

REGIONAL ACTION PLAN

FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT ON
**PREVENTION OF
PLASTIC POLLUTION**
INCLUDING
MARINE LITTER

• DESK STUDY AND ACTION PLAN •

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Title:

Regional Action Plan on Prevention of Plastic Pollution Including Marine Litter

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A photograph of a beach at sunset. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, orange glow. In the foreground, the dark sand of the beach is littered with various pieces of plastic waste, including a large, clear plastic bottle lying on its side, several smaller plastic containers, and other unidentifiable debris. The waves of the sea are visible in the background, crashing against the shore.

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

List of abbreviations and definitions

EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EGD	European Green Deal
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
E-PRTR	European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GES	Good Environmental Status
GAWB	Green Agenda for Western Balkan
ICC	International Coastal Clean Up
INTERREG IVA- EU	Programme for intraregional Territorial Cooperation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MLW	Marine Litter Watch MS - Member State
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
OSPAR	Oslo-Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic
PE	Polyethylene
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RSC	Regional Sea Convention
RWG	Regional working group
SUP	Single Use Plastics
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP/MAP	United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WB6	Western Balkans Six: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

Definitions

‘Extended producer responsibility scheme’ (EPRS) - extended producer responsibility scheme as defined in point 21 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC;

‘Fishing gear’¹ means any item or piece of equipment that is used in fishing or aquaculture to target, capture or rear marine biological resources or that is floating on the sea surface, and is deployed with the objective of attracting and capturing or of rearing such marine biological resources;

‘Marine litter’² or ‘debris’, is defined as “any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment”;

‘Microplastics’ are intentionally added to certain product categories (such as cosmetics, detergents, paints), dispersed during the production, transport, and use of plastic pellets, or generated through wear and tear of products such as tires, paints, and synthetic clothes. Microplastics intentionally added to products represent a relatively small proportion of all those in the sea;

‘Oxo-degradable plastic’ means plastic materials that include additives which, through oxidation, lead to the fragmentation of the plastic material into micro-fragments or to chemical decomposition;³

‘Packaging’ means packaging as defined in point 1 of Article 3 of Directive 94/62/EC;

‘Plastic’ - means a material consisting of a polymer as defined in point 5 of Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006, to which additives or other substances may have been added, and which can function as a main structural component of final products, except for natural polymers that have not been chemically modified;

‘Port reception facilities’ means port reception facilities as defined in point (e) of Article 2 of Directive 2000/59/EC;

‘Single-use plastic product’ (SUP) means a product that is made wholly or partly from plastic and that is not conceived, designed, or placed on the market to accomplish, within its life span, multiple trips or rotations by being returned to a producer for refill or re-used for the same purpose for which it was conceived; SUPs are used once, or for a short period of time, before being thrown away;

‘Treatment’ means treatment as defined in point 14 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC;

‘Waste’ means waste as defined in point 1 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC;

‘Waste fishing gear’ means any fishing gear covered by the definition of waste in point 1 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC, including all separate components, substances or materials that were part of or attached to such fishing gear when it was discarded, including when it was abandoned or lost;

‘Collection’ means collection as defined in point 10 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC; ‘separate collection’ means separate collection as defined in point 11 of Article 3 of Directive 2008/98/EC.

1 https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37131/21ig25_27_2509_eng.pdf

2 Anna Maria Addamo, Perrine Laroche, Georg Hanke, Top Marine Beach Litter Items in Europe, EUR 29249 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017, ISBN 978-92-79-87711-7, doi:10.2760/496717, JRC108181

3 DIRECTIVE (EU) 2019/904 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

Executive summary

Plastic production⁴ has sharply increased over the last 70 years. In 1950, the world produced just two million tonnes. It now produces over 450 million tonnes. Plastic has added much value to our lives: it's a cheap, versatile, and sterile material used in various applications, including construction, home appliances, medical instruments, and food packaging.

However, when plastic waste is mismanaged – not recycled, incinerated, or kept in sealed landfills – it becomes an environmental pollutant. One to two million tonnes of plastic enter our oceans and seas yearly, affecting wildlife and ecosystems. The marine environment can be considered as a sink in which anthropogenic litter accumulates coming from land-based and offshore sources. Thus, marine litter is found in all marine compartments such as beaches, on the shallow and deep seafloor, in the sea surface layer and in the water. Reducing litter in the coastal and marine environment is a major and priority challenge in the effort to preserve biota, ecosystems, as well as goods and services that humans derive from seas and oceans.⁵

According to EU-funded research⁶ carried out by scientists from the Adriatic and Ionian Seas region – Slovenia, Italy, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Greece – there are on average 670 pieces of plastic per square kilometre in the Adriatic, which constitutes a relatively high density. As much as 90 percentage made from artificial materials, while analysis of one ton of waste found on beaches and in the sea indicates that more than half is composed of plastic, 30 per cent wood, 10 per cent metal and six per cent textiles.

With the RCC's pivotal role and substantial contributions, the Western Balkans Six (WB6) Leaders endorsed the Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter ("Joint Statement") at the 2023 Tirana Berlin Process Summit.⁷

The Joint Statement reflects the commitment of the region to protect biodiversity and water ecosystems by addressing plastic pollution including marine litter, based on best circular economy practices to prevent, reduce, reuse, and recycle.

This is particularly significant because the contamination of water bodies and the Adriatic Sea presents a significant challenge for both the Western Balkans Six and EU Member States, affecting tourism and fishing.⁸ Addressing plastic litter, which makes up to 90% of marine litter, necessitates a collaborative regional strategy.

4 <https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution>

5 <https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/201808291247.pdf>

6 <https://balkaninsight.com/2021/02/24/beneath-the-surface-adriatic-beach-waste-just-tip-of-the-iceberg/#:~:text=According%20to%20EU%2Dfunded%20research,which%20constitutes%20a%20relatively%20high>

7 https://www.berlinprocess.de/uploads/documents/regional-joint-statement-on-preventing-plastic-pollution-including-marine-litter-bp-summit-2023_1697614083.pdf

8 <https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/programme/small-business-act-assessment.htm>

The Joint Statement⁹ outlines the agreement of the WB6 leaders/region on 13 actions to:

1. Take actions to effectively prevent a plastic, as defined by Regulation EC 1907/2006, from entering marine ecosystems by reducing and managing plastic waste, particularly focusing on waste items that make up the bulk of marine litter;
2. Adopt and implement a set of regulatory, economic, and information-based measures, incentives, and technically and financially feasible investments in systems and infrastructure to effectively address marine litter issues;
3. Cooperate to enhance regional actions of preventing both land-based and sea-based plastic pollution ending in marine areas, and to mitigate the adverse impact of plastic pollution;
4. Enhance regulatory environment, economic incentives, and technically and financially feasible investments in systems and infrastructure to address marine litter-related issues;
5. Those activities will address the full life-cycle of plastic, taking into account circumstances, needs, and capabilities at both the regional level and the level of individual parties;
6. This set of measures will be tailored not to jeopardise possible binding and voluntary approaches and processes at all levels, and between public and private sectors, particularly businesses manufacturing and distributing products that contain plastics;
7. Identify transport and distribution pathways and hotspots of marine litter where high litter concentrations are likely to affect coastal or marine biodiversity, and ways to clean up these hotspots in an environmentally sound way through cooperation at the party and regional levels;
8. Enhance extended producer responsibility schemes and explore feasibility and modalities for covering the cost of clean-up measures for products prone to littering;
9. Develop the regional action plan for implementation of this joint statement within the Regional Working Group on Environment, to identify coordinated actions to address the plastics through the lifecycle, in line with the Barcelona Convention Regional Plan against marine litter and relevant EU legislation;
10. Coordinate and engage with the European Union and other partners to support ongoing global and regional processes, and to forge a common approach to marine litter in the framework of the global legally binding plastic pollution agreement, foreseen by 2024;
11. Implementation of this initiative requires stepping up with local and regional financial and technical resources;
12. Coordinate and engage with the European Commission to support implementation of this joint statement through the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans via Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. We also invite other development partners, including IFIs and the private sector, to mobilise resources and investment to support the implementation;
13. Invite the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) to monitor and coordinate its implementation within the process of the Green Agenda Action Plan monitoring and reporting framework. We commit to working on improving data on and monitoring of plastic pollution in line with our EU obligations, standards, and best practices.

⁹ https://www.berlinprocess.de/uploads/documents/regional-joint-statement-on-preventing-plastic-pollution-including-marine-litter-bp-summit-2023_1697614083.pdf

This Report aim to supports RCC and RWG GAWB in developing a Regional Action Plan for implementing the Joint Statement, addressing perspectives from both the public and private sectors, in line with GA Action Plan and this year's Circular Economy Operational Plan (prepared by the RCC along with the WB 6).

This **Report** consists of 2 parts:

PART I - Desk Study

This Desk Study consists of 6 Chapters:

- 1. Chapter 1.** Introduction
- 2. Chapter 2.** EU policy
- 3. Chapter 3** International Conventions
- 4. Chapter 4.** Western Balkans 6
- 5. Chapter 5** Methodology of collecting data
- 6. Chapter 6** Conclusion and recommendation for WB6

References

PART II Action Plan

Action plan

List of Roles

And 4 annexes :

Annex I List of stakeholders

Annex 2 List of interviews

Annex 3 List of comments on draft 1

Annex 4 List of participants on meetings of WG held on 14 and 16 of April in Podgorica

Main goal for action plan: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF MARINE ENVIRONMENT, AND MARINE RESOURCES, SEA WATER, GROUND AND ASSOCIATED SURFACE (INLAND) WATERS AND THEIR ECOSYSTEMS actions.

The specified action are divided into regional and individual level:

- ▶ The regional actions are those requiring a joint approach by the WB6 and of a large-scale, widespread, and intraregional character.
- ▶ The Individual level actions are concern and responsibility of the WB6 themselves. Both types of actions are divided into **six themes (Specific goals)**.

Two themes are directly linked to the sources of marine pollution:

- ▶ **Specific goal 1:** Management of land-based sources of sea pollution including inland waters (4 Measures with +15 Activities)
- ▶ **Specific goal 2:** Management of sea-based sources of pollution (6 Measures with 14 Activities)

and four themes are cross related to the first two:

- ▶ **Specific goal 3:** Harmonisation of the legal framework with EU frame for waste management (5 Measures with 20 Activities)

- ▶ **Specific goal 4:** Harmonisation of plastic waste management with the EU Plastics and Circular Economy Strategy (5 Measures with 24 Activities)
- ▶ **Specific goal 5:** Development of education and outreach activities (4 Measures with 18 Activities)
- ▶ **Specific goal 6:** Strengthened capacity of subjects of concern in marine protection in WB6 region(2 Measures with 7 Activities)

PART I: Desk Study



Chapter 1. Introduction

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is the growth strategy for the region that aims to tackle the challenges of climate change and green transition and assist the Western Balkans Six (WB6) to align environmental regulations with the European acquis. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is based on the European Green Deal and the related Economic and Investment Plan for the WB6.

