

**Report of the  
2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop BLUEMED Pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean**

Rue du Champ de Mars 21, 1050 - Ixelles / Elsene

Room: -01/044

**Brussels, 3 July 2019**

*The countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea have launched a pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean Sea under the umbrella of the BLUEMED initiative, as agreed by the Group of Senior Officials (GSO) BLUEMED Working Group. This pilot initiative aims at mobilising key actors to tackle plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. A first exploratory workshop took place on 12 March 2019 at which several potential actions were identified such as the creation of local hubs to deliver on the aims of a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean. This second workshop aimed at operationalising and implementing the BLUEMED pilot through: (i) stock-taking of on-going relevant initiatives in the region, (ii) checking the progress made in setting up local hubs in BLUEMED countries, and (iii) discussing the connection of the different country hubs, projects and initiatives.*

*The first part of the workshop featured presentations from on-going relevant initiatives tackling various key angles of the challenge (i) financial support, such as programmes from the World Bank, the EIB, the Climate KIC (ii) examples of private sector initiatives from Nestlé, Plastics Europe, CIRCPACK, (iii) projects aimed at assessing and reducing marine pollution in the Mediterranean such as Plastic Busters, DEBAG, PANACEA (iv) civil society initiatives such as Surfrider Foundation, Let's do it! and Sea Plastics. All participants showed tremendous commitment towards solving the plastic pollution problem in the Mediterranean and beyond, through concrete initiatives. In several presentations, the need to tackle the problem with a holistic, systems approach was evident. In the second part of the workshop, GSO BLUEMED WG members presented the progress made in the creation of local, regional or national hubs. In particular, the southern Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan, Turkey, Malta) already demonstrated significant advances in setting up national hubs. The Startup Europe SEMED initiative was also briefly presented.*

*A next session about this pilot is planned at the ECOMONDO trade fair (Italy) on 7 November 2019.*

*The next section of this report comprises a brief summary of the main messages of the workshop participants in the order of the agenda and an overview of the key topics covered in the workshop.*

## 1. Introduction and Welcome

Sigi Gruber (DG RTD) opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and by highlighting the key relevance of this initiative for the implementation of the Bioeconomy Strategy. Luca Marangoni (DG MARE) and Michaelis Papadoyannakis (DG ENV) underlined this message and emphasized the importance of marine litter prevention and the role of innovation in tackling the pressing challenge of marine litter.

## 2. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea

### a) North Africa Blue Economy and Coastal Management technical assistance programme. *Melanie Argimon, The World Bank.*

The World Bank has launched in February 2019 the North Africa Blue Economy and Coastal Management technical assistance programme. Its main objective is to strengthen the capacity of North African countries to develop blue economic growth opportunities and climate-resilient coastal investments at national and regional levels. Marine pollution will be a main pillar of the programme., The five North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt are the beneficiaries in the first phase of the programme. The geographical scope could be expanded in the future to the Middle East. The Potential partners: UNEP/MAP, Plan Bleu (RAC), European Commission's (WestMed/Blue/Climate) Initiative, Global Environment Facility. For the time being, the programme is dedicated to technical assistance, but it could be expanded in future towards investment programme.

### b) The Clean Oceans Initiative. *Gregory Briffa, European Investment Bank.*

The Clean Oceans Initiative was launched in October 2018 by the EIB in partnership with the German and French development banks, *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* (KfW) and *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD). It will support projects that reduce pollution in the oceans, with a particular focus on plastics. Together, the three banks will provide up to EUR 2 billion in lending over the next five years. To date, ten projects have been signed. A number of financial instruments are being deployed, including long-term financing to both public and private sector; investment as grants; technical assistance and innovative financing structures. The geographical scope gives priority to coastal countries in Asia and Africa (home of the ten most polluting rivers) but also includes Latin America and Europe when projects with clear impact and demonstration value can be identified.

