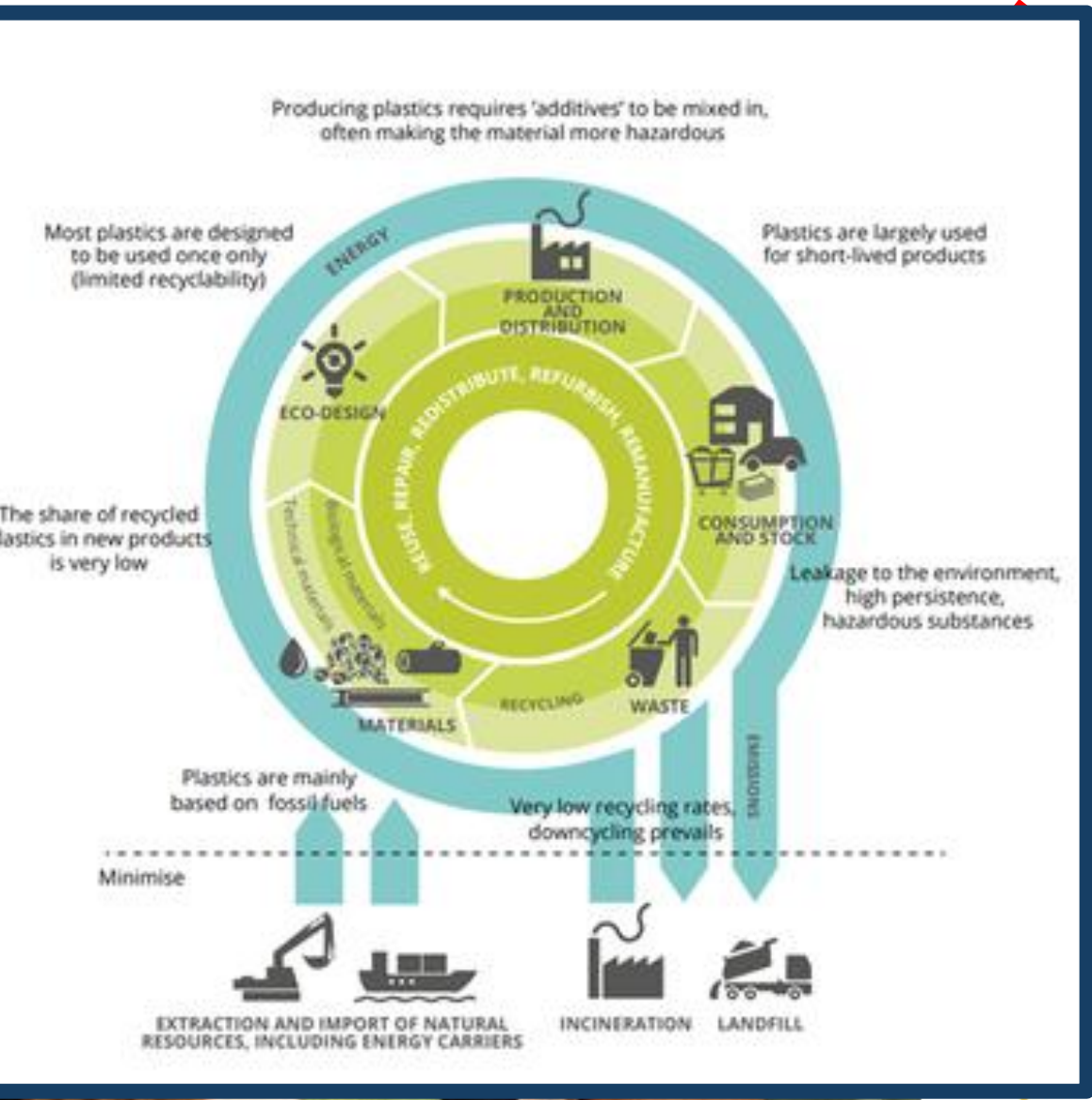
Circular Economy/SCP,
Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter

UfM SBE Roadmap

- ✓ Governance & the future of sea basin strategies
- ✓ Marine research, innovation, skills, careers & employment
- ✓ Sustainable food from the sea: fisheries & aquaculture
- ✓ Sustainable, climate-neutral & zero-pollution maritime transport & ports
- ✓ **Interactions between ML & the blue economy**
- ✓ Coastal & maritime tourism
- ✓ MSP&ICZM
- ✓ Marine Renewable Energy
- ✓ Maritime Safety & Security
- ✓ Sustainable Investments

POLITICAL, POLICY, TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL CONVERGENCE OF
THE 43 UFM MS AND RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