As stated in the COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans no. SWD (2020) 223, published on 06/10/2020:

- ▶ The generation of waste¹⁰ in the Western Balkans Six has been increasing steadily over the last years due to economic development and increased consumption, currently being at around 1000kg/capita. While this is still lower than the EU average of 1700kg/capita, the very low recycling rates (below 3%, in comparison to the EU average of 44%) result in higher per capita amount of waste not being recycled.
- ▶ Important efforts and investments are needed to establish proper functioning waste management centres and recycling facilities, so that the WB6 can use the existing resources currently ending up in landfills (over 90% landfilling rate in the region) or incinerators. The Western Balkans Six will need to implement effective separate collection schemes for at least paper, metal, plastic, glass, and bio-waste, which are key to quality recycling, and establish built-in economic incentives to reduce waste generation (e.g. pay-as-you-throw schemes) and better waste treatment (e.g. landfill/incineration charges), as well as efficient Extended Producers Responsibility Schemes.
- ▶ The Western Balkans Six will need to align with the single-use plastic legislation and to fully implement the modernised EU waste legislation, including its recycling and landfill reduction targets.
- ▶ The rivers in the Western Balkans Six carry disproportionate loads of litter to the Adriatic and to other seas. Poor practices of solid waste management, lack of infrastructure and awareness of the public at large about the consequences of their actions aggravate substantially the situation. Wastewater treatment in the region is very poor or non-existent.

Litter from fishing and shipping in the Adriatic Sea further add to the problem. Marine and coastal plastic litter is a critical issue for the region where coastal tourism is an important source of income.

10 Brussels, 6.10.2020 SWD(2020) 223 final COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (COM(2020) 641 final

Report Initiatives as stated in **Guidelines**:¹¹

- ▶ Support the region in improving the sustainability of production of raw materials;
- ▶ Work towards integrating the Western Balkans Six into the EU industrial supply chains for key industrial ecosystems such as renewable energy, textiles, tourism, digital, mobility-transport-automotive, and energy-intensive industries;
- ▶ Support the region in developing circular economy strategies looking at the entire lifecycle of products, waste prevention, modern waste management and recycling, re-use, repair, and remanufacturing;
- ▶ Consumer targeted initiatives to raise awareness of consumers waste, separate collection, and sustainable consumption;
- ▶ Assist the region in preparing and implementing waste prevention programmes, waste management and recycling strategies, and programmes for re-use, repair and manufacturing;
- ▶ Continue supporting the construction and maintenance of waste management infrastructure;
- ▶ Develop a regional agreement on the prevention of plastic pollution, including specifically addressing the priority issue of marine litter;
- ▶ Support the establishment of sustainable development and innovation policies for the WB6 via the implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategies.

.....
11 ibid

Chapter 2. EU policy

2.1. Plastics Strategy

The Plastics Strategy¹² is a key element of Europe's transition towards a carbon neutral and circular economy. It will contribute to reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement objectives and the EU's industrial policy objectives.

The EU's Plastics Strategy aims to transform the way plastic products are designed, produced, used, and recycled in the EU. However, they can have serious negative effects on the environment and human health.

Facts¹³

- ▶ **Almost 26 million tons of plastic waste is generated in Europe every year**
- ▶ **Around 80% of marine litter is plastic, with single-use plastic items representing 50% and fishing-related items representing 27% of the total**
- ▶ **87% of Europeans are worried about the impact of plastic products on the environment**

The EU adopted a European strategy for plastics¹⁴ in January 2018. It is part of the EU's circular economy action plan, and builds on existing measures to reduce plastic waste. The Plastics Strategy set out its vision for a circular plastics economy, made commitments for action at EU level and recommended measures to relevant authorities and industry. The Plastics Strategy includes the goal of making recycling profitable for business.

For a full list of actions and their timeline, see Annex I of the Plastics Strategy.

In the Plastics Strategy, local and regional authorities were encouraged to put in place well-designed EPR schemes and/or deposit systems for collecting discarded fishing gear and recycling agricultural plastics.¹⁵ This strategy lays the foundations to a new plastics economy, where the design and production of plastics and plastic products fully respect reuse, repair and recycling needs and more sustainable materials are developed and promoted. This will deliver greater added value and prosperity in Europe and boost innovation. It will curb plastic pollution and its adverse impact on our lives and the environment.

Specifically, key players should work together to:

- ▶ improve design and support innovation to make plastics and plastic products easier to recycle;

¹² https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/plastics-strategy_en

¹³ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/plastics_en

¹⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of regions, "A European Strategy for Plastics in a circular economy", COM(2018)28 final

¹⁵ <https://cms.law/en/int/expert-guides/plastics-and-packaging-laws/european-union>

- ▶ expand and improve the separate collection of plastic waste to ensure quality inputs to the recycling industry;
- ▶ expand and modernise the EU's sorting and recycling capacity;
- ▶ create viable markets for recycled and renewable plastics.

Other **policy areas** are also included, such as

- ▶ Chemicals
- ▶ Circular Economy
- ▶ Plastics
- ▶ Waste and recycling

Connected strategies are as follows

- ▶ European Green Deal
- ▶ Circular economy action plan
- ▶ European industrial strategy
- ▶ Chemicals strategy for sustainability
- ▶ Zero Pollution Action Plan
- ▶ Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

2.1.1. European regulatory framework on plastic waste management

Directive 94/62/EC as amended (the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive)¹⁶ aims to harmonise measures concerning the management of packaging and packaging waste in order, on the one hand, to prevent any impact thereof on the environment of all Member States as well as of third parties, or to reduce such impact, thereby ensuring a high level of environmental protection, and, on the other hand, to ensure the functioning of the internal market and to avoid obstacles to trade and distortion and restriction of competition within the Community. Since its amendment by Directive (EU) 2015/720, the Packaging Waste Directive contains specific provisions to reduce the use of light-weight plastic carrier bags and a definition of plastic and different types of plastic bags.

Waste reduction targets

The Waste Framework Directive, in force since July 2020, sets out rules for EU Member States (EU MS) to:

- ▶ increase the re-use and recycling of municipal waste by 55% by 2025
- ▶ set up separate collections of textiles and hazardous waste from households by 1 January 2025
- ▶ ensure bio-waste is either collected separately or recycled at source by 31 December 2023
- ▶ reach material-specific recycling targets by 2025 and 2030 for packaging

16 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/745707/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)745707_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/745707/EPRS_BRI(2023)745707_EN.pdf)

Amendment to Directive requires from EU Member States to take action to address the unsustainable consumption and use of lightweight plastic carrier bags. Such measures might include taxes or charges, reduction targets or outright bans.

The Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive requires EU MS to ensure that they have EPR schemes up and running for all packaging types by 2024.

Directive 2008/98/EC as amended (the Waste Framework Directive)¹⁷ sets out a legal framework for dealing with waste and includes the definitions of waste, recycling, and recovery; end-of-waste criteria; the polluter-pays principle; the concept of waste hierarchy; and the concept of extended producer responsibility (EPR). Producers of very lightweight plastic carrier bags must comply with EPR rules. They are also required to bear the cost of awareness campaigns, waste collection and the cleaning up of litter.

Directive (EU) 2019/904 (the Single-Use Plastics Directive)¹⁸ was adopted on 5 June 2019 to target the 10 single-use plastic products reportedly most often found on Europe's beaches and seas. The 10 items being addressed by the Directive are: cotton bud sticks; cutlery, plates, straws and stirrers; balloons and sticks for balloons; food containers; cups for beverages; beverage containers; cigarette butts; plastic bags; packets and wrappers; and wet wipes and sanitary items.

Directive (EU) 2019/904 requires that extended producer responsibility schemes are established for certain types of packaging including takeaway food containers, packets and wrappers, plastic drinks containers and drinks cups including covers and lids. It also requires that the producers of wet wipes, balloons and tobacco products cover certain costs, including those relating to awareness raising measures and cleaning up litter. For other single-use plastic products, the EU is focusing on limiting their use through

- ▶ reducing consumption through awareness-raising measures
- ▶ introducing design requirements, such as a requirement to connect caps to bottles
- ▶ introducing labelling requirements to inform consumers about the plastic content of products, disposal options that are to be avoided, and harm done to nature if the products are littered in the environment
- ▶ introducing waste management and clean-up obligations for producers, including Extended Producer Responsibility schemes

Specific targets include

- ▶ a 77% separate collection target for plastic bottles by 2025 – increasing to 90% by 2029
- ▶ incorporating 25% of recycled plastic in PET beverage bottles from 2025, and 30% in all plastic beverage bottles from 2030

On 31 May 2021 the Commission published guidelines on the interpretation and implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive.¹⁹

As from 17 October 2023, Regulation (EU) 2023/2055 restricts synthetic polymer microparticles on their own or intentionally added to mixtures with the aim of reducing the emission of microplastics

¹⁷ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/waste-framework-directive_en

¹⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/904/oj>

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_2709

in everyday products in order to protect the environment. The EU considers synthetic polymer particles smaller than 5 mm that are organic, insoluble and resistant to degradation to be microplastics. These types of particles are present in many products such as:

- ▶ glitter,
- ▶ facial scrubs and other types of cosmetics,
- ▶ detergents
- ▶ waxes, polishes and air fresheners,
- ▶ certain fertilisers, plant protection products and seeds treated with them, biocides,
- ▶ other agricultural and horticultural products other than those listed above
- ▶ certain medical devices covered by Regulation (EU) 2017/745
- ▶ granular infill for use in synthetic sports surfaces (such as rubber substrate for artificial turf sports surfaces).

The Industrial Emissions Directive (IED)²⁰ is the main piece of EU legislation addressing industrial pollution. The Commission has proposed to update the directive to support industries in their efforts towards the EU's 2050 zero pollution ambition, notably by supporting circular economy techniques and investments. In 2022, the Commission adopted proposals to revise the IED and the E-PRTR. The proposals aim to improve the Directive by increasing the focus on energy, water and material efficiency and reuse, in addition to promoting the use of safer, less toxic, or non-toxic chemicals in industrial processes.

The revision of IED provides a framework for the operation of EU industrial installations that is in line with the European Green Deal and the Zero-pollution action plan.

Other pieces of EU legislation include also:

- ▶ **Directive on liability for defective products (Product Liability Directive);**
- ▶ **Directive 2009/125/EC for eco-design requirements for energy-related products;**
- ▶ **Single-Use Plastics Directive,**
- ▶ **EU Plastics Strategy, the Circular Economy Action Plan, etc**

2.2. Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSDF)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive MSFD²¹ (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2008) provides the EU legal framework for the protection of European Seas. It requires the application of an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services.

The Directive sets out 11 illustrative qualitative descriptors. The Directive requires EU MS to develop marine strategies to achieve, or maintain where it exists, 'good environmental status'. Such status should have been achieved by 2020. The marine strategies comprise regular assessments of the ma-

²⁰ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/industrial-emissions-and-safety/industrial-emissions-directive_en

²¹ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/marine-environment_en

rine environment, setting objectives and targets, establishing monitoring programmes and putting in place measures to improve the state of marine waters.

The measures should also include spatial protection measures, such as a coherent and representative network of marine protected areas. All these actions must be done in close coordination with neighbours at regional sea level.