### c) EIT Climate-Kick and the Flagship eCircular. *Sira Saccani, Director of Sustainable Production System, Climate-KIC.*

EIT Climate-KIC addresses the interdependent challenges of climate change and sustainable development through strategic innovation. The community of EIT partners includes businesses, (SMEs), higher education institutions, cities, regions, NGOs, researchers and alumni. The Flagship eCircular project aims at catalysing plastic waste prevention and dematerialization of plastic demand through innovation. Possible areas of cooperation with the BLUEMED initiative include education and empowerment of citizens. The following programmes will be available: (i) A MOOC (Massive open online course) on Plastic Waste Prevention will be tested in 2019, (ii) "The Journey" is a four-week residential summer school building talents and capacity in systems innovation of graduates, master students, and change makers and (iii) "Pioneers" is a four to six week placement, to teach systems innovation to young professionals.

### d) StartupEurope MED. *Fabrizio Porrino, SVP Global Public Affairs*

Startup Europe Mediterranean (SEMED) is an initiative supported by FacilityLive in collaboration with the European Commission's Startup Europe initiative, to create an innovation platform for the Mediterranean that connects and produces opportunities for start-ups, investors, corporates, SMEs, universities, policymakers, research centres, incubators and accelerators. <https://www.startupeuromed.eu/>

**e) Tackling Marine Litter in the Southern Med.** *Thomie Vlachogianni, Water and Environment**Support project*

The Water and Environment Support project provides technical assistance to countries in the Southern Mediterranean, with one special emphasis on marine litter. It builds on the Sustainable Water Integrated Management and Horizon 2020 Support Mechanism 2016-2019 (SWIM-H2020 SM Project, funded by the European Union) which aims at contributing to reduced marine pollution and a sustainable use of scarce water resources in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The project carried out one year monitoring of marine litter in beaches in the following countries and identified best practises. (i) Algeria: Characterization of marine and coastal litter on 14 coastal wilayas and support for the development of a national management plan for coastal waste and marine litter (EFH-DZ-4, EFH-DZ-5); (ii) Egypt: Assessment of marine litter in the Egyptian Mediterranean coastline and proposed management options (EFH-EG-3) and (iii) Morocco: Strengthening participatory coastal management for the reduction of marine litter in the regions of Tangier-Tetouan-Al Hoceima and Rabat-Salé-Kénitra (EFH-MO-4). As an upcoming activity, the WES project aims at curbing plastic pollution and marine litter.

**3. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea (2)****f) The Plastic Buster – Interreg project - Update from the first WS (12/03/2019).** *Cristina Fossi, project coordinator (Remotely WEBEX)*

The Mediterranean Sea is one of the most affected areas worldwide for marine litter. The Plastic Busters Marine Protected Areas project aims at preserving biodiversity from plastics and focuses on the complete management cycle of marine litter from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation, as well as actions to strengthen networking between and among pelagic and coastal MPAs located in Italy, France, Spain, Croatia, Albania and Greece. The project will help to assess the amount, sources, pathways, distribution convergence areas and effects of marine litter on biota as well as mitigate and reduce the impact of marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea.

**g) Mismanaged plastic on the seafloor: does it matter?.** *Fabio Trincardi, Italian National Research Council*

Three main sources of plastic on the sea floor are rivers, directly dumping of garbage in coastal cities, and offshore maritime activities (fishing, “ghost fishing” and commercial traffic). Macro-benthic plastic pollution is a major, often overlooked, threat for shallow and deep-sea ecosystems (and ultimately for “us”). We need public engagement (to make private companies, administrators, tourists aware) to prevent plastic pollution. We need a portfolio of new technological instruments to help clean up efficiently (bottom trawling is not as solution).

**h) Plastics Europe.** *Anne-Gaelle Collot, Senior Manager*

In 2011, a declaration of the Global Plastics Associations for Solutions on Marine Litter was created. Since then, 75 associations in 40 countries have voluntarily pledged their commitment to the principles and to the proactive marine litter solutions outlined in the declaration. The Alliance to end plastic waste is a new CEO-led, cross-sector, not-for-profit organisation with a clear mission to develop, accelerate & deploy solutions, catalyse public and private investments and engage communities to help end plastic waste in the environment. Plastic Europe has a voluntary commitment “Plastics 2030” focused on preventing leakage of plastics into the environment, on improving resource efficiency and the circularity of plastic packaging applications. Examples of the activities on which the members of Plastic Europe are engaged are the following: Operation Clean Sweep®, The Interreg Med ACT4LITTER project, LIFE Blue Lakes and Marine Litter Educational & Awareness raising projects.