Circular Economy/SCP, Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter



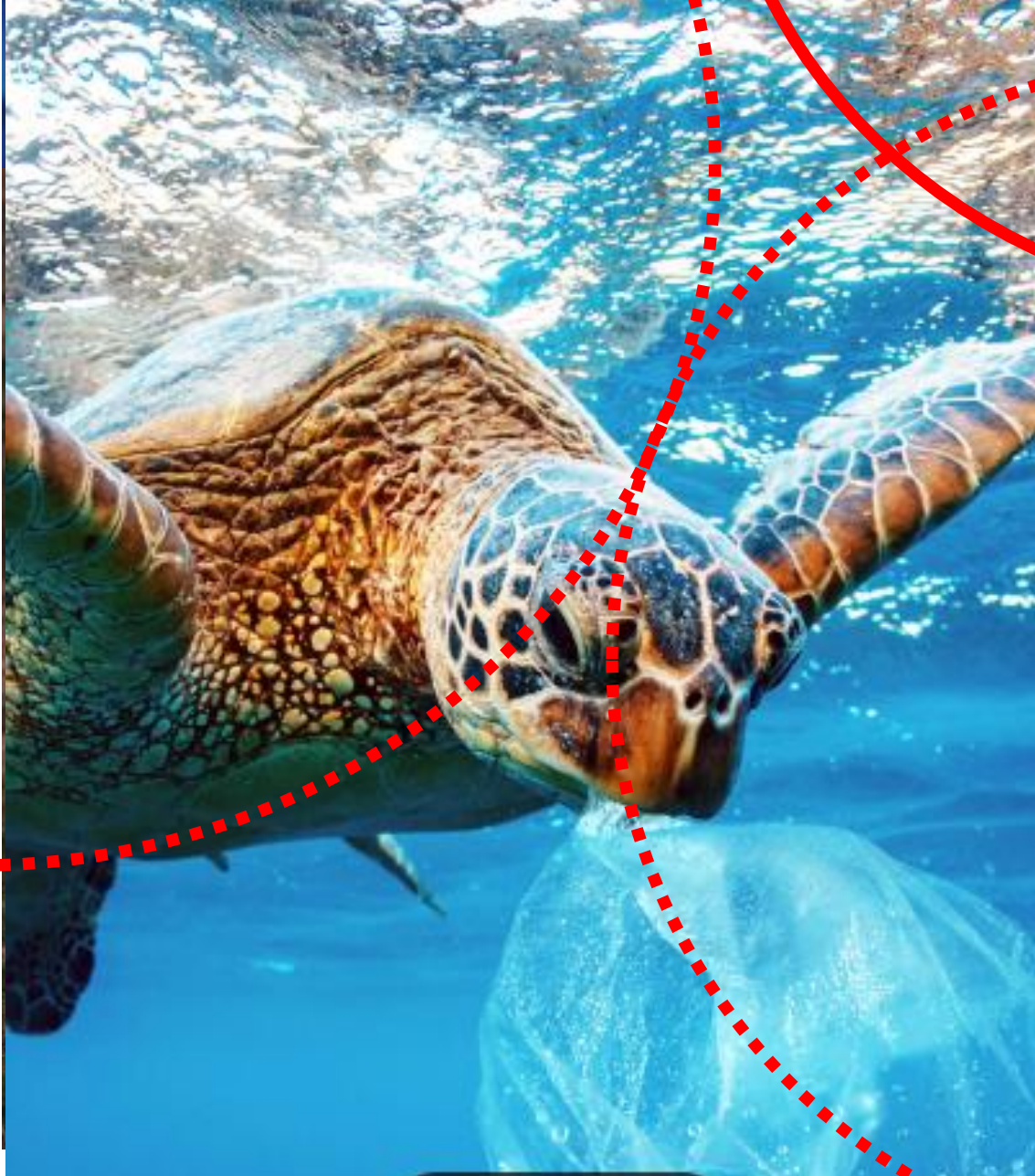
IDENTIFIED KEY ACTIONS UNDER 2030GREENERMED THEMATIC AXIS 1

- KA1.1.** Support Sustainable Consumption and Production
- KA1.2.** Increase Resource Efficiency
- KA1.3.** Adopt innovative solutions along the entire value chain (across sectors and industries, urban and rural)
- KA1.4.** Promote changes in business practices, trade, public policy
- KA1.5.** Promote changes in education, behaviour and lifestyles
- KA1.6.** Engage all stakeholders (private, public and society/consumer level) and raise awareness



IDENTIFIED KEY ACTIONS UNDER 2030GREENERMED THEMATIC AXIS 2

- KA2.1.** Strengthen mechanisms for pollution prevention and reduction from different sources through application of a source-to-sea/ridge-to-reef approach
- KA2.2.** Put a particular focus on plastic pollution and marine litter as well as other inorganic and organic pollution sources
- KA2.3.** Facilitate investments in infrastructure.
- KA2.4.** Reduce chemical pollution
- KA2.5.** Improve soil quality
- KA2.6.** Reduce and control air pollution
- KA2.7.** Reduce landfilled waste



IDENTIFIED KEY ACTIONS UNDER 2030GREENERMED THEMATIC AXIS 3

- KA3.1.** Support actions that preserve, protect and/or restore terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems, natural capital and biodiversity
- KA3.2.** Promote the sustainable management of landscapes, seascapes and coastal areas in the Mediterranean
- KA3.3.** Promote an integrated ecosystem-based approach to managing terrestrial, costal and marine natural resources
- KA3.4.** Focus on safeguarding/improving key ecosystem functions and services (in protected and productive areas)
- KA3.5.** Promote transboundary cooperation
- KA3.6.** Mainstream biodiversity in key sectors
- KA3.7.** Protect on-farm biodiversity in agro-ecosystems
- KA3.8.** Promote Disaster Risk Reduction with a special focus on extreme events including droughts and floods, and forest fires
- KA3.9.** Promote nature-based solutions



The European Green Deal

The European Green Deal marked a turning point by placing plastics within a broader transition towards a circular, resource-efficient and climate-neutral economy, moving the policy focus from waste management alone to the entire life cycle of products

Some Med transformative and flagship programmes

- **SWITCH MED**
- **HORIZON2020/WES**
- **BLUEMED – Cross-countries north south; med and national**
- **PLASTIC BUSTERS – Crosscountries north south med with pilot activities**
- **NEXT MED GREEN CALL/CAPITALIZATION and EUROMED/GOVERNANCE**
- **PRIMA**

What we do

The SwitchMed initiative supports sustainable consumption and production practices for a circular economy in the Mediterranean

About SwitchMed

The SwitchMed initiative is funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Economy Division, and MedWaves, the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) regional activity centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (formerly known as SCP/RAC). The initiative is carried out in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR).

The initiative was launched in 2013 to speed up the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Southern Mediterranean, notably through the promotion of circular economy approaches. The programme aims at achieving productive, circular and sharing economies in the Mediterranean by changing the way goods and services are consumed and produced so that human development is decoupled from environmental degradation.

Its activities benefit 8 countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. The initiative supports development, demonstration activities and networking, provides technical supports and connects stakeholders to scale-up eco-innovative programmes. The programme supports policy makers, eco-innovative small and medium enterprises, industries, start-ups and entrepreneurs in the region. It focuses on countries, which have identified job creation and natural resource management as priority issues that also contribute to their economic stability.

The SwitchMed Initiative contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

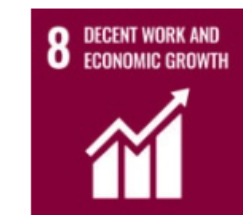
SDG 8 – Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work for all

SDG 9 – Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth and foster innovation

SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

SDG 17 – Revitalize the global partnerships for sustainable development

Total Financing: €22 million	
● EU-financing: €18,58 million	
● Co-financing by the Catalan Government: €1,93 million	
● Co-financing by the Italian Government: €1,5 million	
SwitchMed Phase I (2013-2018)	SwitchMed Phase II (2019-2023)
Total Financing: €24 million	
● EU-financing: €22,8 million	
● Co-financing: €1,25 million	



Collaboration with WES -BCA



**20 case studies on
waste reduction**

www.bestpractices-waste-med.net



**50+ candidate
champions**

of plastic pollution in
the Mediterranean



5 WES videos

including 3 on hot
Mediterranean challenges

- Circular Economy
- Plastic pollution & SUPs
- Construction & Demolition Waste



Activity bulletins



**Modules, Reports,
Compendia,
Roadmaps,**

The BLUEMED initiative: objective and process

The BLUEMED Initiative fosters integration of knowledge and efforts of Countries of the MED to jointly create new 'blue' jobs and sustainable growth in the area.