Marine litter is included as one of the Descriptors for the **Good Environmental Status (GES)** of the European Marine Waters²² (see Descriptor 10 in European Commission, 2010). The revised European Commission Decision COM/2017/848 (European Commission, 2017a) provides details for the assessment of litter in the environment.²³

Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Adriatic Marine²⁴ and River Waters is defined by 11 ecological objectives which are

- EO1 – Biodiversity (marine habitats, marine mammals, reptiles and seabirds)
- EO2 - Non-indigenous species
- EO3 – Harvest of commercially-exploited fish and shellfish
- EO4 - Food webs
- EO5 - Eutrophication
- EO6 - Sea-floor integrity
- EO7 - Hydrography
- EO8 – Coastal ecosystems and landscapes
- EO9 – Contaminants
- EO10 – Marine litter
- EO11 - Energy, including underwater noise

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive builds on the existing EU legislation and covers specific elements of the marine environment not addressed in other policies. Some of the key legislation and policies directly relevant to the Directive are²⁵

- ▶ [The Water Framework Directive](#) - sets the goal of achieving Good Status for all EU surface and groundwaters by 2015, tying in with the goal of Good Environmental Status under the Marine Directive.
- ▶ [Bathing Water Directive 2006/7/EC](#), complementing the Water Framework Directive, is one of several pieces of EU law that protect water:
 - ▼ the Environmental Quality Standards Directive,
 - ▼ the Groundwater Directive,
 - ▼ the Nitrates Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive

22 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/marine-environment/descriptors-under-marine-strategy-framework-directive_en

23 Marine Directive defines Good Environmental Status (GES) as “The environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive”

24 <https://www.adriatic.eco/ges-good-environmental-status-of-the-adriatic/>

25 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/marine-environment_en

- ▶ [The Birds and Habitats Directives](#) - Europe's central laws on nature conservation, providing special protection for key sites including marine.
- ▶ [The Common Fisheries Policy](#) sets out a collaborative approach to managing the EU's shared seas and fisheries. It lays down rules to ensure Europe's fisheries are sustainable and do not damage the marine environment, thereby contributing to achieving good environmental status.
- ▶ [The Blue economy and maritime spatial planning](#) - setting out the policy framework for use of maritime space and resources.
- ▶ [REACH Regulation](#) - aims to improve the protection of human health and the environment through better and earlier identification of environmental risk chemicals pose.
- ▶ [Action plan²⁶: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries](#), bridging the fisheries and environment worlds for a transition to sustainable ways of fishing.
- ▶ [The Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive](#) – regulates one of the main sources of water pollution that can find its way to coastal waters if left uncollected and untreated.
- ▶ [The Waste Framework Directive](#) provides important mechanisms for the removal of litter and the improvement of water quality in line with the requirements of MSFD.
- ▶ [Strategic Environmental Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Directives](#),
- ▶ [Port Reception Facilities Directive](#),
- ▶ [Ship-source Pollution Directive](#), and many others

When developing their marine strategies, EU Member States are required to coordinate with each other and third parties through existing regional cooperation structures.

Achieving the objectives of the MSDF contributes to the following instruments:

- ▶ [The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#) - UNCLOS provides the legal framework for contemporary principles of protection of the marine environment, including the ecosystem-based approach, the precautionary approach and sustainable development.
- ▶ [The Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) - The CBD aims to halt biodiversity loss, ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, and to create a global network of marine protected areas (MPAs).
- ▶ [Sustainable Development Goal 14](#) - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Although most of Europe's bathing waters are classified as being in excellent condition, pollution of surface and groundwater remains significant, and may be exacerbated by the changing climate. Improving water resilience for people and for the environment in coming years will be key.

26 Document 52023DC0102, COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS EU Action Plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries, COM/2023/102 final

The [quality of coastal bathing waters is generally better than that of rivers and lakes](#). In 2023, around 89% of coastal bathing waters in the EU were classified as excellent, compared with just under 79% of inland bathing waters.

Increased heavy rainfall linked to climate change could impact bathing water quality negatively, potentially increasing health risks for bathers.

2.3. Green Deal

The European Green Deal (EGD)²⁷ set the blueprint for this transformational change. All 27 EU Member States committed to turning the EU into the first climate neutral continent by 2050. To get there, they pledged to reduce emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. To build a Healthy Planet for All, the European Green Deal calls for the EU to better monitor, report, prevent and remedy air, water, soil and safer consumer products design to minimise related pollution, among other things.

The main goals of the EGD²⁸ are a net carbon neutral European Union by 2050 and a decoupling of economic growth and resource use. The EGD is not a law, but a general policy strategy, outlining the ambitions and goals in different policy sectors. For its implementation, existing regulations and standards will be revised over the next few years and new laws and directives will be developed and implemented. There are eight key areas that make up the Green Deal:

1. Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050
2. Supplying clean, affordable, secure energy
3. Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy
4. Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way
5. A zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment
6. Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity
7. Farm to Fork: a fair, healthy, and environmentally friendly food system
8. Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility

The European Green Deal is not a single strategy that provides the solution for Europe's many environmental and climate related challenges. Rather, it presents a collection of targets, intentions and objectives that will be implemented over the next ten years. It provides the overarching framework for the necessary green transition.

2.3.1. Circular economy

A circular economy²⁹ is defined as an economy 'where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste is minimised'.

27 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/delivering-european-green-deal_en

28 https://www.esdn.eu/fileadmin/ESDN_Reports/ESDN_Report_2_2020.pdf

29 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy,

The circular economy³⁰ is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended. In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum. When a product reaches the end of its life, its materials are kept within the economy wherever possible thanks to recycling. These can be productively used again and again, thereby creating further value.

The circular economy will

- ▶ enable a healthier planet and reduce pollution
- ▶ reduce pressure on natural resources such as water and land use
- ▶ reduce emissions to help the EU become the first climate-neutral continent
- ▶ create new business opportunities and local quality jobs
- ▶ enable more resilient value chains

Decoupling economic growth from resource use and shifting to circular systems in production and consumption is key to achieving EU climate neutrality by 2050. Circular economy action plan adopted in 2020 features over 35 action points. Measures that will be introduced under the new action plan aim to³¹

- ▶ make sustainable products the norm in the EU
- ▶ empower consumers and public buyers
- ▶ focus on the sectors that use most resources and where the potential for circularity is high such as: electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and buildings, food, water and nutrients
- ▶ ensure less waste
- ▶ make circularity work for people, regions, and cities
- ▶ lead global efforts on circular economy

The EU is taking action to **tackle plastic pollution and marine litter**³² to accelerate the transition to a circular and resource-efficient plastics economy. Specific rules and targets apply to certain areas, including single-use plastics, plastic packaging, microplastics, and soon bio-based, biodegradable, and compostable plastics.

There, it identified plastics as a key priority and committed itself to 'prepare a strategy addressing the challenges posed by plastics throughout the value chain and taking into account their entire life-cycle'. In 2017, the Commission confirmed it would focus on plastics production and use and work towards the goal of ensuring that all plastic packaging is recyclable by 2030. The EU's Plastics Strategy, as part of the circular economy action plan, outlines specific actions in more detail.

Achieving a climate neutral and circular economy requires the full **mobilisation of industry**. Under the 2020 circular economy action plan, the Commission is working on³³:

COM(2015)614 final, p.1.

30 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits>

31 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en

32 https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/plastics_en

33 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/circular-economy/>

- ▶ mandatory requirements for recycled content and waste reduction for key products
- ▶ a new policy framework on biobased, biodegradable, and compostable plastics to clarify where these plastics can bring genuine environmental benefits
- ▶ measures to address the presence of microplastics unintentionally released into the environment, with the aim of reducing plastic litter

On 27 May 2024,³⁴ the Council adopted the **Eco-design regulation**, which sets requirements for sustainable products for almost all kind of goods placed in the EU market.

Those requirements include:

- ▶ product durability, reusability, upgradability and reparability
- ▶ rules on the presence of substances that inhibit circularity
- ▶ remanufacturing and recycling possibilities
- ▶ carbon and environmental footprints
- ▶ energy and resource efficiency

The new regulation also introduces a ban on the destruction of unsold textiles and footwear.

2.3.1.1. Monitoring of Circular economy

The European Commission has set up a monitoring framework³⁵ to keep track of progress towards a circular economy. This framework provides a holistic view as it:

- ▶ measures direct and indirect benefits of 'becoming circular';
- ▶ values the contribution of a circular economy in living well within the limits of the planet; and
- ▶ addresses energy and material supply risks.

It consists of 5 thematic sections with a total of 11 statistical indicators, some of which have additional sub-indicators. In some cases, there are policy targets which should be achieved in the future, and the indicators monitor progress towards these targets. The current monitoring framework is a revision of the original framework which was set up in 2018.

The indicators were selected to capture the main elements of a circular economy. The 11 indicators, for which data is available in database³⁶, are divided into the following 5 thematic areas:

1. Thematic area: **Production and consumption**

- ▶ material consumption
- ▶ green public procurement
- ▶ waste generation

2. Thematic area 2: **Waste management**

- ▶ overall recycling rates
- ▶ recycling rates for specific waste streams

³⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/circular-economy/>

³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/circular-economy/information-data>

³⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/circular-economy/information-data#Production%20and%20consumption>

3. Thematic area 3: *Secondary raw materials*

- ▶ contribution of recycled materials to raw materials demand
- ▶ trade of recyclable raw materials between EU Member States and with the rest of the world

4. Thematic area 4: *Competitiveness and innovation*

- ▶ private investments, jobs and gross value added
- ▶ innovation

5. Thematic area 5: *Global sustainability and resilience*

- ▶ global sustainability from circular economy
- ▶ resilience from circular economy

2.3.2. Sustainable blue economy

The European Green Deal and the Recovery Plan for Europe³⁷ will define the European economy for many years, or even decades.

To fully embed the **blue economy**³⁸ into the Green Deal and the recovery strategy, the Commission has adopted a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU. The detailed agenda for the blue economy should help achieve the European Green Deal's objectives, and complement other recent Commission initiatives on biodiversity, food, mobility, security, data and more.

For example,

- ▶ the blue economy contributes to climate change mitigation by developing offshore renewable energy, decarbonising maritime transport and greening ports;
- ▶ it will make the economy more circular by renewing the standards for fishing gear design, for ship recycling and for decommissioning of offshore platforms;
- ▶ developing green infrastructure in coastal areas will help preserve biodiversity and landscapes, while benefitting tourism and the coastal economy.

The new approach provides coherence across the blue economy sectors, facilitates their coexistence, and looks for synergies in the maritime space, without damaging the environment. It also underlines the need for investment in research, skills, and innovation.

2.4. Green skills³⁹

The transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy requires systemic changes that will result not only in new products and services but also in changes in production processes and business models. This greening of the economy will inevitably change the skills required and the tasks involved in many of the existing occupations.

³⁷ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/ocean/blue-economy/sustainable-blue-economy_en

³⁸ <https://atlantic-maritime-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/new-approach-sustainable-blue-economy-eu>

³⁹ Radovanovic, N. and Stevanovic Carapina, H., Green transition and Smart Specialisation in the Western Balkans, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2024, JRC136482 (to be published)

According to UNIDO⁴⁰ definition: **green skills** are the knowledge, abilities, values, and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society. Green General Skill index identified four groups of work tasks that are especially important for green occupations:

- ▶ Engineering and technical skills: hard skills encompassing competences involved with the design, construction and assessment of technology usually mastered by engineers and technicians. This know-how is needed for eco-buildings, renewable energy design and energy-saving research and development (R&D) projects.
- ▶ Science skills: competences stemming from bodies of knowledge broad in scope and essential to innovation activities, for example, physics and biology. These skills are especially in high demand in each stage of value chains and in the utility sector, which provides basic amenities such as water, sewage services and electricity.
- ▶ Operation management skills: know-how related to change in organisational structure required to support green activities and an integrated view of the firm through life-cycle management, lean production, and cooperation with external players, including customers. Such skills are important, for example, for sales engineers, climate change analysts, sustainability specialists, chief sustainability officers and transportation planners.
- ▶ Monitoring skills: technical and legal aspects of business activities that are fundamentally different from the remit of engineering or of science. They refer to skills required to assess the observance of technical criteria and legal standards. Examples are environmental compliance inspectors, nuclear monitoring technicians, emergency management directors and legal assistants.

In addition to these skills, a range of soft skills are also considered to be increasingly important, not only for green skills but generally for “skills of the future”, including also those necessary for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Skills related to design thinking, creativity, adaptability, resilience, and even empathy are regarded as critical.

The European Commission⁴¹ has launched the **Pact for Skills**, a shared engagement model for skills development in Europe. Companies, workers, authorities at individual level, regional and local authorities, social partners, cross-industry and sectoral organisations, education and training providers, chambers of commerce and employment services all have a key role to play.