**i) CIRC-PACK project.** *Aitana Saez, project coordinator*

The CIRC-PACK project aims at transforming plastic packaging waste into a resource. It will develop more sustainable, bio-based and recyclable plastics for use in manufacturing a wide range of products:

trays, bottles, coffee capsules, jars, car parts, pellets, and new types of multi-layer and multi-material packaging. It includes three demo cases: (i) Innovative bio-based and biodegradable/compostable polymers with enhanced functionalities, (ii) demonstrate new multi-layer film and multi-material packaging to improve their recyclability and end of life impact and (iii) improving recycling under several approaches.

**j) DEBAG – Life project: Plastic Bags.** *George Papatheodorou, project coordinator*

The LIFE DEBAG project has developed and implemented an integrated information and awareness campaign to prevent and reduce plastic bag pollution in the marine environment. It carried out a nation-wide awareness campaign in Greece as well as a very intensive and integrated campaign on Syros island. Examples include the plastic bag free weeks; 13500 information leaflets and about 12,000 durable, cotton, reusable carrier bags were offered for free to residents and visitors and retail professionals of Syros; educational seminars where almost 7000 students and 56 schools participated. Door-to-door campaign in 4.410 households and 522 shops. 17 beach litter monitoring campaigns around the island were carried out over the course of three years. The impact of these campaigns resulted in a 85% reduction in plastic bags accumulation rates and 56% reduction in marine litter accumulation.

**k) BeMed Initiative.** *Antidia Citores, Surfriders Foundation Europe*

Initiative funded by Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the Tara Expeditions Foundation, Surfrider Foundation Europe, the Mava Foundation and IUCN. It carried out two main types of actions: (i) Funding an ever-growing network of NGOs, territorial authorities, private companies with fewer than 20 employees and scientific institutions through the support of local initiatives. (ii) Building a private sector initiative where companies can develop plastic footprint reduction strategies under the guidance of a scientific committee. The objectives of the supported actions include: Research and data collection, information and instruction, assembly of allies and mobilisation, recommendations and new regulations, plastic reuse and alternatives. Since 2017, 38 projects were funded in twelve different countries, including Mediterranean EU, North African and Middle Eastern countries.

**l) Let's do it!.** *Kadi Kent, Let's Do It Foundation*

The Let's Do It Foundation is a public benefit organization which coordinates the international movement 'Let's Do It! World'. It works by mobilising positive-minded, action-oriented people to tackle environmental and social problems related to mismanaged solid waste. Over the years, it has mobilised 36 million people in 169 countries and engaged communities for implementing sustainable waste management solutions. It has built the World Waste Platform - a central database of mismanaged waste and litter that gathers information from eight different waste apps, including their own World Clean-up Day app. Planned activities in 2019-2021 include: (i) Develop trash detection computer vision algorithm (WADE) that will take any image and identify (and possibly classify) the trash visible in the picture. (ii) Create an interface between the algorithm and World Waste Platform.

**a) Update from invited experts to the first WS (12 March 2019)**

**a. Nestle.** *Johannes Weber, Nestlé Europe, Middle East and North Africa*

Nestlé goes beyond its commitment to 100% recyclability. A design milestone in 2019 has been the launch of fully based paper packaging in two countries. This will be launched in July/August in ten countries. Other initiatives include an ice-cream with a re-usable container, the delivery of products in containers brought by consumers and a 100% recycled PET bottle.

**b. PANACEA – Interreg project.** *Sonsoles San Roman, project coordinator*

The objective of PANACeA is to streamline networking and management efforts in Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a mechanism to enhance nature conservation and protection in the region. Major achievements linked to marine litter (ML) include supporting the consolidation of knowledge & tools needed for more effective monitoring of type of litter and the caused impacts on

biodiversity, in particular (i) Factsheet & DataBase (DB): Update of the ML biodiversity interactions database and report on state of the art; (ii) Joint Policy Brief & Factsheet: Consolidation of knowledge and tools generated by the community pinpointing most pressing need and gaps to be addressed by EU and Med Policy and Frameworks; (iii) MedBioLitter: Mediterranean marine litter and biodiversity interactions database (establishment, consolidation, and regular updates) to support evidence based regional responses to marine litter threat and its impact on biodiversity (2016 – 2022).