It was a priority of the Programme of the IT Presidency of the Council of the European Union; IT implemented it in close cooperation with CY, HU, FR, GR, MT, SI, ES, PT and BE, and

April 2014 >>
Priority of the
Programme of
the Italian
Presidency of
the EU Council



The **Mediterranean Lighthouse** addresses **Objective 2 of the Mission**, namely “**prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters**”, through the definition of the following targets:



REDUCE BY AT LEAST 50%
PLASTIC LITTER AT SEA



REDUCE BY AT LEAST 30%
MICROPLASTICS RELEASED
INTO THE ENVIRONMENT



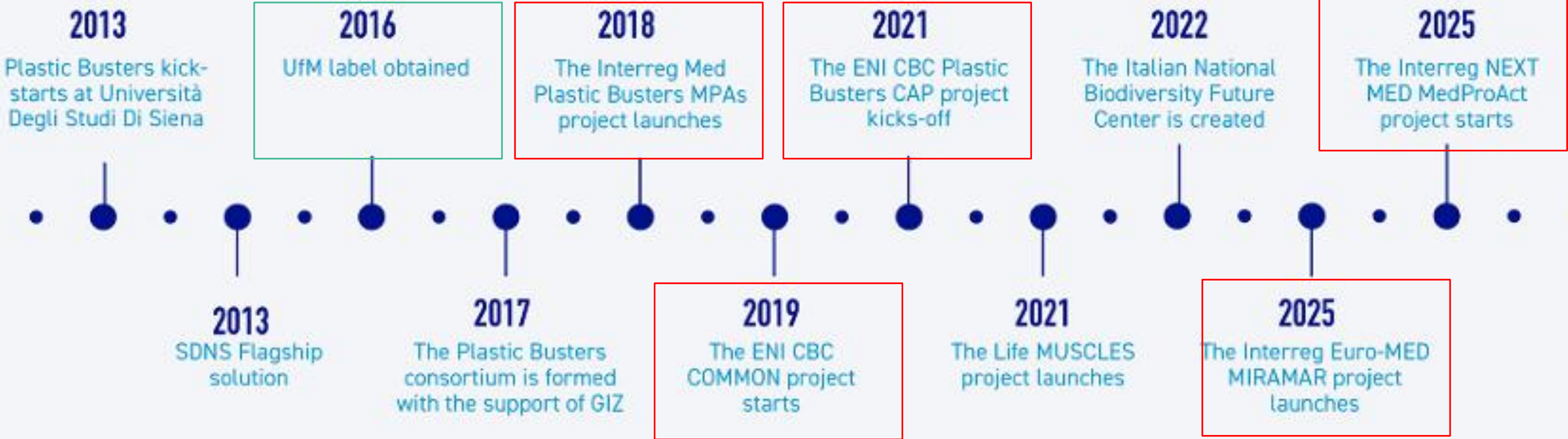
REDUCE BY AT LEAST 50%
NUTRIENT LOSSES, THE USE
AND RISK OF CHEMICAL
PESTICIDES

PLASTIC POLLUTION/MARINE LITTER

PLASTIC BUSTERS INITIATIVE



The Plastic Busters Initiative Timeline



+2

POLICY PAPERS

LITTER-FREE IS THE WAY TO BE

ACTIONS FOR A HEALTHY MEDITERRANEAN



Union pour la Méditerranée
Union for the Mediterranean
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



SDSN
Mediterranean



PLASTIC BUSTERS



Interreg
Mediterranean



ENI
CBCMED



EUROPEAN UNION



COMMON

THE ISSUE AT STAKE

Marine litter — and marine plastic pollution in particular — is a major threat due to its significant environmental, economic, social, political and cultural implications. Marine litter negatively impacts **coastal and marine ecosystems** and the **services** they provide, ultimately affecting **people's livelihoods** and **well-being**. Marine plastic pollution is not just an oceans' pollution issue. It is an air pollution and climate issue too as plastic — admittedly an indispensable material of today's societies — contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle, from its production to its refining and up to the way it is managed as a waste product.

Plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea poses a threat to **countries' wellbeing, economic resilience** and **environmental sustainability**, with potential effects on human health yet to be fully understood.

as estimated in 2015, are at the level of over **260,000 tonnes** per year or **730 tonnes per day**, depending on the coastal population, which may vary depending on the country, representing more than 2% of the total inputs in the world's oceans (UNEP/MAP, 2015).

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

Overall, the Mediterranean economy is still marked by a linear system, which over-exploits natural resources, causes pollution and thus undermines the resilience of the economic system. It also constitutes a lever to help achieve the UN 2030 Agenda and several of its SDGs.

Within this context, **PLASTIC BUSTERS** is continuously and concretely consolidating and advancing actions towards a litter-free Mediterranean.



The Mediterranean basin is particularly vulnerable to marine litter. Litter items found on Mediterranean





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Sida



UNIVERSITÀ
DI SIENA
1240



Interreg
Mediterranean



Interreg
Mediterranean



EUROPEAN UNION



SDSN



LITTER-FREE IS THE WAY TO BE

Actions for a healthy Mediterranean

2025 Edition Update



THE ISSUE AT STAKE

Marine litter — and marine plastic pollution in particular — is a major threat due to its significant environmental, economic, social, political and cultural implications. Marine litter negatively impacts **terrestrial and marine ecosystems** and the **services** they provide, ultimately affecting **people's livelihoods** and **well-being**. Marine plastic pollution is not just an oceans' pollution issue. It is an air pollution and climate issue too as plastic is admittedly an indispensable material of today's

societies — contributes to greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its lifecycle, from its production to its refining and up to the way it is managed as a waste product.

Plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea poses a threat to **countries' wellbeing, economic resilience** and **environmental sustainability**, with potential effects on human health yet to be fully understood.



The Mediterranean basin is **particularly vulnerable** to pressures from its densely populated coasts, highly developed tourism, and heavy maritime traffic (30 percent of the world maritime traffic). This vulnerability is exacerbated by the low renewal of its waters and the structural lack of proper waste management systems and infrastructure (from collection to recycling) in most surrounding

countries. Litter items found on Mediterranean beaches appear to originate primarily from recreational and tourism related activities, and poor municipal waste management practices.