To support a fair and resilient recovery and deliver on the ambitions of the green and digital transitions and of the EU Industrial and SME Strategies, the Commission invites public and private organisations to join forces and take concrete action to upskill and reskill people in Europe.

2.5. Green procurement

Green Public Procurement (GPP)⁴² is defined in the Communication (COM -2008- 400) “Public procurement for a better environment” as “a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured”.

40 <https://www.unido.org/stories/what-are-green-skills>

41 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en>

42 https://green-business.ec.europa.eu/green-public-procurement_en

More responsible purchasing⁴³ can influence the market towards the adoption of more sustainable practices, provide the industry with incentives for developing sustainable technologies and products and can stimulate the demand for more sustainable goods and services. By promoting and using GPP, sustainable consumption and production can thus be strengthened and the efforts towards a circular economy for plastics and less plastic pollution supported.

GPP policies and criteria can for example include the mandatory use of recycled plastics, can stimulate the purchase of reusable products and packaging or can support eco-labelling and similar environmental schemes, which guide consumers and help them to make purchase decisions based on environmental and social criteria.

'Rethinking Plastics' works on strengthening green procurement policies, processes and the cooperation between the EU and Japan and Singapore specifically.

43 rethinkingplastics.eu/key-areas/green-public-procurement

Chapter 3 International Conventions

Within the different regional⁴⁴ seas surrounding Europe, **the Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs)** engage neighbours for the conservation of their common marine environment. Their work areas cover maritime activities, pressures resulting from them, as well as biodiversity and ecosystems protection. The RSCs implement coordinated monitoring programmes in the regional sea basins, and perform joint assessments of the state of the environment.

UNEP launched its Regional Seas Programme in 1974 with the aim of protecting the marine environment using a “shared seas” approach to address the accelerating degradation of the world’s Ocean and coastal areas. More than 143 parties have joined 18 Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans for sustainable management and use of the marine and coastal environment.

There are **four Regional Sea Conventions** which aim to protect the marine environment and bring together EU Member States and the neighbourhood that share marine waters:

- ▶ **Mediterranean Sea,**
- ▶ **Black Sea,**
- ▶ **North-East Atlantic, and**
- ▶ **Baltic Sea.**

In recent years, heightened understanding and awareness of plastic pollution has prompted many international organisations to take action to prevent the uncontrolled spread of plastics in the environment.

3.1. Barcelona Convention- The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution⁴⁵

The Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) was adopted on 16 February 1976 in Barcelona and entered into force in 1978.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention agree to individually or jointly take all appropriate measures in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the Protocols in force to which they are party to prevent, abate, combat and to the fullest possible extent eliminate pollution of the Mediterranean Sea Area and to protect and enhance the marine environment in that Area so as to contribute towards its sustainable development. They cooperate in the formulation and adoption of Protocols, prescribing agreed measures, procedures and standards for the implementation of this Convention.

⁴⁴ <https://water.europa.eu/marine/countries-and-regional-seas/regional-conventions>

⁴⁵ <https://www.unep.org/uneppmap/who-we-are/barcelona-convention-and-protocols>

Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP): The MAP was the first regional seas initiative. Spearheaded under the auspices of UNEP, it was approved in 1975 by Mediterranean states and the European Commission as the institutional framework for addressing marine environmental degradation in the region. The Convention was subsequently amended in 1995 and renamed the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. The aim is to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment while boosting regional and Individual level plans to achieve sustainable development.

The Mediterranean Sea is polluted by some 730 tons of plastic waste every day, and the Mediterranean region is warming 20% faster than the global average. The Barcelona Convention and its seven Protocols⁴⁶ adopted in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP)⁴⁷ constitute the principal regional legally binding Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA) in the Mediterranean. Protocols are as follows:

- ▶ Dumping Protocol
- ▶ Prevention and Emergency Protocol
- ▶ Land-Based Sources Protocol
- ▶ Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity Protocol
- ▶ Offshore Protocol
- ▶ Hazardous Wastes Protocol
- ▶ Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol

The UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2027 was adopted by the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22, 7-10 December 2021, Antalya, Türkiye).

PROGRAMME of work 2024-2025 refer to : 1. [Towards a Pollution and Litter Free Mediterranean Sea and Coast Embracing Circular Economy](#)

The elimination and improved management of marine and coastal pollution from sea and land-based sources, using ecosystems-based management, remains a core priority for the Mediterranean through cooperation and partnerships for effective implementation of the Protocols addressing pollution, the thematic Regional Plans, Strategies, and NAPs.

Whilst levels of major pollutants show a decreasing trend, important issues remain, especially for heavy metals in coastal sediments, as well as in known hotspots associated with urban and industrial coastal areas and wastewater. There is a recognised need to also assess the threat emerging pollutants, such as plastic additives, cosmetics, plasticizers, microplastics, nanoparticles, and pharmaceuticals, to ecosystems and human health. In addition, further work will be undertaken regarding the impacts of underwater noise. Major attention is also needed regarding marine litter, as the Mediterranean is one of the areas in the world most highly affected by marine litter due to an increase in plastic use, littering, inadequate and ineffective waste management, the lack of proper separate collection and recycling, unus-

46 <https://www.unepmap/who-we-are/contracting-parties/>

47 <https://www.rempec.org/en/knowledge-centre/online-catalogue/e-fpm-2023-wg-56-6-rempec-activities-and-deliverables-of-the-draft-unep-map-pow-2024-25a.pdf/@download/file/E-FPM-2023-WG-56-6-REMPEC-activities-and-deliverables-of-the-draft-UNEP-MAP-PoW-2024-25a.pdf>

tainable consumption patterns, high pressures from tourism and shipping, coupled with significant riverine inputs.

Programme 1 includes the following strategic objectives linked to the Pollution control related Protocols of the Barcelona Convention:

1. To eliminate to the extent possible, prevent, reduce, monitor and control selected/regulated pollutant inputs, oil discharges and spills;
2. To prevent, reduce, monitor, and control marine litter generation and its impact on the coastal and marine environment;
3. To consolidate the development and implementation of programmes for circular economy businesses (including the polluter pays principle) addressing main sources of pollution, including plastics, and promote SCP in key economic sectors and lifestyles which are upstream drivers of chemicals and plastic pollution.

The latest Conference of the Parties was held in December 2023 (COP23).

3.2. Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution⁴⁸

In March 2022, at the resumed fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-5.2), a historic resolution was adopted *to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment*.

The resolution (5/14)⁴⁹ requested the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to convene an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop “the instrument,” which is **to be based on a comprehensive approach that addresses the full life cycle of plastic, including its production, design, and disposal**.

The INC began its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition to complete the negotiations by the end of 2024

3.3. International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)⁵⁰

The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) is the main international convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes.

The MARPOL Convention⁵¹ was adopted on 2 November 1973 at IMO. The Convention includes regulations aimed at preventing and minimising pollution from ships - both accidental pollution and

⁴⁸ <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution>

⁴⁹ UNEA Resolution 5/14 entitled “End plastic pollution: Towards an international legally binding instrument” UNEP/PP/OEWG/1/INF/1

⁵⁰ <https://www.international-maritime-rescue.org/>

⁵¹ [https://www.imo.org/en/about/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of-Pollution-from-Ships-\(MARPOL\).aspx](https://www.imo.org/en/about/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of-Pollution-from-Ships-(MARPOL).aspx)

that from routine operations - and currently includes six technical Annexes. Special Areas with strict controls on operational discharges are included in most Annexes.

- ▶ Annex I Regulations for the Prevention of Pollution by Oil (entered into force 2 October 1983)
- ▶ Annex II Regulations for the Control of Pollution by Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk (entered into force 2 October 1983)
- ▶ Annex III Prevention of Pollution by Harmful Substances Carried by Sea in Packaged Form (entered into force 1 July 1992)
- ▶ Annex IV Prevention of Pollution by Sewage from Ships (entered into force 27 September 2003)
- ▶ Annex V Prevention of Pollution by Garbage from Ships (entered into force 31 December 1988)
- ▶ Annex VI Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships (entered into force 19 May 2005)

Should MARPOL Annex V be complied with in full, all operational waste generated while at sea will be delivered to port reception facilities for disposal. In addition, the London Convention and Protocol ban any disposal of plastic wastes at sea or marine internal waters. These instruments, including the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, will be complemented if residual wastes are minimised and plastic wastes have potential end-markets.

3.4. Basel Convention

The overarching objective of the **Basel Convention**⁵² is to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes. Its scope of application covers a wide range of wastes defined as "hazardous wastes" based on their origin and/or composition and their characteristics, as well as two types of wastes defined as "other wastes" - household waste and incinerator ash.

The provisions of the Convention centre around the following principal aims:

- ▶ the reduction of hazardous waste generation and the promotion of environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, wherever the place of disposal;
- ▶ the restriction of intraregional movements of hazardous wastes except where it is perceived to be in accordance with the principles of environmentally sound management; and
- ▶ a regulatory system applying to cases where intraregional movements are permissible.

Recently, the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes has moved up on the international political agenda in the context of environmental governance. This is in no small part due to what has become known as the "synergies" process between the Basel, Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The conventions have joined forces to better address the challenge of environmentally sound management of hazardous substances at different stages of their life cycle.

52 <https://www.basel.int/TheConvention/Overview/Milestones/tabid/2270/Default.aspx>

In May 2019, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention adopted amendments that require exporter to obtain prior informed consent from the importer before exporting hazardous plastic waste and plastic waste that requires special consideration.

A Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP)⁵³ has been established under the Basel Convention to mobilise business, government, academic and civil society resources, interests, and expertise to improve and promote the environmentally sound management (ESM) of plastic waste at the global, regional and individual levels and to prevent and minimise its generation.

The goal of PWP is to improve and promote the ESM of plastic waste at the global, regional, and individual levels and to prevent and minimise its generation so as to, among other things, reduce significantly and in the long-term eliminate the discharge of plastic waste and microplastics into the environment, in particular the marine environment.

3.5. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea⁵⁴

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was adopted in 1982. It lays down a comprehensive regime of law and order in the world's oceans and seas establishing rules governing all uses of the oceans and their resources.

The Convention provides a general obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment (Article 192). This has been recognised as customary international law and all, whether party to the Convention or not, must comply to the best of their ability. The Regional Action Plan proposed in this report will complement this obligation, as well as the following:

- ▶ Article 207 - Pollution from land-based sources,
- ▶ Article 208 - Pollution from seabed activities subject to Individual level jurisdictions,
- ▶ Article 210 - Pollution by dumping,
- ▶ Article 211 - Pollution from vessels, and
- ▶ Article 212 - Pollution from or through the atmosphere.

3.6. The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (PoPs)⁵⁵

By taking a whole life cycle approach, including associated chemicals and waste, a new global agreement also complements **the Stockholm Convention** through long-term prevention of toxins originated from POPs chemicals re-entering the market via recycling and reuse processes (Article 6d(iii)). A new global agreement must therefore aim to close these gaps where possible, while complementing relevant measures undertaken within the mandate of the Stockholm Convention.

53 <https://www.basel.int/Implementation/Plasticwaste/PlasticWastePartnership/tabid/8096/Default.aspx>

54 <https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/legal/pages/unitednationsconventiononthelawofthesea.aspx#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Convention%20on,the%20oceans%20and%20their%20resources>

55 <https://www.pops.int/>

3.7. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)⁵⁶

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the international legal instrument for “the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources” that has been ratified by 196 nations. The conservation of biodiversity is a common concern of humankind. CBD covers biodiversity at all levels: ecosystems, species, and genetic resources. It also covers biotechnology, including through the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. In fact, it covers all possible domains that are directly or indirectly related to biodiversity and its role in development, ranging from science, politics and education to agriculture, business, culture and much more.

The UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP) is the most significant conference on biodiversity in a decade. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was adopted during the 15th meeting of the COP held in 2022. The framework provides a strategic vision and a global roadmap for the conservation, protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has for several years considered plastic pollution as a risk to species and habitats and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) has outlined reducing pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, by preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution including implementation of strategic visions and plans of the relevant biodiversity related agreements and processes for the BDTF⁵⁷ members (at the global and regional level) and Roadmap for development of the Western Balkans Six Biodiversity Strategic Plan for the BDTF.

⁵⁶ <https://www.un.org/ldcportal/content/convention-biological-diversity-and-its-protocols#:~:text=The%20Convention%20on%20Biological%20Diversity,the%20utilization%20of%20genetic%20resources>

⁵⁷ BDTF - Biodiversity Task Force

Chapter 4. Western Balkans Six

The Western Balkans Six⁵⁸ is a designation used for a region which includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The region, considered mountainous, includes the Dinaric Alps Mountain range, which stretches across Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, , Kosovo*, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The region retains some of Europe's richest areas with regard to natural habitats, biological diversity, karst phenomena, and lakes and rivers.

Descriptions⁵⁹ of the typology and water bodies have been completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, while the process has been initiated in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia.

The Balkans is an area surrounded by the Adriatic, Ionian and Black seas.

People are mainly engaged in activities within weather and climate related sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and supporting services. WB6 have a common goal of increasing income per capita, while reducing the percentage of unemployment.

4.1. Western Balkans Six Regular Economic Report

The Regular Economic Report (RER)⁶⁰ covers economic developments, prospects, and economic policies in the Western Balkans Six: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Western Balkans Six have seen their resilience tested over the last three years.

Against the background of the lasting effects of shocks from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, sticky inflation, and tighter financial conditions, global demand has been weakening, and this has a divergent impact across the Western Balkans Six. On the one hand, the slowdown in global demand contributed to weaker than expected performance of industrial production in the whole European Union (EU) and in the WB6.

Reforms are needed to consolidate the recovery towards sustainable growth, while negotiations with the EU hold the potential to bolster prospects in the Western Balkans Six. The energy crisis has highlighted the need to accelerate the green transition across Europe, including in the Western Balkans Six, and with a focus on key sectors, such as agriculture.

Reforms aimed at increasing market competition, attracting higher quality investments, and addressing barriers that limit labour force participation (especially amongst women) also hold the potential to boost economic growth in the region. Accelerating regional integration would also help accelerate income convergence.

58 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=SWD:2020:223:FIN>

59 International Conference Adriatic Biodiversity Protection AdriBioPro2022 13-17 June 2022, Kotor, Montenegro
Book of Abstracts

60 World Bank Group: Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No.24 | Fall 2023 Toward Sustainable Growth

4.1.1. SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)⁶¹ contribute to the economic performance and sustainable and inclusive development of societies. SMEs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye (pre-EU accession) account for almost three quarters of private-sector employment and generate around 60% of private-sector value added.

*Progress was made in SMEs' greening through new financial incentives*⁶²

Since 2019, financial incentives for greening available to SMEs have been multiplied, albeit unevenly across the region. During the same period, the average regional share of SMEs offering green products or services increased by 5 percentage points, to 25%, approaching the EU average of 32%. Most SMEs took at least one action to become more resource-efficient, often minimising waste or saving energy or water. While the role of green funds in supporting SME greening efforts has grown, through dedicated programmes and credit lines, they remain dependent on external financial support. Environmental aspects have rarely been included in post-COVID recovery programmes, pointing to a lost opportunity to enhance SME greening.

While SMEs are receiving more support to help grow exports and shift to higher value-added activities, a more systematic approach is needed.

Expanded regional co-operation represents a unique opportunity for Western Balkans Six to scale up and boost growth by making the most of intensified economic integration. Through resource- and knowledge-sharing networks, together with an enhanced regional trade, they are more likely to increase their productivity and competitiveness. Strengthened economic integration will also result in greater resilience to external shocks.

4.2. Western Balkans Six: State of Environment

The Western Balkans Six⁶³ is highly diverse in terms of its ecosystems, ethnic groups, religions, cultures, economies and geographies, the latter of which includes four of Europe's bio-geographical areas: Mediterranean, Central European, Alpine and Pannonic.

Several factors have contributed to environmental degradation in WB6 region in the face of economic growth, industrial development, and modern consumption patterns. These include socio-economic factors such as weak or recovering economies with limited budgets for addressing issues of environmental protection, insufficient environmental regulation, or implementation, limited public participation and poverty. Limited access to cleaner technology and environmental information and political tensions have also contributed to environmental degradation in the region, leading to the pollution of soil, air and water in the WB6.

61 SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Türkiye2022: Assessing the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe

62 https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/61/

63 Sida's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change 2019; Western Balkans Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief, www.sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se

The following areas are considered the key environmental challenges at the WB6⁶⁴ level:

- ▶ Threats to biodiversity
- ▶ Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- ▶ Degradation of water resources
- ▶ High levels of air pollution
- ▶ Infrastructure development that does not consider sustainability issues
- ▶ Contamination of soil and water
- ▶ Agriculture – trends towards more intensive farming
- ▶ Waste and recycling - poorly enforced legislation
- ▶ Mining, environmental and security concerns as well as potential intraregional risks

Despite significant improvements in the alignment of the climate and GHG emissions monitoring and reporting legislation and the good progress in the areas of air and water pollution in the latest two years, the EU acquis implementation is still lagging in WB6.

As in many parts of Europe, the natural wealth of the Western Balkans Six⁶⁵ is under pressure. Urban sprawl, infrastructure development, over-exploitation of forests and water are just some of the growing threats. While some progress has been made on protecting natural areas, many challenges remain.

- ▶ Pollution – especially air pollution, which is amongst the highest in Europe – is taking a toll on human health and having a negative effect on the environment.
- ▶ Lakes, rivers and coastal areas suffer from agriculture and urban wastewater discharge. This increases the risk of toxic algae, with costs for tourism and fisheries.
- ▶ Land use is changing – agricultural land is being abandoned as people move to the cities and the coasts, causing increasing urban sprawl and loss of habitats. This leads to reduced biodiversity and weaker ecosystem resilience.
- ▶ Municipal authorities in towns and cities are struggling to dispose of the increasing amounts of waste generated.

The region's natural assets need to be safeguarded, not only to protect its environmental wealth but also to harness its great economic potential. Eco-businesses, sustainable tourism, and organic food production are not only good for the environment but generate new jobs, new markets and new business opportunities.

4.2.1. Protected areas

The number and size of protected areas (PA) in the region has been increasing, although the share of protected land is still low compared to EU targets for the Natura 2000 network.⁶⁶ In SEE some protected areas have recently been established or are under preparation in an intraregional context,

64 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=SWD:2020:223:FIN>

65 <https://webalkans.eu/bs/themes/environment/environmental-protection/>

66 https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-45843-0_18

including: the Neretva River Delta, Skadar Lake, Ohrid Lake, Prespa Lake, the Prokletije mountains, Djerdap Park, the Balkan and Tara Mountains, and the Danube River.

All WB6 have begun cooperating on conservation issues to some degree in accordance with various European and other relevant conventions. Two widely known networks are the Emerald Network, working under the Bern Convention¹⁰, and the Natura 2000 network working under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The systems and resources for efficient management of protected areas are still developing, and where they are insufficient, poor enforcement and negative trends can endanger the important biodiversity they are meant to preserve. Inadequate local participation in establishing protected areas, and insufficient or non-existing dialogue and lack of transparency in management are obstacles to coming to satisfactory management solutions and achieving successful intraregional cooperation.

4.2.2. Contamination of soil and water

Soil contamination has contributed significantly to loss of livelihoods, resulting in unemployment and poverty, health problems, land abandonment and depopulation of rural areas.⁶⁷

Inadequate municipal and industrial waste disposal and treatment, and substandard storage of chemicals from industrial activities are the predominant sources of soil contamination in the region, and illegal disposal practices are widespread. Extraction industries have left behind a legacy of contamination and degradation, with adequate policies and resources for clean-up lacking.

In most cases relevant authorities are responsible for carrying out remediation measures linked to historic pollution, but the huge financial liability attached to any systematic rehabilitation programme means that no substantial progress has been made. Freshwater quality varies significantly across the region, which holds both pristine mountain streams and rivers polluted by industrial and urban wastewater as well as agricultural run-off.

Water is connecting the region, as all river basins and many of the aquifers are shared. Water plays a major role for the energy sector (hydropower, cooling water), and the agricultural sector (in particular for North Macedonia). The water availability in the region varies significantly in the region, with Serbia, accounting for the flows in the Danube, having highest availability and North Macedonia the lowest which has furthermore faced a reduction of the annual values of the average discharges in the past years.

Water monitoring programmes in the Western Balkans Six⁶⁸

Water monitoring programmes in WB6 are at different levels of development as regards Water Framework Directive (WtFD) requirements. Since the WtFD came into effect in 2000, significant efforts in the EU and at regional and local levels have focused on the upgrade of water management in WB6, particularly to raise institutional capacity and improve water management systems, including water monitoring and status assessment. Transposition of relevant legislation has been made in all WB6

⁶⁷ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans SWD/2020/223 final

⁶⁸ Belis C. A., Djatkov D., Lettieri T., Jones A., Wojda P., Banja M., Muntean M., Paunović, M., Niegowska M., Marinov D., Poznanović G., Pozzoli L., Dobricic S., Zdruli P., Vandyck T. Status of environment and climate in the Western Balkans, EUR 31077 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, ISBN 978-92-76- 52723-7, doi:10.2760/294516, JRC129172

with different degrees of accomplishment. WB6 has recognised the necessity to coordinate water management upgrades with EU Member States, following the basin-wide approach to water management.

Descriptions of the typology and waterbodies,⁶⁹ obligatory under WtFD, are in progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, and in Serbia they are delineated and published in the Rulebook on determination of surface and ground water bodies (Official Gazette of Serbia 72/23), while in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia waterbodies have not yet been delineated nor characterised in accordance with the WtFD Annex II.

Most of the WB6 water quality networks are not fully compliant with the WtFD requirements. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia have developed, completely or partially, surveillance and operational monitoring networks, while in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia this task is still pending. Although the grouping of waterbodies is applied in accordance with the guidance for the implementation of WtFD, surveillance monitoring networks in the three mentioned have limited coverage of waterbodies and monitoring frequency for a reliable status assessment.

Monitoring of transitional and coastal water bodies under the Water Framework Directive

Transitional and coastal water bodies are relevant for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The WtFD compliant monitoring of transitional and coastal waters started in Montenegro in 2018, with the methodology still needing further development. Montenegro has identified five distinct types of transitional waters and two types of coastal water bodies. In an assessment of low confidence level, both coastal and one transitional water body failed to achieve good status. The assessment methodology for coastal and transitional water bodies in the WB6 could be developed based on the available systems applied in the Mediterranean. It is worth mentioning that Montenegro has the capacity to fully implement the monitoring of coastal and transitional water bodies thanks to the work of the Institute of Marine Biology in Kotor.

Monitoring of protected areas under the Water Framework Directive⁷⁰

The legislation related to protected areas in WB6 is not fully harmonised with EU standards. Additionally, the registers of protected areas relevant for water management, as well as their monitoring according to WtFD requirements, have not been accomplished in WB6. Thus, the establishment of proper monitoring of protected areas according to the principles established in the WFD is one of the priorities for this region.

