

Summary of the Marine Litter High Level Preparatory Meeting, Brussels 22 September 2011

1. Opening

DG ENV chaired the meeting. At the opening, and after the "tour de table", reference was made to the [speech](#) of Commissioner Potočnik in Athens (April 2011) at the joint plastic MED event with Commissioner Damanaki on the protection of the Mediterranean Sea, highlighting 4 tools (the last one being the starting point for the discussion of the meeting):

- Implementation of the MSFD
- Development of a strategic framework on marine litter under the Barcelona Convention
- Legal arsenal (waste policy, research, Port Reception Facility Directive)
- "Push for **partnerships with all stakeholders**, starting with industry ... investigate further what can be done at European level to encourage **voluntary agreements with and within industry**".

The objective of the meeting is to "brain storm" on stakeholder involvement in the coordination of initiatives already under development (as those mentioned in the annex of the invitation) and to develop new ideas, with an emphasis on a non-legislative approaches on a voluntary basis. We would like to identify 'leaders' to take the lead on a certain topic with involvement of other stakeholders. We aim at a regular (yearly) high-level meeting where commitments and agreements can be made.

The discussion at the meeting followed the following items:

2. Production

The design of products should be rethought and a more integrated product policy should be defined (e.g. eco-labelling to set targets for best products). What more can be done to avoid marine litter, what are the best practices, how will the Honolulu Declaration be put into practice? DG ENV stressed the importance to improve the life-cycle of product production, including (1) after-life, (2) risks of e.g. micro-plastics (scrub creams), (3) lessons learned, (4) who is involved, (5) what is the source. Partnerships should be found in this forum to take identified problems to a higher level.

The following ideas came up during the discussion:

- *Re-use* to reduce (e.g. bags, beverage and packaging material)
- *Share best-practices* to redesign (eg. aluminium beverage caps)
- Main focus should be on *improved waste management* across the EU (collection, recycling, recovery)
- Assess the *production chain*: at what point of the production chain does waste enter into the environment (e.g. pellets)?
- Assess the *"end of life" environmental impact* of a product to install a system of punish and reward for brand owners (polluter pays). Different materials pose problems (glass, fibres, metal, etc) with plastic having the highest impact.
- *Labelling* products to raise consumer awareness (e.g. "this is flushable", tidyman, "marine litter logo" at EU level?).
- *Improve recycle system*: avoid "green-washing". Design a new eco-label? Set-up recycling guidelines for the entire product chain for brand owners.

Change the value of packaging material (especially "on-the-go" packaging material) to make recycling more interesting and change behaviour: incentive for consumers / deposit system.

- A group of wise people to *assess the after use life* of a product can create more awareness and assessment

Result:

- There are several ways to look at the issue: from the life cycle, from the source or from the product. For each approach different options are open.
 - Those who analyse marine litter (for instance at beaches) and those who produce could bring together their knowledge and experience.
1. For **everybody**: contact your relevant networks to bring together organisations involved in marine litter for: analysis, collection, research, design and production. Product producers and Consumer organisations must be invited.
 2. **EEB, EuPR and the consultant from Milieu** will draft a short paper to identify bottle-necks, find solutions and make new ideas operational with regard to valuing the product and exchanging best practices on the handling of one product to the possible handling of another product.
 3. **EuPR** offers to organise a visit to a recycling plant

3. Prevention

We should have the full picture to improve the waste hierarchy without duplication of efforts. What is the situation in countries where market-based measures are in place? How efficient are these measures? (Reference was made to a global study of ACR+, an International Network of Cities and Regions.) What is the involvement of retailers / consumers? How do we mitigate the problem?

Reference was made to two Impact Assessments carried by the ENV.C2 on (1) identifying waste / change standards and (2) the reduction of plastic bags (online consultation). End 2011 results will be published on the way forward.