It is widely acknowledged that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the most affected seas by marine litter worldwide. Inputs of plastics into the sea,

as estimated in 2015, are at the level of over **260,000 tonnes** per year or **730 tonnes per day**, depending on the coastal population, which may vary depending on the country, representing more than 2% of the total inputs in the world's oceans (UNEP/MAP, 2015).

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Overall, the Mediterranean economy is still marked by a linear system, which over-exploits natural resources, causes pollution and thus undermines fragile ecosystems: in a region considered a biodiversity hotspot, waste prevention and reduction through upstream solutions are urgently needed.

Circular economy is a unique opportunity for Mediterranean countries to 'build back better' after the current COVID-19 crisis and to improve

the resilience of the economic system. It also constitutes a lever to help achieve the UN 2030 Agenda and several of its SDGs.

Within this context, **PLASTIC BUSTERS** is continuously and concretely consolidating and advancing actions towards a litter-free Mediterranean.



related as well as with
related processes and projects

UNION FOR MEDITERRANEAN

UfM Ministerial(s) on Sustainable Blue
Economy, February 2021, and related
UfM Working Group >

MED Blue Economy Platform >

UfM Ministerial on Environment and
Climate Action >

'GreenerMed Agenda', October 2021,
and related UfM Working Group >

BARCELONA CONVENTION

Regional Plan on Marine
Litter Management in the
Mediterranean >

Integrated Monitoring and
Assessment Programme of the
Mediterranean Sea (IMAP) >

Regional Cooperation
Platform on Marine Litter
in the Mediterranean >

Ecosystem Approach
Correspondence Group on
Monitoring Marine Litter

EUROPEAN UNION

Marine Strategy Framework Directive >

Strategy for Plastics
in a Circular Economy >

Green deal >

Directive (EU) 2019/904 on the reduction of
the impact of certain plastic products on the
environment (SUP Directive) >

INITIATIVE

ACTION 1 ASSESSMENT VIA HARMONISED MONITORING APPROACHES

Addressing data gaps
and needs with regards to marine litter,
to complement existing assessments
carried out in the region as well as
the further development and practical
implementation of harmonized
monitoring approaches in line
with the related advances made at
Barcelona Convention and EU levels.

ACTION 2 DEMO ACTIONS FOR TESTING PREVENTION & MITIGATION MEASURES

Developing and coordinating the
implementation of demonstration
projects showcasing actions to
prevent, reduce and mitigate marine
litter in the Mediterranean Sea,
based on the measures provided by
the Barcelona Convention Regional
Plan on Marine Litter Management
in the Mediterranean, the EU
MSFD Programmes of Measures,
the EU SUPs Directive, etc.

The **Plastic Busters Initiative** kick-started
in 2013 to address some of the scientific
and policy gaps existing at the time in the
Mediterranean region. Since then, improve-
ments have been implemented on the sci-
ence policy interface, with Plastic Busters
contributing to the regional policy context as
well as being informed by it. Born under the
umbrella of **SDSN Mediterranean** (United
Nations Sustainable Development Solutions
Network), the Initiative provides a **concrete
opportunity** to like-minded projects deal-
ing with marine litter issues to **get together**
and **fully explore** the potential for synergies
towards ensuring aligned and synchronized
marine litter activities across the Mediterra-
nean. The Plastic Busters Initiative strives to
push forward a shared common objective:
to **effectively tackle the issue of marine
litter in the Mediterranean** by addressing
its entire management cycle, from monitoring
and assessment to prevention and mitiga-
tion, thus contributing to evidence- and sci-
ence-based support to governance.

Led by the **University of Siena** (scientific
Coordinator Prof. Maria Cristina Fossi), and
implemented by a consortium of 15 Partners
from around the Mediterranean, the Plastic
Busters Initiative works in four key areas of
intervention:

ACTION 3 GOVERNANCE SUPPORT

Strengthening the science-policy interface
by providing fit-for-purpose marine
litter data; recommendations for a
comprehensive and harmonized marine litter
monitoring strategy; concrete showcases
and guidelines for operationalizing
best practice marine litter measures;
capacity building of institutional actors
on marine litter related issues, etc.

ACTION 4 CAPACITY BUILDING & AWARENESS RAISING

Designing and coordinating the
implementation of awareness
raising campaigns and education
for sustainable development
programmes, tailor-made to the
needs of different stakeholders,
including the educational community.

PROJECTS WHICH ARE PART OF THE PLASTIC BUSTERS INITIATIVE

Interreg Med — Plastic Busters MPAs >

ENI CBC MED — COMMON >

ENI CBC MED —
Plastic Busters CAP >

PROJECTS WHICH ARE ASSOCIATED/LINKED TO THE PLASTIC BUSTERS INITIATIVE

EU Water and Environment
Support (WES) >

Interreg Med Green
Growth Community >

Interreg Med Blue
Growth Community >

SwitchMed >

OTHER RELEVANT PROCESSES ASSOCIATED LINKED TO PLASTIC BUSTERS

EU Mission for Oceans, seas and waters >

BLUEMED >

WESTMED >

EUSAIR >

Interreg Euro-Med
Strategic Framework >

ENI CBC MED
Strategic Framework >

PLASTIC BUSTERS INITIATIVE >

UfM labelling of Plastic Busters

MOVING FORWARD

MOST URGENT ACTIONS TO ADDRESS MARINE LITTER POLLUTION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

WHAT DOES EXPERIENCE TELLS US

Time is not in our favour. Urgent actions are needed to reverse the increase of marine litter pollution in general and marine plastic pollution in particular in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Mediterranean needs to accelerate the transition towards a regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes, advance towards keeping its resource consumption within planetary boundaries, and therefore strive to reduce its consumption footprint and

double its circular material use rate in the coming decade.

The **processes, initiatives** and **projects featured in this document**, all align in illustrating the need for a shift in production and consumption patterns, coupled with ambitious actions to prevent and mitigate marine litter effects. In concrete terms there is urgency in:

THE PLASTIC BUSTERS INITIATIVE TIMELINE



1. MOVING TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY.

Keeping a linear economy and reducing the amount of environmentally harmful materials is not enough to curb the catastrophic path of marine litter. This approach can have more damaging effects by creating a false sense of "environmental consciousness and responsibility" in consumers.

Reducing the consumption footprint and increasing the circular material use rate is a targeted priority, which should also be seen in the context of the European Green Deal. Natural resources underpin national economies, provide crucial raw materials for everyday life, and are necessary to almost every sector of the global economy. In particular, given the size of the demand, raw materials (including both primary and secondary raw materials obtained through recycling) will continue to play a key role in the economy.

