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## Smurfing our blue planet: European Union and Smurfs team up to protect the ocean

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What do the European Union and the Smurfs have in common? Both are blue, and both care deeply about the health of our – blue – planet. And now they will partner to clean up beaches across the world, and encourage people to take care of our ocean.

*“We have no ocean B, just as we don’t have a planet B”, says João Aguiar Machado, Director-General for maritime affairs and fisheries at the European Commission, as he signs the cooperation agreement with Smurfs. “Marine pollution is one of the most pressing environmental problems, in Europe but certainly also in the rest of the world. With the Smurfs, we have found a partner that can help us reach out globally, while sharing our values and priorities”.*

*“The Smurfs have always been the bearer of noble values”, says Véronique Culliford daughter of Smurf-creator Peyo and president of IMPS, the company behind the Smurfs. “Thanks to this partnership with the European Union, we will be able to share common ideals. The Smurfs might be small in size, but they can make a great difference in working towards our world remaining an enjoyable place to live in. So let’s smurf together for a brighter future!”*

Concretely, the EU will spur its embassies across the world and its representations in EU Member States to organise beach clean events together with local organisations, schools etc. In 2018, over 70 actions and nearly 3,000 people participated to this EU Beach Clean-up campaign. The ambition for this year goes even further, says Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary General at the European External Action Service (EEAS), *“through EU Delegations, we will encourage children, young people and adults of all countries to follow the example of the Smurfs and take care of our blue planet”.*

Cleaning up beaches has an instant positive result. Last year, EU delegations in Mozambique and Senegal removed 10 tons of litter from the shores in just one day. But the EU and Smurfs hope their campaign will achieve a longer lasting impact. *“By organising these activities, we want to increase global awareness about the state of our ocean, and our individual responsibility to take care of it”*, adds Mr Machado. *“People will find very familiar things on the beach: plastic bottles, cigarette butts, candy wraps... Cleaning it up, can help us to mind our own daily behaviour and habits.”*

Of course, goodwill only gets you so far. Countries need to have proper waste management schemes in place, and this is often lacking in developing countries. The EU is also helping with that. Just last year, the EU has committed EUR 9 million to reduce plastic waste and marine litter in South East Asia and EUR 19 million to support a waste management programme for the Pacific region.

Within its own territory, the EU is adopting new legislation that will curb single use plastics, especially those items that are most commonly found on the beach. In addition, the legislation focuses on lost fishing gear, which accounts to some 27% of all beach litter. Member States will have two years to turn this legislation into national laws.

### **More information:**

[EU Beach Clean 2018 summary video](#) [2]

[EU Plastics Strategy: single use plastics and lost fishing gear](#) [3]

[European Atlas of the Seas: overview of 2018 EU Beach Clean events](#) [4]

[EMODNet: marine litter map](#) [5]

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### **Links**

[1] [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/newsroom/2019-04-17-smurf\\_44100\\_0.jpg](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/newsroom/2019-04-17-smurf_44100_0.jpg)

[2] <https://youtu.be/GuAM4qtuRUc>

[3] [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-18-6867\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-6867_en.htm)

[4] [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/atlas/maritime\\_atlas/?fbclid=IwAR3RjHCdEW1bZxW8Ttsfbx2NR80Tq7ksdrS\\_zmL4RPahVEdY4FbKcCniEg4#lang=EN;p=w;bkgd=5;theme=2:0.75,752:0.8;c=1581146.0451068654,6309354.762495784;z=-1](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/atlas/maritime_atlas/?fbclid=IwAR3RjHCdEW1bZxW8Ttsfbx2NR80Tq7ksdrS_zmL4RPahVEdY4FbKcCniEg4#lang=EN;p=w;bkgd=5;theme=2:0.75,752:0.8;c=1581146.0451068654,6309354.762495784;z=-1)

[5] <http://www.emodnet.eu/emodnet-chemistry-litter-data-maps-first-release>