The following topics were discussed:

- Waste *reduction*: if less is used, less waste will end up as marine litter.
- (Reduction) Increase use of *re-usable plastic bags*: put in place *voluntary agreements* with industry on their use (depending largely on geographical area and operational differences; now mainly used in food sector and not other retailers)
- Proper *management of landfills* by relevant authorities (different countries, different measures). Avoid illegal / uncontrolled landfills. Implementation is politically unpopular.
- *Proper closed circuit waste cycle*: not only in EU, but globally to reduce littering (in some EU countries - mainly new MS - only 60% of the population is connected to a public waste collection).
- *Source analysis - Labelling*: ability to trace the product back and to identify the bottle-necks (research with traceable elements, long-term solution).
 - Rough data on packaging waste: 1/3 is recycled, 1/3 is incinerated and 1/3 ends up in a landfill, equivalent to 10-12 million tons yearly.
- Expand *target*: marine litter is not only what is found on beaches, but includes the water column, sea beds and what is found in animals.

- *Single-use plastic bags* are handled in different ways in different countries with different success: Levy a tax, legislative options and voluntary agreements. Add *value* to the product (see under point 2.) is another option. Single-use bio-bags might not be an option: 1/3 less strong, create (marine) litter
- *Port Reception Facility Directive*: include also practical solutions (increase the number of bins; educate staff on vessels, cruise ships and ferries through e.g. placards)
- *Pilot Project* (study) commissioned by ENV.D2 will run in 2012 to identify pressures, loopholes, source type and identify measures.

Result:

4. **Eurocommerce** and other retailers have been asked already by DG ENV to think on possible ways to reduce the use of free plastic carrier bags. Depending on this outcome, they could cooperate with **KIMO**, the organization of coastal cities, on possible options to reduce the use of plastic bags in coastal cities
5. Need for implementation / political commitment: Member States should be invited to the discussion by **DG ENV**

4. Education and Awareness

The International Coastal Cleanup day takes place every year at the end of the bathing season. The focus is mainly on US / Asia. The European contribution to this exercise is limited; we have mostly local clean-up actions. How do we coordinate all efforts under 1 umbrella to create an annual European Coastal Cleanup day? What is the potential of this growing cooperation? Development of new tools for data collection (e.g. EEA initiative for "eye on earth" as a citizen science) can be combined with such an effort. We only have bits and pieces of actions and no inventory of all existing initiatives.

The discussion focussed on:

- Learning from already *existing, similar initiatives*: "Waste Free Oceans" and the UK initiative "Love where you live"
- *Involvement* of every layer of society (top down); 60 % of the population in Slovenia participated in a clean-up event.
- *Funding*: "Seas at Risk" Members organise local actions and finance through sponsoring (PR, research, communication, education, etc).
- *Waste is a resource* (see under point 2): use marine litter to finance actions.
- If less budget is spent on cleaning the beaches, this money could *in return be invested* in proper waste collection (bins).
 - *Involve / educate "litterers"*: social control, communication material / posters in public places
- *Education* of staff on vessels, fisherman, etc
- *Education* of young people, i.e. before they get to the age to start littering
- Ensure *convenient infrastructure* (globally): enough bins on the beach, collection of waste
- Convince *national authorities* of the need: Convention of Mayors
- Need for a common approach on monitoring (such as the OSPAR guidelines)
- Creation of *local partnerships* between local authorities and NGOs:
- Amendment of the *Bathing Water Directive* to include marine litter?
- Framework contract of DG RTD for producing films and spread via o.a. Euronews; use of social media

- Make use of existing education materials and support these organisations to spread material

Result:

6. **Everybody** will mail to DG ENV a list of actions on local clean-ups they are aware of (suggested deadline: 1 November 2011). We will see how these can be brought under one umbrella, involving different stakeholders (fishery/shipping sector, schools, local authorities).