A comprehensive intervention is needed with a strong focus on new/sustainable behaviours and lifestyles, different from the current *throwaway culture* in society, with waste prevention becoming a priority. They should include:

be coordinated. Likewise, enabling frameworks require coherent measures in large number of relevant policy areas such as industrial development, entrepreneurship, trade, research and innovation and education and skills development.

Enhance Integrated Waste Management Plans. Ambitious waste prevention (e.g., those integrating zero waste objectives and strategies) and management measures (including through waste prevention and management plans aligned with the waste hierarchy and circular economy objectives; targets for recycling of key waste streams and reducing landfills; extended producer responsibility schemes and deposit return schemes for plastic products and packaging) are urgently needed;

New business models, are needed to favor resource-efficient production and uptake of clean technologies; promote upcycling businesses, engage and involve the private sector including the need to implement safe and sustainable approaches in the design stage of product development; use the Green Public Procurement as a lever for new business models.

The full embedment of circularity in



2. DEVELOPING INTEGRATED GOVERNANCE AND ACTIONS.

The Mediterranean Sea has to be considered as a whole, and marine litter as a multi-dimensional challenge for which non-coordinated responses offer little effectiveness and impact. Geographical, administrative, sectoral boundaries cannot constitute a hurdle to action. In that sense it is urgent to:

- Strengthen the **cooperation among all Mediterranean initiatives**, from both the North and the South rims of the Mediterranean basin, maintaining a clear overview of the entire management cycle of marine litter, **ensuring land/sea dimensions. Capitalize on current results and advance towards a region-wide approach**, ensuring long term support to the ongoing process. Disseminate and exchange best practices and, where relevant, compare the different circular economy initiatives, to take forward partnership initiatives.

- Although useful data on marine litter exists and has been recently improved in the region (types, quantities, etc.) it is inconsistent and geographically restricted mainly to the North Mediterranean. Standardized monitoring data for assessment purposes concerning the problem of litter across the whole Mediterranean is still a necessity and information sharing between and among NGOs, IGOs, research institutes, relevant authorities, etc. in the region regarding marine litter related data needs to be improved through **an enhanced common information sharing system**.

- Map domestic policies and regulatory frameworks** in Mediterranean countries on the management of natural resources (e.g. water, soil, minerals, biomass) and the circular economy transition, including sustainable use, improving circularity, and strengthening resilience to climate change impacts. Enhancing the implementation of selected ML policy/regulatory prevention and reduction common measures at

- Developing and applying regionally harmonized approaches, guidelines and tools to ensure effective implementation of selected measures. Improve, and/or widely implement a **Harmonized Marine Litter monitoring strategy at the Mediterranean level**, working with a novel, harmonized protocol to detect the presence and impact of marine litter on biodiversity via a set of bioindicator species (ranging from invertebrates to marine mammals) across the entire Mediterranean basin, in line with both MSFD and IMAP indicators. Such harmonized protocol shall allow the identification of hotspot areas for marine litter threats to marine biodiversity as well as of prevention and mitigation actions (such as banning single use plastics; establishing derelict fishing gear management; banning specific activities; introducing extended producer responsibility; implementing awareness raising campaigns). Significant efforts should be addressed on enlarging the geographical scope of marine litter monitoring programmes to assess the presence and effects of marine litter in marine protected areas (MPAs), within the context of the SDG 14 Life Below Water

- Reinforce the role of the Science-Policy-Society interface**. This should be strengthened by favouring Research & Development projects gathering industry and academia and by encouraging the connection between scientific research and societal needs to address marine litter. Effective implementation of such interface must also be enabled via adequate capacity building programs and proper financing of key actors, such as MPA management bodies, local and national environmental protection agencies, and the alike.

- Enforcing current **legislation and policy measures addressing marine litter including on responsibility and liability issues** and further develop and upgrade them.

3. ADOPTING A SYSTEMIC, INTERCONNECTED APPROACH.

- Going forward, a more holistic and systemic approach shall be adopted to fight marine litter in order to really understand (and address via new diagnostic systems) the whole set of impacts and stressors that human activities are posing on biodiversity and on oceans' health. **Cumulative direct and indirect stressors** caused by marine litter, chemical contamination, climate change, and emerging pathogens among others, concur in destabilizing the precarious balances of marine biodiversity, marine ecosystems, and their services.

- A paradigm shift should then be embraced to recognise the health-environment nexus as the core of planetary health and evolve **from cost-benefit analysis to recognition of**

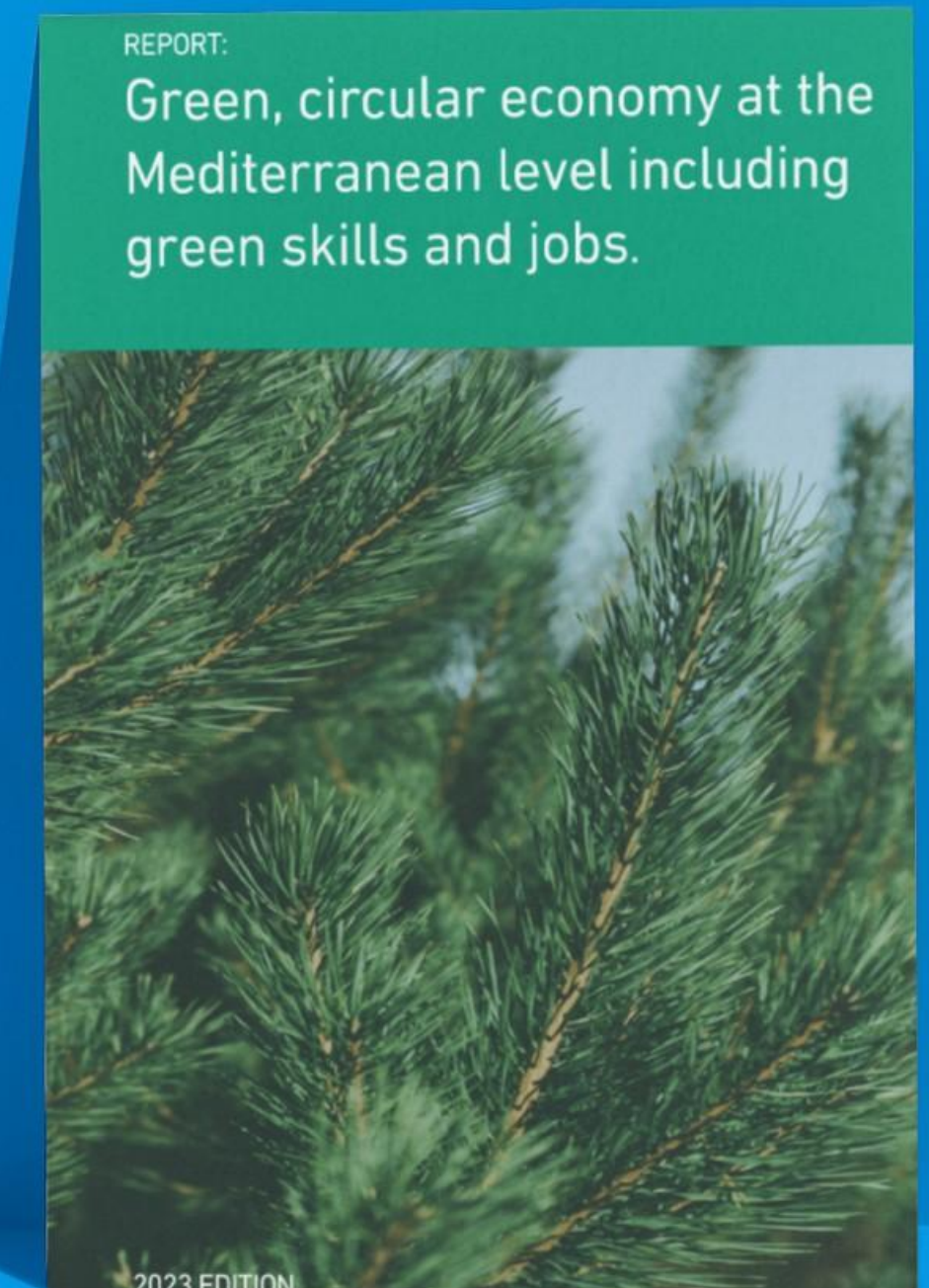
'co-benefits'. A new approach to addressing environmental problems is needed that does not recognise a trade-off between 'saving the economy' and 'saving lives', nor between 'the economy' and 'the environment', but rather works towards the concurrent achievements of the preservation of oceans, marine economic activities, and human livelihood and wellbeing.