**c. SEA PLASTICS.** *Aymeric Barre, Founding partner*

SEA Plastics is an organisation led by engineering students, to contribute to research on micro-plastics and to raise awareness about plastic pollution. The association was created in 2017 by three engineering students from AgroParisTech to make use of their gap year by working on a scientific project related to the oceans. Sea Plastics actions mix science and raising awareness to fight plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. Scientific dimension: mapping microplastics using manta nest to collect surface microplastics; immersing a closing net in the water column; collecting deep-water sediments with a specific bucket. Awareness component: conferences and activities in ports of call: One movie was presented in a museum and a second one is in the making. A series of booklets will be presented in September.

**b) Setting-up of national hubs and connection for synergies and impact. Presentation of Local Hubs in BLUEMED countries GSO BLUEMED WG members**

*Marta March (ES-GSO BLUEMED WG member)* explained that a national hub already exists in Spain. It was established as part of the actions taken under the Marine Strategies Programme (Royal Decree 1365/2018, of 2 November, approving new measures under Spain's Marine Strategies), in particular, measure BM-25 "Constitution of a technical group on marine litter as a forum for coordination/discussion on the problem Marine waste and its possible solutions.

The Directorate-General for coastal and sea sustainability of the Ministry for Ecological Transition, responsible for the implementation, is chairing this technical group on marine litter. The group started in 2016 and aims to exchange on state of the art, disseminate common messages and promote a global commitment to this threat as well as foster collaborative work and new partnerships and initiatives among participating entities.

The existing group will be connected with the BLUEMED Pilot. Coordination between the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (BLUEMED initiative) and Ministry for the Ecological Transition (Marine Strategies) will be formalised in this respect to join forces in the most effective way and assure the involvement of all relevant actors.

*Mustafa Yucel (TR-GSO BLUEMED WG member)* explained that the Turkish national hub for the BLUEMED Pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean builds on the already established stakeholder community that contributed to the BLUEMED SRIA (as well as to the Black Sea SRIA). With the BLUEMED Pilot, this hub has been enlarged with the inclusion of a research-performing organization (Akdeniz University in Antalya, linked to PAGEV - Turkish Association of Plastic Producers).

Two concrete steps will now be taken by the Turkish hub:

1. Link the BLUEMED Pilot to the newly emerging 'Zero Waste - Blue' national initiative driven by the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and represented in public by the First Lady, Ms Emine Erdogan. A meeting has already been held with the Deputy Minister in charge of this initiative, and further developments and potentially national-level project proposals on preventing plastic pollution in the Med are forthcoming.
2. Creation of a regional initiative with the support of Mersin Governorship composed of the Governor's office, The Mersin Municipality, Mersin Chamber of Maritime Commerce, Mersin Chamber of Industry and Trade, Mersin University and METU-IMS. The initiative is

now producing projects and trying to align and pool different funding streams to support the overall goal of a 'healthy, plasti- free Mersin Bay by 2030'. The Turkish national hub will ensure that this regional initiative will set a national example for Turkey and contribute to the overall BLUEMED goal of a healthy, plastic-free Mediterranean.

*Aldo Drago (MT-GSO BLUEMED WG member)* explained that the Malta local hub was initiated by bringing together a number of national champions who are actively contributing to the protection of the marine environment in general, and are already engaged in actions related to marine plastics. Ambjent Malta, an agency that will soon be established under the Ministry of the Environment, has been entrusted to lead the hub with the support of the GSO member and the Malta Council for S&T. The lead of Ambjent Malta is intended to secure a direct link with government structures so that the Maltese contribution to the BLUEMED pilot project for a plastic free and healthy Mediterranean can have the backing from government and local stakeholders.

The approach adopted in Malta is thus to create a hub of local initiatives addressing the plastics problem, starting with public entities, NGOs and Ministries, and linking to academia in a second stage; the aim is to bring together active partners that are locally recognised and have the ambition to achieve. The SeaBins project run by the local NGO Żibel (more information in annex) is one of the showcase examples.