5. Remediation

DG MARE gave a presentation on Remediation. Three types are identified: pick-up discarded nets, retain waste from nets, collect surface litter (fishing trip). The Member States identify the projects to finance within the European Fisheries Fund (all 3 types are eligible). EFF is to further discuss on 20 October 2011.

- *EFF Funding:*
There was some discussion and criticism on *financing fisherman* to collect litter: is it a subsidy for the fishing sector / artificial employment of the sector? If fishing is unsustainable it must be ended and not be paid to stay in business. Or does it give an alternative to fishermen (is legal base for funding)?
At present, it is Fishing for *surface litter*: what about litter on the sea bed (re. risks of bottom trawling)? Pro: litter is retrieved, possibility to identify hot spots. Cons: energy consumption, environmental impact, survival of a fleet. Has there been an Impact Assessment made for this type of Fishing for litter? Instead of paying the fishermen, we should focus on educating them / that industry. The funds should be used for networks to dispose of waste.
- *Legislation in place:* OSPAR recommendations on the spreading of 'Fishing for litter' to more countries. MS have to take actions in respect of the MSFD (targets and measures for reaching Good Environmental Status- GES).
- EuPR and KIMO are at the moment looking at which other countries "fishing for litter" can be applied

Result:

7. Elaboration of the pros and cons / set-up of a best-practices guide on Fishing for litter by **EuPR, KIMO, Seas at Risk, DG MARE**

6. International Cooperation

There are a number of international events where not only governments but also stakeholders can play a role:

(1) Rio+20 in June 2012 where marine litter might be on the agenda. Attention of the topic by others than Member States could stimulate such discussions (2) the ASEM conference in 2012 in Copenhagen (cooperation with Japan to address plastic waste in Asian countries) and (3) existing cooperation instruments (such as the activities by UNEP) could be tools to raise the issue on the political agenda, raise awareness in a collective effort of both Member States and stakeholders. How can we help each other?

- Organisation of *cooperation* with non-EU (industry) federations? Close cooperation exists to share best-practices and implement an action plan on landfill management.
- Use the *conferences framework* to raise attention on waste / recycling / best-practice sharing / education
- Use *Basel Convention* (as a new strategic framework)
- Make best use of *existing project findings* on waste in Mediterranean (Milieu)
- Need for a *European legislative* approach as legislation is more effective than cooperation on a mere voluntary basis.

Result:

8. **PlasticsEurope** will announce their action plan at a conference on 15-17 November 2011 in Dubai. This result will be shared with the participants.
9. **Everybody** will identify possible ideas and synergies (who does what, when, at which platform?) and send it to DG ENV (deadline 1 November 2011)

7. Summing up the deliverables

8. Process until high-level meeting

These last 2 points were combined and it was decided to first summarize all ideas for action and to meet again before the High-Level Meeting will take place (mid-January 2012, to keep the momentum), but after adoption by Plastics Europe of its action plan implementing their Honolulu statement.

In the 9 (numbered) concrete results, the actors have been highlighted:

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The following process is proposed:

1. Prepare progress/output per action relevant to your organization
2. Send a short update to DG ENV (Leo de Vrees: leo.de-vrees@ec.europa.eu and copy to Nicole Wanders-Wengler: Nicole.Wanders-Wengler@ec.europa.eu)
3. We aim at having another preparatory meeting end November 2011 in Brussels

ⁱ The (21) participants included representatives from:

Industry: European Plastic Convertors (EuPC); European Plastic Recyclers (EuPR); European Organization for Packaging and the Environment (EUROPEN); European Association of the Plastic Manufacturing Industry (PlasticsEurope);

Distribution: European Retail Association (Eurocommerce); European Retail Round Table (EERT);

Harbour and Shipping organisation: European Cruise Council

NGO's : Organisation of Coastal Municipalities (KIMO); Seas at Risk (also on behalf of Surfrider Foundation); European Environmental Bureau (EBB)

European Commission: DG Mare; DG Environment (Waste Unit, Marine Unit plus consultant from Milieu Ltd.).