

Abstract

Marine Litter along European coasts: sources, distribution, impacts and European policy.

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Keywords: Marine litter, marine debris, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, monitoring.

One of the most evident changes in the last half-century is the ubiquity and abundance of litter in the marine environment. The EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, 2008/56/EC) established a framework within which EU Member States shall take action to achieve the good environmental status (GES) of their marine waters by 2020. Amongst the 11 MSFD qualitative descriptors, descriptor 10 (D 10) concerns marine litter. Here we report the general strategy in support to the implementation of MSFD for marine litter. It includes various aspects such as scientific background, monitoring strategies and protocols, definition of Good Environmental Status and targets, and support to management policies.

A Technical Study Group on Marine Litter (DG Environment /TSG ML) was created to provide scientific and technical background for the implementation of MSFD requirements and support to Member States with regard to (D 10). The work of the TSG ML focuses on the specification of monitoring methods through the development of monitoring protocols for litter in the different marine compartments, including micro plastics and litter in *biota*. Further consideration is also being given to the identification of sources of marine litter and a better understanding of the harm caused by marine litter.