Hot-spots

Transboundary river hotspots are shared between river basins and are deeply affected by climate change. Such river basins include relevant parts of:

- ▶ Drin/Drim River Basin
- ▶ Ohrid Lake (Albania and North Macedonia): inadequate treatment of wastewater and pollution from nearby settlements, hotels, and restaurants – especially during the tourist season, is affecting water quality. There is evidence that this pollution is negatively impacting biodiversity as well
- ▶ Danube River Basin
- ▶ Sava River Basin

69 <https://grid.cld.bz/Outlook-on-Climate-Change-Adaptation-in-the-Western-Balkan-Mountains>

70 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-021-00726-2>

4.2.3. Waste management

Municipal waste, if not managed properly, is a source of pollution. However, it also contains valuable materials that can be recycled. As in the EU, in the Western Balkans Six, municipal waste has been the target of waste policies for several years, mainly aimed at improving waste management.

Western Balkans⁷¹ Six have adopted legal frameworks for municipal waste management by approximating or being inspired by EU waste legislation, and the EU Waste Framework Directive in particular. However, for most Western Balkans Six, further alignment⁷² and harmonisation with this Directive is needed. Implementing the legal frameworks is challenging because of a lack of staff, insufficient cross-institutional cooperation, budget deficiencies and poor enforcement mechanisms.

Since 2015,⁷³ municipal waste generation per capita has increased in Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia, remained rather stable in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Montenegro, and decreased in Albania (where the decreasing trend is the result of improving data quality rather than decreasing waste generation). They demonstrate different levels of municipal waste generation, ranging from approximately 250kg/capita in Kosovo* to almost 500kg/capita in Montenegro. These values are all less than the 2020 EU average of 505kg/capita and correspond to below-EU-average household expenditures in the Western Balkans Six.

All Western Balkans Six still rely heavily on landfilling: considerable amounts of waste end up at illegal dumpsites and recycling is mostly still negligible, with little progress being made over the years.

Good-quality data are crucial to facilitating waste management planning and investments in required infrastructure. However, the availability and reliability of waste data are suboptimal in the region. In many cases, the amounts of waste generated are still high-level estimates, based on, for example, the number of residents in a municipality. Statistical surveys are conducted, but the accuracy and response rates are often low.

The share of the population served by public waste collection enterprises in Albania⁷⁴ was reaching 90% in 2022. Waste separation at source remains almost inexistent despite a legal obligation and was only around 17% of generated waste in 2021 (INSTAT, 2022[1]).

Under the data provided by EEA⁷⁵ public waste collection in WB6 ranges from 70% (Albania) to 86% (Montenegro and Serbia) and has slightly increased over the past few years. It is largely rural areas that are not covered by public waste collections.

The systematic separate collection of recyclables has not been introduced in any of the Western Balkans Six, yet some initiatives have been put in place: Albania(17% of generated waste recycled in 2021), Kosovo* and Serbia reported projects to collect some recyclables separately; and, in some municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, population can take certain recyclable wastes to collection points or civic amenity sites. In North Macedonia and Serbia, producer responsibility organisations have collection points for packaging waste, but these are uncommon.

71 Briefing no. 06/2022 Title: Municipal waste management in the Western Balkans EN HTML: TH-AM-22-006-EN-Q - ISBN: 978-92-9480-468-6 - ISSN: 2467-3196 - doi: 10.2800/132793 EN PDF: TH-AM-22-006-EN-N - ISBN: 978-92-9480-469-3 - ISSN: 2467-3196 - doi: 10.2800/58266

72 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/municipal-waste-management-in-western>, published 2022

73 Ibid

74 INSTAT, 2022[, reporting data of Albania

75 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/municipal-waste-management-in-western> , published 2022

Facts⁷⁶:

- ▶ Growing amounts of municipal waste and improper waste management lead to environmental pollution in the Western Balkans Six. Most municipal waste is still sent to landfills.
- ▶ Data on waste generation and management are largely insufficient, although many initiatives are in place to improve data quality.
- ▶ There is an urgent need to set up and invest in separate collection systems and recycling infrastructure, and seize the opportunity to recover valuable resources.
- ▶ Targets for municipal waste, mainly for recycling but also for collection and reducing land-filling, are set in waste legislation, strategies, and programmes. WB6 generally strive to approximate their waste targets with those set by the EU. In some cases, this results in targets that appear ambitious compared with the current situation and the capacity for change. The measures implemented with the aim of reaching the targets are generally weak, especially for recycling targets.
- ▶ Key challenges include a lack of financial resources and staff, insufficient cross-institutional cooperation, and poor enforcement of waste legislation. Illegal, substandard, and informal activities hinder the proper funding and functioning of the legal infrastructure and its gradual improvement. The region would benefit from fees that are better structured to cover the full waste collection and management costs and more effective enforcement.
- ▶ Waste legislation, including targets, is increasingly being adapted to or inspired by EU directives.

One option to improve waste management is to introduce **extended producer responsibility (EPR)** systems,⁷⁷ as they create opportunities for additional funding for separate collection of end-of-life products and their proper management through the polluter-pays principle. The introduction of extended producer responsibility schemes in the region could provide additional funding for improving waste management if they are designed, governed, and implemented well.

EPR systems for packaging have been implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia also have an EPR system in place for waste electrical and electronic equipment, while Kosovo* and Montenegro plan to implement such systems until 2024. Albania is in an advanced stage with regard to the preparation of draft law including on EPR and creating the basis for the functioning of EPR system. This means that all Western Balkans Six have implemented or have plans to (further) implement EPR systems soon.

However, to deliver good results, good governance of EPR systems is required. Challenges remain regarding the effectiveness of EPR systems currently in place, especially in relation to how fees are defined, collected, and used.

In all Western Balkans Six⁷⁸ most municipal waste is disposed of in non-sanitary landfills, some of which are operated by municipalities and others are illegal, according to information provided by the authorities. These sites are often poorly engineered, managed and operated, posing serious

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/904/oj>

⁷⁸ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/municipal-waste-management-in-western>

threats to human health and the environment. Waste is usually not pre-treated, and, although illegal, the open burning of waste still happens, for example in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia.

Albania has waste incineration plants in place; a new waste incineration plant started its operation in Serbia in 2022; North Macedonia is planning the construction of a waste-to-energy plant; and preliminary studies are considering this possibility in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

There is an urgent need to introduce and extend separate collection systems and improve recycling infrastructure, and to prevent waste from being disposed of in (illegal) landfills. Cooperation across the region and with regional industries might help to build both an economically viable recycling sector and demand for recyclables, thus creating a regional circular economy.

It has to be concluded that financial sustainability of waste management should become a political priority.

4.2.3.1. Plastic and plastic waste management

Plastic production,⁷⁹ consumption, and waste is expanding exponentially, affecting marine, fresh-water, and terrestrial ecosystems and contributing to greenhouse gas (GHG) and hazardous chemical emissions with consequent implications for human health, economies, and social well-being around the world.

The OECD's Global Plastics Outlook⁸⁰: Policy Scenarios to 2060 first provides an overview of plastics use, waste, and environmental impacts with current policies until 2060 and then compares two scenarios to understand the policies needed for, and economic implications of, drastically reducing the environmental impacts of plastics. An additional scenario, which has climate mitigation as its primary objective, examines the cross implications of policies aimed at climate mitigation and plastics leakage reduction. A companion volume to the Global Plastics Outlook: Economic Drivers, Environmental Impacts and Policy Options released earlier, this report, together with its predecessor, provides a comprehensive roadmap for a more circular plastics lifecycle.

The Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Programme tackles plastic pollution using a circular economy approach. Packaging, particularly single-use related to the food and beverage sector, will be the priority since it is the main source of plastic waste in the developing world.

Interventions⁸¹ will cross the entire plastic value chain—from production to consumption to disposal. Such a holistic approach leverages the interlinkages across the processes and sectors contributing to plastic pollution. As plastic pollution efforts tend to focus on waste collection, recycling and clean-ups, the GEF will prioritise actions early in the plastic value chain, i.e. production and consumption. By aligning with existing waste management efforts, the programme will address the full value chain.

The programme⁸² emphasizes upstream measures to reduce plastic production and consumption, the engagement of the private sector, and single-use packaging in the food and beverage sectors. It has several objectives⁸³:

79 Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program, 2022, www.thegef.org

80 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/aa1edf33-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/aa1edf33-en>

81 GEF_IP_PlasticPollution_2022_10_12_0.pdf

82 GEF_IP_PlasticPollution_2022_10_12_0.pdf

83 It has several objectives: Eliminate production and use, concern, using green chemistry to create sustainable materials

- ▶ Eliminate production and use of problematic and unnecessary plastic products (e.g. single-use plastic packaging) and phase out plastic products containing chemicals of concern, using green chemistry to create sustainable materials.
- ▶ Innovate for circularity through increased reusability, recyclability, and composability of products; innovate better reuse, refill, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling business models, including service as product; reengineer products towards materials made from recycled materials, which are recyclable and are ocean-safe if they leak into the ocean; and promote innovative solutions such as reusable to-go food container programmes.
- ▶ Ensure products are reused or recycled by shifting consumer behaviour, by improving waste collection and recycling, and by fostering markets for recycled material.
- ▶ Create cross-cutting enabling conditions by strengthening coordination along the plastic value chain, sharing best practices, and establishing transparent means of monitoring and evaluation.

For more details concerning plastic production, please see global plastic outlook in OECD library (2022), Global Plastics Outlook: Economic Drivers, Environmental Impacts and Policy Options <https://doi.org/10.1787/de747aef-en>. The transboundary hotspots were identified based on desk research and input from local and regional experts. The resulting 37⁸⁴ hotspots were a preliminary selection and therefore did not represent an exhaustive list.

Plastic waste, particularly plastic packaging deeply polluted Balkan environment. Rivers in the Balkans, known for its stunning natural beauty, have been transformed into a giant floating rubbish heap, amid a spell of bad weather, worsened by long-running mismanagement.

Tonnes of plastic bottles, rusty barrels, used tires, household appliances, driftwood and other waste have piled up behind a barrier in the e.g. Drina River in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which snakes through forested hills.

Much of this rubbish was dumped in poorly regulated riverside landfills or directly into the waterways that flow across the Balkans, accumulating behind the fencing as it flows downstream.

4.2.3.2. Marine pollution hotspots

The last twenty years⁸⁵ have seen a rapid development in the coastal zones of the region in terms of both urbanisation and tourism. As this development has not been followed by investment in appropriate infrastructure and services, it has resulted in pollution of the Adriatic by urban wastewater and solid waste, which adds to the pollution from upland watersheds by rivers emptying into the sea.

According to the 2020⁸⁶ International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) report “The Mediterranean: Mare plasticum”, Tirana and Podgorica are amongst the four top cities for leaking waste and plastics into the Mediterranean Sea. Overall, Albania is responsible for almost 10,000 tonnes of plastic waste that enters the Mediterranean.

84 Regional Assessment for South-Eastern Europe Security implications of climate change, OECD 2021

85 Sida's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change Western Balkans Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief, 2019; www.sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se

86 intellinews.com/bnegr-green-cleaning-up-the-western-balkans-waste-problem-253776/

Additional pressures affect the environment of the seas off the Western Balkans Six: marine transport of petroleum and natural gas, natural gas extraction in the Adriatic Sea and invasive species.

The Adriatic is characterized by high biodiversity with the largest area of continental shelf in the Mediterranean Sea, including almost half (49%) of all Mediterranean marine species. It is one of the most productive fishing areas in the Mediterranean and subject to intense bottom trawling and dredging. Overfishing is intensive throughout the Mediterranean and particularly severe in the Adriatic with 50% reduction in fish stocks in the past 50 years according to a report published in Nature 108. Fish populations are affected by the “triple threat” of pollution, climate change and overfishing.