- To this end, it is of priority to link **human livelihood and well-being with ocean health** and realize that monitoring and addressing cumulative stresses on the oceans via a co-benefits approach means not only to preserve the health of ocean ecosystems but also to preserve human livelihood via accessing better quality ecosystem services (e.g., fisheries, climate stabilization, etc.).



STUDY ON GREEN, CIRCULAR AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY IN THE MED

- Report on green, circular economy at the Mediterranean level including green skills and jobs
- Overview on the status of GCE in the MED, including opportunities and pathways for transformation
- Implemented by UfM, supported by GlZ, with guidance by a group of experts and relevant organizations in the MED (e.g. MIO-ECSDE, Beta Centre, MedWaves, etc.)

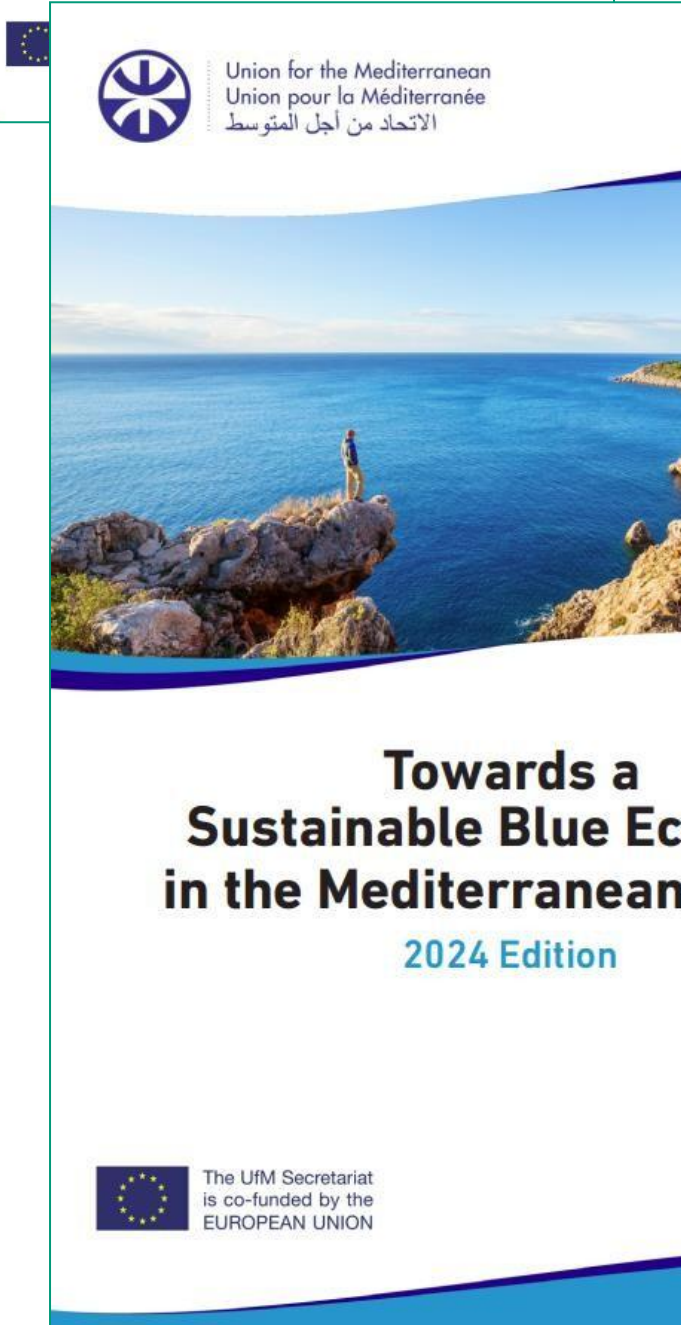
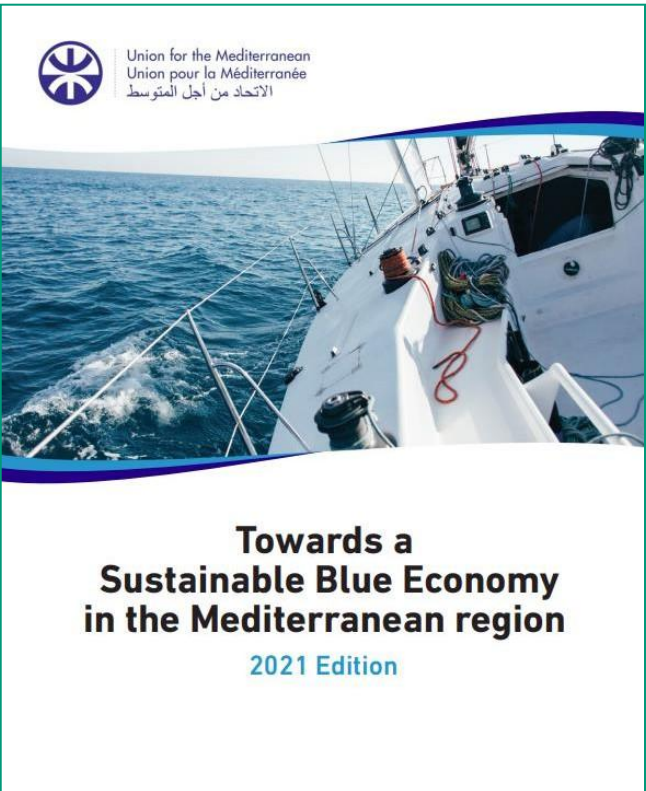