Great focus is also dedicated to education and awareness especially amongst younger generations. With the involvement of Nature Trust - FEE Malta and its participation in international programmes (Eco-Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE), Blue Flag for Beaches and Green Key for Hotels) the local hub brings on board and integrates efforts to strengthen plastic awareness initiatives with effective hands-on events (clean-ups, interactive educational workshops, sand sifting activities) as well as dissemination in the media (articles, video clips and photos).

*Fabio Fava (IT-GSO BLUEMED WG member)* explained that Italy will launch the national hub associated with the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea” on July 25, 2019 under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, University and Research and in close cooperation with the Italian unit leading the BLUEMED CSA. More than 20 public and private stakeholders working on the monitoring, prevention, mitigation and the overall management of marine litter in the Italian seas and the Mediterranean Sea basin have been invited. Over 15 of the invited delegates are representing already ongoing initiatives, coordinated by industries, private and consumers associations, NGOs, public institutions and municipalities, and more than five are representing prominent ongoing national and EU R&I projects or training/educational projects.

The structure and the implementation road map of the Italian hub of the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea” will be defined before September 2019.

In the meantime, Italy selected two among the major successful ongoing national initiatives to characterize the Italian contribution to the BLUEMED Pilot. (Further information in annex)

- a) Legambiente initiatives. Legambiente is an Italian NGO which has historically been greatly involved in marine litter issue prevention and management ([www.legambiente.it](http://www.legambiente.it)). They are working closely with the Italian Ministry of Environment, Region of Tuscany, other Regions and Municipalities (ie Apulia and Lazio Region), Volunteers, Cooperatives, End users (industries). Legambiente launched the Fishing for Litter initiative designed to a) develop common technical-operational procedures/methods for prevention/recovery of waste; b) build new local value chains to convert plastic waste into new products and energy; and c) involve other stakeholders to facilitate replicates and join forces/actors.

- b) Aquafil company initiative ([www.aquafil.com](http://www.aquafil.com)), a global company with 16 plants in eight countries on three continents based in Arco (Italy), which developed the “ECONYL® Regeneration System” technology to chemically regenerate Nylon 6 from fishing nets.

Italy recommended also involving other two initiatives, led by Italy but active or potentially active in several of the countries of the BLUEMED initiatives in the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea”. (further info in annex):

- a) The Plastic Buster MPAs project, led by the University of Siena and ISPRA, is a MED INTERREG project, labelled by UfM (43 countries), joined by partners from Cyprus, Tunisia, Slovenia, Italy, France, Greece and Spain. <http://plasticbusters.unisi.it/>,
- b) The eCircular project - EIT Climate-KIC project for plastic waste prevention, coordinated by University of Bologna <https://ecircular.climate-kic.org/>,

*Emmanuelle Klein (FR-GSO BLUEMED WG member)* explained that France would like to promote the following initiatives in the Pilot:

- Actions aiming at preventing plastic pollution
- Ban on single-use plastics coming into effect in 2020
- Development of deposit return scheme
- Roadmap on circular economy
- The launch of a reflection workshop in the context of the G7 Environment Ministerial Meeting, about the SSH inputs for the comprehension of citizens behaviour facing plastics
- Promoting next TARA expedition, some stops are in France, Italy, Tunisia, etc. <https://oceans.taraexpeditions.org/en/m/agenda/18stopovers/> which will cover the awareness / communication part

*Maria Snoussi (MA-GSO BLUEMED WG nominee)* explained that the establishment of the Moroccan national hub was initiated by several of the main blue economy actors in Morocco. The Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) has already organized a nation-wide consultation in 2018, involving institutional departments, scientists, NGOs and the private sector, to propose guidelines and operational recommendations for the establishment of a National Strategy for the Blue Economy. The report which represents a shared vision of the blue economy in Morocco, is in line with most of the BLUEMED SRIA priorities.