- ▶ Concessions for offshore drilling for oil and gas have been granted or are in the process of being granted in Albania and Montenegro, while Montenegro is exploring the potential for oil and gas production in its waters.
- ▶ Boka Kotorska (Montenegro): the wastewater discharged from vacation cruises poses a threat to the marine environment.
- ▶ Drini, Shkumbini and Vjosa Rivers (Albania): waste deposited on the river shores, which is then transported to marine ecosystems.⁸⁷

4.2.4. Agricultural hotspots

Agriculture⁸⁸ remains an important economic sector in the region as employment in agriculture is high but varies between the Western Balkans Six with Albania at 38% of the work force in 2017 and the rest around 20%. After the wars, many people returned to their villages where they could find a relatively safe outcome in agriculture. This trend has now stopped and increasing urbanization is the present case

Agricultural run-off is a problem in many parts of the Western Balkans Six. Agriculture is the largest contributor of nitrogen pollution to groundwater and many surface water bodies, as nitrogen fertilisers and manure are used on arable crops to increase yields and productivity

Main hot spots affected Adriatic sea are:

- ▶ Podgorica municipality and surrounding Zeta Valley (Montenegro).
- ▶ Divjaka area (West Plain of Albania).⁸⁹

4.2.5. Biodiversity hotspots

The entire Balkan Peninsula⁹⁰ is a biodiversity hot spot with a characteristic climate, landscapes, and habitats, many of European interest. Western Balkans Six share similar habitat types and even the same populations of some species like large carnivores, but they also share the same threats to biodiversity and its wise-use management. The most vivid obstacles to nature conservation are air and

87 Rüttinger, Lukas; van Ackern, Pia; Gordon, Noah; and Adrian Foong. Regional Assessment for South-Eastern Europe. Security implications of climate change. (Berlin: adelphi; Vienna: OSCE, 2021)

88 Sida's Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change Western Balkans Environment and Climate Change Policy Brief, 2019; www.sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se

89 Rüttinger, Lukas; van Ackern, Pia; Gordon, Noah; and Adrian Foong. Regional Assessment for South-Eastern Europe. Security implications of climate change. (Berlin: adelphi; Vienna: OSCE, 2021)

90 Green Agenda - Biodiversity and Nature Conservation”, Civil Society & Think Tank Forum I Road to Berlin June 01-02, 2021 Center for Environment

water pollution from industry and energy sectors, soil and water contamination from intensive agricultural and urbanism practices, deforestation, poaching, poisoning, and in the general, the loss of habitats and species.

Percentages of protected areas in the Western Balkans Six are hardly approaching the 20 % mark and some have less than 5 % of territory under protection, as is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Main hot spots which affected biodiversity are:

- ▶ Tara Planina-Drina (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) mountainous area near Tara Park.
- ▶ Sutjeska-Durmitor Tara River Valley (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro): mountainous intraregional areas affected by wildfires, biodiversity loss and decrease in tourism (IUCN Category V, IUCN Category II).
- ▶ Orjen-Snjeznica (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro): intraregional mountainous area affected by wildfires, biodiversity loss, and decrease in tourism (IUCN Category V).
- ▶ Prokletije (Montenegro and Albania): mountainous intraregional area affected by wildfires, biodiversity loss and decrease in tourism (IUCN Category II).
- ▶ Skadar Lake and River Bojana (Montenegro and Albania): ecologically valuable area affected by multiple threats and pressures, including floods and climate change that affect water level and navigation, as well as increase in environmental and sanitation (health) problems associated with pollution from the drainage basin (IUCN Category II).
- ▶ Ohrid-Prespa Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Albania and North Macedonia): combination of waterbodies and surrounding mountains affected by degradation of wetland habitats, decreasing lake levels, loss of biodiversity and habitat fragmentation, deforestation (illegal logging), increased risk of forest fires, reduced forest productivity, and snow melting (UNESCO Biosphere Reserve).

4.3. Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB)⁹¹

In accordance with the EU ambition to become climate-neutral by 2050, the region has also committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, and to aligning with the European Green Deal's key elements by endorsing the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) at the Summit in Sofia in 2020, and subsequently the GAWB Action Plan, at the Brdo Summit in October 2021.

The RCC⁹² has coordinated the process of drafting the GAWB Declaration and Action Plan based on intense consultations with all stakeholders to identify concrete steps, supporting organisations and structures, and an indicative timeframe for each measure to be implemented.

The main goal of GAWB is to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and align with the European Green Deal's key elements.

⁹¹ https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/61/

⁹² https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/61/green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans

- ▶ Objectives
- ▶ Cleaning energy sources & protecting the climate
- ▶ Moving to a circular economy
- ▶ Depolluting air, water, and soil
- ▶ Building sustainable agriculture & food systems
- ▶ Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems

The GAWB Action Plan⁹³ envisages 58 actions and 7 roadmaps for implementation that are focused on: climate policy, sustainable energy, sustainable mobility, circular economy, depollution, sustainable agriculture and food supply, and protection of nature and biodiversity. Among others, the Plan envisions the adoption of 2030 Energy and Climate Policy targets to include carbon pricing, coal phase-out plans, pollution control, nature, and biodiversity protection, regional integration, and an indicative timeframe for harmonisation with the EU Emissions Trading System as of 2024.

For more details see https://www.rcc.int/priority_areas/61/green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans

4.3.1. Circular economy (CE) in WB6

The CE concept relates to an economy in which products and materials are highly valued, unlike the traditional, linear economic model based on a 'take-make-consume-throw away' pattern. The CE model is based on the biological cycle, and in practice, a CE is assumed to reduce waste linkage to a possible minimum. As such, the primary purpose of the CE is to keep the materials of the product which reaches the end of its life within the economy for further production of goods wherever possible. The provisions leading towards a CE include reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products. In CE, what was considered 'waste' can be turned into a valuable resource for goods and services.

WB6⁹⁴ are working to improve waste management and could benefit from the CE approaches, which consider systemic interdependencies and go beyond the tendency to look merely at just one aspect of the whole problem, waste. Establishing CE in the WB6 region finds itself in its developmental stages.

CE policy framework implementation⁹⁵ analysis has shown that most in the WB6 have regulations in place, but only partially implemented. None of the WB6 shows full regulations taking place nor fully functioning. Policy transition towards the implementation of CE is slow. The CE transition requires actions and policies; more importantly, it seeks synergy amongst all stakeholders involved. In the praxis of governance, a common way to steer the transition to a different proceeds through setting targets that can be systematically monitored to see if progress is there or not. Thus, this report seeks to set a measuring tool that can track the long-term progress of policy implementation underpinning the WB6 CE transition.

93 [https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Open Call Reference 022-024 Implementation of Green Agenda-WB Action Planpdf /47c6a13971210acd3dd68d4f8ea96534.pdf](https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Open%20Call%20Reference%2022-024%20Implementation%20of%20Green%20Agenda-WB%20Action%20Plan.pdf/47c6a13971210acd3dd68d4f8ea96534.pdf)

94 Frančeska Koranč, Šejla Mahmutović Dr. Sanda Midžić-Kurtagić. Underpinning Circular Economy Progress in the Western Balkans Six: A Comprehensive Policy Implementation Analysis, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, 2022

95 ibid

A set⁹⁶ of financial and non-financial incentives should be implemented to facilitate the transition to CE:

- ▶ Support the creation of new value;
- ▶ Mitigate investment risks;
- ▶ Enhance competitiveness of CE supply chains.

Five groups of incentives were identified to help decision-makers transition to a CE:

1. Improved legislation regulating the CE;
2. Fiscal incentives for CE;
3. Introduction of the full price to cover waste management costs as well as remediation procedures;
4. Green public procurement;
5. Education and awareness-raising programmes.

Some financial incentives for CE projects in the wider region include:

- ▶ Providing direct or indirect financial assistance to encourage companies to make changes towards circular activities;
- ▶ Ensuring partly concessionary co-financing or loans for projects aiming to introduce CE model into operations;
- ▶ Providing guarantee funds and partly replenishing investments in fixed assets or starting capital for companies applying circular operations;
- ▶ Encouraging banks to introduce targeted loans to support circular operations with subsidised interest rates;
- ▶ Offering longer grace periods in targeted loans for circular operations;
- ▶ Providing local subsidies for circular products or setting lower service taxes if such a system is introduced;
- ▶ Protecting interest rates against the risk of other factors;
- ▶ Introducing additional fees, such as excise taxes or taxes for production operations that do not comply with CE requirements or have a negative impact on the environment;
- ▶ Providing an alternative source of loans;
- ▶ Establishing a fund to support circular operations.

4.3.2. Green public procurement⁹⁷

Green public procurement (GPP) is a procedure in which all levels of public entities purchase goods and services that have a lower environmental effect than conventional alternatives. GPP is gaining

⁹⁶ Green Agenda for the Western Balkans The Road Toward Effective and Sustainable Implementation, Aspen Institute, Germany, Publication: December 2022 ISSN 2940-4169

⁹⁷ <https://knowledgecenter.ubt-uni.net/conference/IC/MBE/31/>

popularity in the Western Balkans 6 as a strategy for promoting sustainable development and addressing environmental issues.

An essential factor in the implementation of green public procurement is the commitment of the contracting authority as well as their sincere intention to adopt a greener approach not only in the procurement process, but also in their general behaviour and attitude towards the environment. Some of the instruments that may be used in public procurement⁹⁸ include:

- ▶ ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14000 or Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) certificate as a condition for qualification for tenders;
- ▶ Statements that bidders will implement measures of environmental management throughout the duration of their contract;
- ▶ Commitments to implement measures for the disposal of waste generated in the process of providing services that are in line with applicable waste management law;
- ▶ Requirements for the bidder to employ an expert in ecology, environmental engineering, or a similar field of studies;
- ▶ Certificates confirming that marked goods comply with environmental specifications and norms;
- ▶ A list of similar environmentally-aware contracts previously executed, with the confirmation of their implementation issued by a third party;
- ▶ Special obligations to mitigate environmental impacts such as the use of recycled packaging

4.3.3. Marine litter in WB6⁹⁹

The term marine litter indicates any object which has been artificially manufactured or processed that reaches the marine environment after its use. Due to the current high plastic consumption patterns, this material has become the main type of waste affecting marine environments. Most waste comes into the sea from the bordering lands and river mouths.

The rivers¹⁰⁰ in the Western Balkans Six carry disproportionate loads of litter to the Adriatic and to other seas. Poor practices of solid waste management, lack of infrastructure and awareness of the public at large about the consequences of their actions aggravate substantially the situation. Waste-water treatment in the region is very poor or non-existent. Litter from fishing and shipping in the Adriatic Sea further add to the problem. Marine and coastal plastic litter is a critical issue for the region where coastal tourism is an important source of income.

The pollution of inland water bodies and the Adriatic Sea¹⁰¹ has become a serious regional challenge for the Western Balkans Six and for EU Member States bordering the Adriatic Sea. Increasing amounts of waste in rivers threaten economic activities such as tourism and fishing and endanger

98 Green Agenda for the Western Balkans The Road toward Effective and Sustainable Implementation, Aspen Institute, Germany, Publication: December 2022 ISSN 2940-4169

99 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0400>

100 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

101 <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/80948.html>

the health and livelihood of people throughout the region. Up to 90% of marine litter in the Adriatic Sea is plastics.

Tackling these challenges through a regional approach offers unique opportunities. Introducing circular economy in the Western Balkans Six can reduce and prevent marine litter significantly.

4.3.3.1. Marine litter monitoring

The Guidance¹⁰² on monitoring discusses general topics associated with the monitoring of marine litter and the requirements under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), including advice on the harmonisation of the monitoring framework, data requirements, and the costs and efforts of monitoring, and a general overview of existing monitoring protocols.