UfM flagship publication on SBE: Advancing towards SBE in the MED (3rd Edition)

Blue Economy Sectors

Cross-Cutting Themes

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Where do we stand now



New Context

- Political and Thematic (Plastic Treaty; EU Ocean and Med Pact; etc.)



The Pact for the Mediterranean

Co-creating a space of peace, prosperity and stability through a genuine partnership



- The Pact is the result of an extensive consultation process with the 10 southern Mediterranean partners, EU Member States, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, non-EU neighbouring countries, UN agencies and other international organisations. Given its unique composition as an inter-governmental organisation where all EU and southern Mediterranean partners are members, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has been closely involved. The Anna Lindh Foundation (ALF) has also played an important role in the consultations
- The Union for the Mediterranean has experience in building regional networks and leading flagship projects. With its convening power, the UfM will support the joint group meetings, and it will also be a partner in the roll-out of the Pact, including through its ministerial meetings.
- The UfM has developed expertise in specific areas such as Education, Employment and Economic Development, Water, Environment and Blue Economy; Crisis management and civil protection



It is built around six priorities:

- ✓ Protecting and restoring ocean health
- ✓ Boosting the competitiveness of the sustainable blue economy
- ✓ Supporting coastal, island communities and outermost regions
- ✓ Advancing ocean research, knowledge, skills and innovation
- ✓ Enhancing maritime security and defence as a prerequisite
- ✓ Strengthening EU ocean diplomacy and international rules-based governance

The European Ocean Pact

Sustaining the ocean that sustains us

“The new Pact for the Mediterranean, that will pave the way towards a common space of peace, prosperity and stability in the Mediterranean region, building on the foundations of the 2021 Agenda for the Mediterranean. The Commission, in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean, will support the development of a blue economy sea-basin strategy on the Eastern Mediterranean, which currently lacks a dedicated structure for cooperation, based on the format of the WestMed Initiative and in cooperation with existing regional bodies”



LITTER-FREE IS THE WAY TO BE
Actions for a healthy Mediterranean

2025 Edition Update

Union for the Mediterranean

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is pleased to announce the release of the updated [2025 Edition Policy Brief "Litter-Free Is the Way to Be: Actions for a Healthy Mediterranean"](#), developed under the UfM-labelled Plastic Busters Initiative

As one of the Mediterranean's flagship science-policy efforts, the Plastic Busters Initiative works to protect marine biodiversity, prevent and mitigate marine litter pollution, and strengthen the science-policy interface across the region. The updated brief provides an evidence-based overview of the growing challenge of marine litter — noting that the Mediterranean is *"among the most affected seas globally"* — and highlights the urgent need for integrated, cross-sectoral, and long-term action

Building on more than a decade of scientific collaboration and regional coordination, the brief outlines priority areas for action,

The root causes of marine litter in the Mediterranean mirror those observed elsewhere in the world. They are a complex interplay of:

- unsustainable **production and consumption patterns** in a region still largely shaped by a linear economic model that over-exploits natural resources,
- **behaviour** of individuals and economic sectors that drive over-exploitation of natural resources, generating significant pollution,
- weak **legislative and regulatory frameworks**, and their **enforcement**,
- inadequate **waste management practices**,
- lack of **fit-for-purpose data** leading to misinformation, fragmented understanding and misconceptions resulting in ineffective solutions.

Areas of Intervention

To support Mediterranean countries in tackling marine litter and advancing shared sustainability goals, the Plastic Busters Initiative has worked and continues to work through the following areas of intervention:



Action 1

Harmonized Monitoring and Assessment:

Promote alignment on marine litter data collection across Mediterranean countries, using fit-for-purpose methodologies that meet both Barcelona Convention (IMAP) and EU MSFD standards.



Action 2

Demonstration of Prevention and Mitigation Measures:

Deploy on-the-ground solutions at pilot sites, supporting implementation of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management and EU directives. Introduce and lever a multi-stressor approach – addressing plastic pollution alongside climate impacts, invasive species, and habitat degradation – to inform ecosystem-based management.



Action 3:

Strengthening Governance and the Science-Policy Interface:

Provide policy-relevant evidence, tools, and training to support decision-making and intergovernmental coordination. Activities include developing guidance on monitoring strategies, scaling best practices, and building institutional capacity.



Action 4:

Education, Outreach, and Stakeholder Engagement:

Foster behavioural change and multi-actor collaboration through awareness-raising, citizen science, and community engagement, encouraging shared responsibility across sectors and societies.



MOVING FORWARD

Tackling marine litter in the Mediterranean demands a decisive shift from fragmented interventions to comprehensive, long-term, and integrated strategies.

Building on the collective experience and outcomes of regional initiatives that began over 15 years ago, it is urgent to scale up and align action across sectors, stakeholders, and borders.

Along the lines of the recently released European Ocean Pact and the newly launched Pact for the Mediterranean, presented below are some of the most pressing actions that regional initiatives—such as the UfM's Plastic Busters Initiative—have highlighted for Mediterranean countries, stakeholders, and institutions to champion for a litter free Mediterranean:

1. Advance integrated monitoring, research, and knowledge sharing

- Harmonize and expand monitoring protocols, using shared indicators and methodologies (e.g., under IMAP and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive), and promote citizen/participatory science and bioindicator species.
- Close knowledge gaps on sources, transport, accumulation, and ecological impacts of marine litter, particularly microplastics, through targeted research and cross-sectoral data partnerships.
- Support science-policy-society interfaces to foster innovation, feedback loops, and evidence-based policymaking.

2. Integrate land-sea action and ecosystem restoration

- Target upstream interventions to reduce land-based litter inputs and protect

vulnerable coastal areas.