In addition, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, through its national waste management programme, has organized several awareness campaigns and assessments of marine debris (in the framework of the SwitchMed project). NGOs active in the field of marine litter (Zero Zbel, AGIR) have also been contacted and will be involved in the hub. The National Institute of Fisheries Research is also conducting studies on marine debris on the continental shelf and is willing to collaborate with the hub. The Maritime Fisheries Department, which is currently co-chairing Westmed Initiative, should also be contacted to coordinate with their national hub in order to avoid duplicating actions.

Overall, the first stages of consultation are progressing. However, the development of the national hub requires a maturation of thinking regarding the configuration of this core community, in order to involve the key people who will be able to make decisions, but who are also experts in the field, balancing decision-makers, scientific researchers (including young people), potential investors, and members of civil society.

**c) Any other business**

**d) Closing the meeting**

Sigi Gruber (DG RTD) closed the meeting by highlighting some of the key messages emphasized during the day and defining some next steps.

- Regions and local actors are key drivers towards a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean. Education, at all levels (kindergarten, universities, museums, etc.), is a necessary part of the solution. There is a very strong social dimension (e.g. consumer behaviours) and thus a need to involve social scientists.
- There is a need to tackle the problem with a holistic, systems approach. This requires working with all kinds of stakeholders including legislators, private sector, NGOs and society at large.
- Several examples of hubs working at local, regional or national level were presented during the workshop, which could be followed by others. There is “no one size fits all solution”. A platform acting as “super-hub” could collect information from the different regional and local hubs. There is a need to set up a website to showcase and connect the various actions.
- Sigi Gruber encouraged those countries which have already established hubs to keep the momentum and invited those which have not yet done so to seek inspiration from the many examples and initiatives/opportunities presented in the workshop. At the next meeting it will then be possible to come out with a clear structure of local, regional, national hubs. As local hubs become active/established, they should be involved. From the EC side, we will try to invite to the next meeting further relevant initiatives as a source of inspiration.
- There is an opportunity to have the next GSO meeting at the occasion of Ecomondo 7 November, if everyone agrees. However, it is not clear whether the EC can finance meetings outside Brussels (to be assessed). We can explore the possibility using the CSA BLUEMED to organise some workshops of the pilot. In view of the media coverage expected in Ecomondo, it would be an opportunity to launch the platform at this occasion.



**DRAFT PROGRAMME**

<b>Registration</b>	<i>09:00-09:30</i>
<b>1. Introduction and Welcome</b> <i>Sigi Gruber, DG RTD, European Commission; Luca Marangoni, DG MARE, European Commission; Michaelis Papadoyannakis, DG ENV; Alessandra Senssi, UfM.</i>	<i>09:30-9:45</i>
<b>2. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea</b> <b>a) North Africa Blue Economy and Coastal Management technical assistance program</b> <i>Melanie Argimon, The World Bank.</i> <b>b) The Clean Oceans Initiative</b> <i>Gregory Briffa, European Investment Bank.</i> <b>c) EIT Climate-Kick and the Flagship eCircular</b> <i>Sira Saccani, Director of Sustainable Production System, Climate-KIC.</i> <b>d) StartupEurope MED</b> <i>Fabrizio Porrino, SVP Global Public Affairs</i> <b>e) Tackling Marine Litter in the Southern Med</b> <i>Thomie Vlachogianni, Water and Environment Support project</i>	<i>9:45-11:00</i>
<b>Coffee Break</b>	<i>11:00-11:10</i>
<b>3. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea (2)</b> <b>f) PlasticBuster – Interreg project - Update from the first WS (12/03/2019)</b> <i>Cristina Fossi, project coordinator (Remotely WEBEX)</i> <b>g) Mismanaged plastic on the seafloor: does it matter?</b> <i>Fabio Trincardi, Italian National Research Council</i> <b>h) Plastics Europe</b> <i>Anne-Gaelle Collot, Senior Manager</i> <b>i) CIRCPACK project</b> <i>Aitana Saez, project coordinator</i> <b>j) DEBAG – Life project: Plastic Bags</b> <i>George Papatheodorou, project coordinator</i> <b>k) BeMed Initiative</b> <i>Antidia Citores, Surfriders Foundation Europe</i> <b>l) Let's do it!</b> <i>Kadi Kent, Let's Do It Foundation</i>	<i>11:10-12:30</i>

<b>Lunch Break</b>	<i>12:30-13:30</i>
<b>a) Update from invited experts to the first WS (12 March 2019)</b>  <b>a. Nestle</b> <i>Johannes Weber, Nestlé Europe, Middle East and North Africa</i>  <b>b. PANACEA – Interreg project</b> <i>Sonsoles San Roman, project coordinator</i>  <b>c. SEA PLASTICS</b> <i>Aymeric Barre, Founding partner</i>	<i>13:30-13:50</i>
<b>b) Setting-up of national hubs and connection for synergies and impact</b>  <b>a. Presentation of Local Hubs in BLUEMED countries GSO BLUEMED WG members</b> <i>All GSO BLUEMED WG members (tour de table)</i>  <b>b. Discussion on how to progress their work</b> <i>All GSO BLUEMED WG members (tour de table)</i>	<i>13:50-16:00</i>
<b>c) Any other business</b>	<i>16:00-16:15</i>
<b>d) Closing of the meeting</b>	<i>16:15-16:30</i>

## ANNEX

### **Maltese progress towards the establishment of the National Hub:**

From the part of Malta, the local hub was initiated by bringing together a number of champion players that are actively contributing to the protection of the marine environment in general, and are already engaged in actions related to marine plastics. Ambjent Malta, an agency that will be soon established under the Ministry of the Environment, has been entrusted to lead the hub with the support of the GSO member and the Malta Council for S&T. The lead of Ambjent Malta is intended to secure a direct link with government structures so that the Maltese contribution to the BlueMed pilot project for a plastic free and healthy Mediterranean can have the dimension and backing from government and local stakeholders.

The approach adopted in Malta is thus to create a hub of local initiatives addressing the plastics problem. We are starting with public entities, NGOs and Ministries, but shall link to academia in a second stage; the aim is to bring together active partners that are locally recognised and have the ambition to achieve. One of the showcase best practices consists of the **SeaBins project** run by the local NGO Żibel. This NGO is working towards a holistic plan to tackle ocean plastics within and around the Maltese Islands over the next 5-10 years, with important activities comprising the installation of sea bins in ports and bays, a dedicated boat for micro plastic surveying and cleaning of plastics from the coast and in the open sea, education and awareness, recycling of collected debris including plastic bottles, hard plastics, fishing nets and ropes, and a Malta Sicily 2020 expedition between the two coastlines to conduct microplastic surveys.

Great focus is also dedicated to education and awareness especially amongst the younger generations. With the involvement of Nature Trust - FEE Malta, and its participation in International programmes (Eco-Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE), Blue Flag for Beaches, and Green Key for Hotels) the local hub brings on board and integrates efforts to strengthen plastic awareness initiatives with effective hands-on events like clean-ups, interactive educational workshops, sandsifting activities, as well as dissemination on various media such as through articles, video clips and photos.

### **Italian progress towards the establishment of the National Hub:**

Italy will launch the national hub associated with the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea” on July 25, 2019 under the coordination of the Ministry of Education, University and Research and in close cooperation with the Italian unit leading the BLUEMED CSA. Over than 20 public and private stakeholders working on the monitoring, prevention, mitigation and the overall management of marine litter in the Italian seas and the Mediterranean sea basin have been invited. Over than 15 of the invited delegates are representing initiatives already ongoing, coordinated by industries, private and public -even consumers- associations, NGOs, public institutions and municipalities, and more than 5 are representing prominent ongoing national and EU R&I projects or training/educational projects.

The structure and the implementation road map of the Italian hub of the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea” will be defined during the coming weeks and within the beginning of September.

In the meantime, Italy selected two among the major successful ongoing national initiatives to characterize the Italian contribution to the BLUEMED Pilot. In the following session, they are briefly presented.

- a) **Legambiente initiatives.** Legambiente is an IT NGO highly and historically involved in marine litter issue prevention and management ([www.legambiente.it](http://www.legambiente.it)). They are working closely with IT Ministry of Environment, Region of Tuscany, other Regions and

Municipalities (ie Apulia and Lazio Region), Volunteers, Cooperatives, End users (industries).