3. Enhance sector-specific measures to reduce marine litter sources

- Fishing and aquaculture: Support retrieval of lost gear, responsible gear design, and litter-reduction certification schemes.
- Ports and shipping: Upgrade port reception facilities and enforce ship waste discharge controls.
- Agriculture: Phase out unnecessary plastic inputs and improve collection and treatment of agricultural plastics.
- Tourism: Promote sustainable tourism practices that integrate litter prevention in coastal areas and marine activities.

4. Empower communities and foster inclusive engagement

- Invest in public awareness and behavioural change, emphasizing shared

visibility campaigns, and inclusive policy dialogues.

5. Strengthen waste governance and infrastructure

- Support integrated waste prevention and management systems, particularly at the local level, in line with the waste hierarchy and disaster resilience needs.
- Build institutional capacity, especially in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, through training, funding, and inclusive governance structures.
- Reinforce legal frameworks and compliance mechanisms, with clear provisions for producer responsibility, liability, and penalties for non-compliance.

6. Accelerate the transition to a Circular Economy

- Embed circularity in policy frameworks at national and regional levels, linking marine litter objectives with strategies in trade, industry, education, innovation, and green jobs.
- Promote eco-design and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to ensure products are durable, reusable, recyclable, and traceable across their lifecycle.
- Increase transparency of chemicals in plastic products, enabling safer materials, improved recycling, and alignment with global frameworks such as the upcoming international plastics treaty.
- Prioritise waste prevention and reduction, setting ambitious targets for reducing single-use plastics and scaling deposit-return schemes, reuse models, and local

zero-waste systems, in line with the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive¹⁶.

- Foster innovation and circular business models, especially through public procurement and private sector incentives that reward refillable, upcycled, or service-based product systems.

7. Leverage regional cooperation and policy alignment

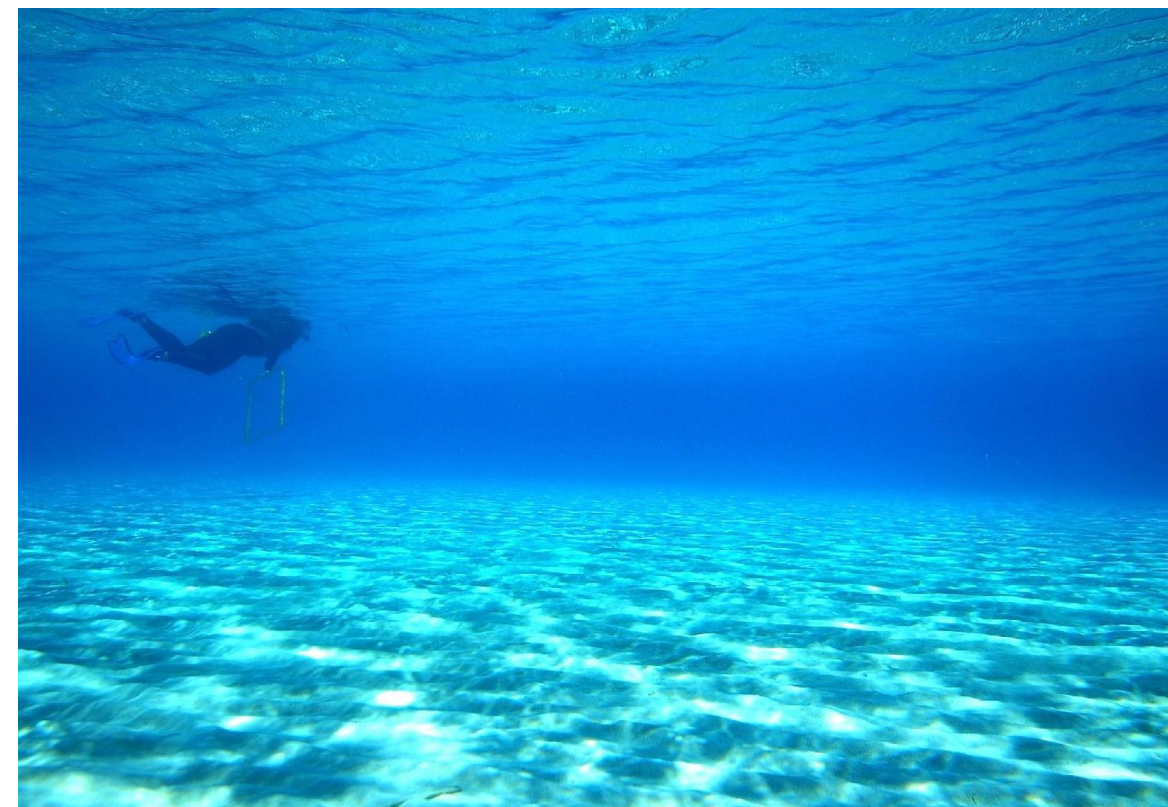
- Treat the Mediterranean Sea as one ecosystem, strengthening cross-border coordination between northern and southern shores and aligning efforts with UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention, and the Union for the Mediterranean.
- Scale up and replicate successful local solutions, including those piloted under Plastic Busters, through coordinated regional strategies and funding mechanisms.
- Align with international commitments, including UNEA resolutions and the forthcoming global treaty on plastic pollution, ensuring national actions reflect regional goals while addressing country-specific realities.

This suite of scientific, evidence-based actions outline a roadmap for how Mediterranean states can produce, consume, and manage resources that fosters regeneration and resilience. Through collaborative and inclusive cooperation, the region can be transformed into a more sustainable and resilient one.

BLUEMED PARTNERSHIP: INVESTMENT FACILITY

5 Investment Projects in
Egypt, Jordan, Morocco

BMP SC on the 20 April,
Barcelona



Multi-partner financial instrument to support
the Mediterranean region



Upcoming UfM Regional Platforms/Working Groups

- UfM Regional Platform on SBE, 14-15 October 2026
- UfM Working group –Environment and Green Agenda, 1-2 December 2026
- COP31 – Med Pavillion
 - *Updates on multilateral agreements*
 - *Updates on GreenerMed Agenda and related actions*
 - *Updates on the SBE Roadmap and related actions*
 - *Regional initiatives, programs, projects and Partnerships*

**Intergovernmental Negotiating
Committee on Plastic Pollution**

NEXT STEPS AS OF 2027

Setting the path towards:

- ✓ 3rd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy
- ✓ 3rd UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Action



Union pour la Méditerranée
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Thank you! Merci ! شكراً

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Union for the Mediterranean