They launched the Initiative: “The Fishing for Litter” initiatives addressed to a) develop common technical-operational procedures/methods for prevention/recovery waste; b) build new local value chains to convert plastic waste into new products and energy; and c) involve other stakeholders to facilitate replicates and join forces/actors.

Sub-initiative: “Arcipelago pulito”, with Tuscany fishermen, Tuscany Region, Italian Ministry of Environment, and Revet, a company that analysed waste caught.

*Aim:* fish seabed plastics via 10 boats of Tuscany fishermen fleet;

*Results:* 1840 kg waste recovered in 23 days; 85% of it was characterized for tailored exploitation. *Impact:* launch of “Salvamare” draft law (from Ministry of Environment) that formally recognizes fishermen as 'scavengers' of the sea.

Sub-initiative “Lakes’ Schooner” initiative, with RTOs (ENEA, CNR), Regions, Volunteers

*Aims:* monitor and assess occurrence of plastics waste in IT Rivers and Lakes; set up and promotion good practices for preventing plastic pollution at sea. Project ongoing.

Other activities in the frame of the EU projects: COMMON (ENI CBC MED), CleanSea LIFE (LIFE), Life Blue Lakes

**b) Aquafil company initiative** ([www.aquafil.com](http://www.aquafil.com)), a global company with 16 plants in 8 different Countries and 3 Continents based in Arco (Italy), owner of the technology “ECONYL® Regeneration System” able to chemically regenerate Nylon 6 starting from fishing nets. The facilities of Arco (TN, Italy) and the plant in Ljubljana (Slovenia) can be partners of the Pilot.

*The approach:* fishing and fish farming nets made of Nylon 6 are recovered all over the world and delivered to Ljubljana (Slovenia), where the Nylon 6 is separated from other additives used in the product, and regenerated into ECONYL® polymer, which is then spun into ECONYL® yarn for carpet manufacturing (in Arco, Italy) and for textile applications (in Ljubljana, Slovenia). Notably, Nylon 6 can be regenerated into ECONYL® infinitely, without downgrading the quality of the material. Fishing and fish farming nets are collected from end users and recovered from the seabed through the Aquafil project “The Healthy Seas: A Journey from Waste to Wear”; since 2013, Aquafil has recovered 453 tons of fishing nets.

*Impacts:* ECONYL® is used by over 700 brands worldwide in their products ie, carpet manufacturers operating for hotels, offices and public buildings, automotive and residential, textile floorings products and the «bulk continuous filament» sector. The reuse of Nylon 6 reduces the use of virgin oil-based feedstock (every 10.000 tons of ECONYL® raw materials, 70.000 barrels of crude oil are saved, and 57.100 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> are not emitted into the atmosphere). This will also contribute mitigating the increase of costs of future fishing gear and aquaculture equipments due to the EU Directive 2019/904, an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme set up in all EU MS Member States.

Then, Italy recommended to involve in the “BLUEMED Pilot: Towards a Healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea” other two initiatives, led by Italy but active or potentially active in several of the Countries of the BLUEMED initiatives. They are shortly described below:

- c) **The Plastic Buster MPAs project**, led by the University of Siena and ISPRA, is a MED INTERREG project, labelled by UfM (43 countries), joined by partners from Cyprus, Tunisia, Slovenia, Italy, France, Greece and Spain. <http://plasticbusters.unisi.it/>  
*Objectives:* i) Diagnose of Marine Litter (ML) impacts on biodiversity including the identification of “ML hotspots”; ii) define and test tailor-made ML surveillance, prevention and mitigation measures; iii) develop a common framework of ML actions for Med regions towards the conservation of biodiversity.

The knowledge transfer of project outputs have been funded via **ENPI -CBC** joined by Tunisia e Libano (project COMMON)

- d) **The eCircular project** - EIT Climate-KIC project for plastic waste prevention, coordinated by University of Bologna <https://ecircular.climate-kic.org/>  
*Objectives:* eCircular will promote smart manufacturing solutions, advanced eco-design approaches, new business models and alternative consumption patterns. Advanced policies and industry standards will be explored to scale-up innovative solutions. *Actions proposed in the frame of Pilot:* eCircular project can set-up and guide a dedicated pilot educational program and a student exchange program across BLUEMED Pilot countries.