The EU MSFD covers diverse aspects of marine GES¹⁰³ by monitoring numerous environmental parameters for the holistic assessment of the marine environment, ranging from marine biodiversity to multiple anthropogenic pressures (e.g. marine contaminants, marine litter or energy, including underwater noise).

Marine litter criteria and methodological standards under the MSFD, as specified in Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848, are as follows:

Primary criteria

- ▶ **D10C1** The composition, amount and spatial distribution of litter on the coastline, in the surface layer of the water column, and on the seabed, are at levels that do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment. Specifications: Litter shall be monitored on the coastline and may additionally be monitored in the surface layer of the water column and on the seabed. Information on the source and pathway of the litter shall be collected, where feasible.
- ▶ **D10C2** The composition, amount and spatial distribution of microlitter on the coastline, in the surface layer of the water column, and in seabed sediment are at levels that do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment.

Specifications: Microlitter shall be monitored in the surface layer of the water column and in the seabed sediment and may additionally be monitored on the coastline. Microlitter shall be monitored in a manner that can be related to point-sources for inputs (e.g. harbours, marinas, waste-water treatment plants, storm-water effluents), where feasible.

Secondary criteria

- ▶ **D10C3** The amount of litter and microlitter ingested by marine animals is at a level that does not adversely affect the health of the species concerned. EU Member States shall establish threshold values for these levels through regional or subregional cooperation.
- ▶ **D10C4** The number of individuals of each species which are adversely affected due to litter, such as by entanglement, other types of injury or mortality, or health effects. Member States shall establish threshold values for the adverse effects of litter, through regional or subre-

102 Galgani, F., at all., Guidance on the monitoring of marine litter in European seas, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, doi:10.2760/59137, JRC133594. An update to improve the harmonised monitoring of marine litter under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, EUR 31539 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023, ISBN 978-92-68-04093-5, doi:10.2760/59137, JRC13359

103 Good Environmental Status

gional cooperation. Specifications: or D10C3 and D10C4: the monitoring may be based on incidental occurrences (e.g. strandings of dead animals, entangled animals in breeding colonies, affected individuals per survey).

Harmonisation of monitoring approaches, in particular for sampling design, marine litter categories, analysis techniques and data reporting, is vital to combine and compare datasets. Numerous international and individual level frameworks are working on developing harmonised approaches to marine litter and microlitter. The aims of marine litter monitoring in the MSFD framework are to:

1. generate compatible and comparable data for each marine environmental compartment to allow spatial and temporal trend analysis;
2. identify the main marine litter sources to support the development of mitigation measures;
3. assess whether GES has been achieved or maintained, and if environmental status is improving, remaining stable, or deteriorating;
4. assess the progress towards achievement of environmental targets and the effectiveness of mitigation strategies

Monitoring of litter in Western Balkans Six is not established systematically, data is inconsistent and poor Note:

The Integrated Waste Management and Marine Litter Prevention Programme in the Western Balkans 6 (MLP¹⁰⁴) project, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, supports four of the WB6 to help reduce plastic discharge into the Adriatic Sea: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Montenegro by facilitating regional exchange, knowledge sharing and intraregional cooperation.

Categorisation of marine litter was performed by MEDPOL protocol (MEDPOL Beach Survey Form).

The official text and status of signatures and ratification of the ICZM Protocol (Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean) is available at <https://www.unep.org/unep-map/who-we-are/contracting-parties/iczm-protocol>

104 <https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/giz2022-factsheet-marine-litter.pdf>

Chapter 5. Methodology for collecting data

5.1. Introduction

The chosen consultation method used for development of Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter (AR) depends on the current situation, available time and funds, and accessibility of potential participants in the consultation process.

The methodology conducted for the purpose of Action Plan development is based on the following steps:

- ▶ Analysis of available EU policy documents concerning state of marine pollution particularly with focus on plastic waste and circular economy approach in Western Balkans Six, strategic, legal and policy framework in relevant areas, analysis of requirements from multilateral conventions, case studies, examples of good practice;
- ▶ Collecting primary data based on analysis of available documents in EU and Western Balkans Six which includes relevant policy instruments and relevant strategic and legislative documents in the Western Balkans Six;
- ▶ Identification of key stakeholders relevant for development of AP for Western Balkans Six;
- ▶ Identification of
 - ▼ key contributors to marine litter in the Western Balkans Six;
 - ▼ regional hotspots prone to marine litter;
- ▶ Conducting interviews, if possible, for collecting relevant data, and a survey of the main challenges regarding the role of stakeholders and the topics related to AP;
- ▶ Identification of gaps;
- ▶ Developing conclusions and proposing initiatives and recommendations for the Regional Action Plan for implementation of the Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter (AP) including proposals for individual and regional collaborative activities;
 - ▼ Defining regional measures essential for combating plastic pollution, with a particular focus on marine litter;
 - ▼ Exploring the viability of extended producer responsibility schemes and alternative mechanisms to cover the costs associated with clean-up efforts;

- ▼ Providing recommendations to enhance the regulatory environment, economic incentives, and investments in systems and infrastructure for combatting plastic pollution and marine litter in the region;
- ▼ Deliberating on the holistic life-cycle and management of plastic, acknowledging both regional and individual circumstances, to outline coordinated actions in alignment with the Barcelona Convention Regional Plan against marine litter and pertinent EU legislation;
- ▼ Establishing a monitoring methodology aligned with EU standards and best practices for the systematic collection of data on plastic pollution;
- ▼ Assessing the potential involvement of private sector in the successful implementation of this action plan.

5.1.1. General research on EU marine pollution and plastic waste policy

General desk research was conducted on:

- ▶ International and European marine and waste policy;
- ▶ EU and international legal and institutional framework;
- ▶ International studies;
- ▶ Good learning practices in Europe;
- ▶ Guidelines;
- ▶ Literature review also included consulting web-based resources.

5.1.2. General research on marine policy and plastics strategy in Western Balkan Six

Desk research for Western Balkans Six:

- ▶ Individual strategic documents and databases for WB 6 concerning marine and waste policy, mainly plastic waste;
- ▶ Individual statistics;
- ▶ Websites of all relevant authorities, academia, corporate sector, NGOs;
- ▶ Overview of existing and previous practices and projects relating to AP topics;
- ▶ Lessons learned, good practice mapping;
- ▶ Regional cooperation.

5.1.3. Development of Action Plan

- ▶ Based on 5.1.1. and 5.1.2. develop the Action Plan
- ▶ Present Draft Action Plan to WB6

5.2. Identification of stakeholders

The frame for identification of stakeholders was laid down in correlation with the Marine Strategy and Strategy for plastic and waste management with the focus on plastic pollution.

Consultations are important and implemented during the process of development of the Action Plan. The purpose of the consultation process is to gather data from stakeholders and target groups required to implement the Regional Action Plan for implementation of the Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter (AP) of the Western Balkans Six and to define optimum public policy measures.

The goal of the stakeholder selection is to propose a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders to be involved in development of the Action Plan.

5.2.1. Criteria for the identification of stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement is about building and maintaining constructive relationships with all institutions, bodies and their representatives, corporate sector, academia, and NGOs which are on behalf of the relevant authority engaged in development of the Action Plan and in different strategies/programmes, such as strategies for circular economy, climate change mitigation, air protection, sustainable development, protection of biodiversity, etc.

Due to the complexity of marine protection and pollution associated with plastic waste, and their cross relations with plastic producers, key groups of stakeholders have been identified, as priority, including aggregates based on their type, roles, and responsibilities. Each group of stakeholders presented below has a certain capability to impact the successful analysis in development of AP from various perspectives and with diverse levels of knowledge and experience, gaining a potential role therein. These are:

- ▶ Relevant authorities as bodies that formulate policies and lead the decision-making processes at the individual level, each responsible for its area of action. The role of ministries is essential from the point of view of marine protection, plastic production and management of plastic waste. As key creators of public policies at the individual level, the relevant authorities are those that formulate development directions in the field of environmental protection, nature protection, industry development, economy, entrepreneurship, tourism, etc.
- ▶ Relevant institutions specialised in and responsible for various fields. They represent the backbone of leading changes and coordination, implementation, and monitoring of respective policies. In this case, such institutions are mainly relevant agencies such as but not only: the agency responsible for environmental data management, agency in charge of nature protection, etc.
- ▶ City administrations and other local authorities of the concerned and affected environment, responsible for management of marine and in-land river ports, and usually for municipal waste management facilities, mainly landfills.
- ▶ Corporate sector as the group of public and private companies, private businesses, SMEs, as well as their associations presenting the major players as they are producers and possible

collectors and operators of plastic waste which would have wide impact on future socio-economic development.

- ▶ Business and professional organisations as the stakeholders that gather specialised professionals or interest groups, possessing thematic expertise and skills valuable in the plastic process (included chambers of commerce from across the WB6 region, operators, recyclers).
- ▶ Academia and local school administrations as educational institutions to lead regional reskilling and retraining activities (included all universities).
- ▶ Non-governmental organisations as the stakeholders of great importance.
- ▶ Financing institutions as the enablers of funding opportunities, securing sustainable resources.
- ▶ Other relevant stakeholders.

A comprehensive list of stakeholders together with their relevance is given in Annex I.

List of interviews is presented in Annex II. Agenda for all meetings was the same.

Topics which were discussed were as follows:

1. Regulatory framework concerning EU and international framework, particularly Waste, Marine, Plastics Strategy implementation in economy; prevention of plastic pollution, single-use plastic, bags, collection, design, LCA treatment, chemicals, vision for future.
2. What is your vision for marine and river protection? How will you deal with marine and river-borne litter, and do you have data and plan to deal with it? Do you have data on cruiser and ship pollution?
3. Implementation of circular economy: state of implementation, vision: How to implement circular economy in plastic management?

Chapter 6. Recommendations for WB6

6.1. Conclusions

Conclusions are based on:

- ▶ literature review,
- ▶ online/phone meetings,
- ▶ survey of a comprehensive list of documents, and
- ▶ personal communication and expert's documentation.

Based on a comprehensive list of documents and communication, the following conclusions are made:

- ▶ Western Balkans Six are at different stage of economic transformation and are working on developing policies to maximise their potential;
- ▶ Environmental degradation of soil and water including river and sea water, as well as air pollution in the WB6 are significantly present mainly due to: socio-economic factors such as weak or recovering economies with limited budgets for addressing issues of environmental protection, insufficient environmental regulation, or implementation, limited public participation and poverty, old industry and limited access to cleaner technology and environmental information, and unfortunately political tensions;
- ▶ Western Balkans Six institutions¹⁰⁵ continue to lack resilience to corruptive business contracts;
- ▶ After the economic activity bounced back in 2021, economic performance has been buffeted by a challenging external environment stemming from the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, higher energy and food prices, unfavourable weather conditions, tightening financial conditions, and significant uncertainty. That said, while growth continues to slow and prices continue to rise, the Western Balkans Six have shown resilience. Employment levels (second half 2022) across all WB6 except North Macedonia are still above pre-crisis levels;¹⁰⁶
- ▶ Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute to the economic performance and sustainable and inclusive development of WB6, account for almost three quarters of private sector employment and generate around 60% of private sector value added;
- ▶ Economic growth and competitiveness of WB6 face challenges due to fragmentation and their being small economies;

105 <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2021/05/31/western-balkan-institutions-continue-to-lack-resilience-to-corruptive-business-contracts/>

106 World Bank: Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No.23 | Spring 2023 Testing Resilience

- ▶ WB6 are at different stages of EU enlargement process and the accession negotiations;
- ▶ The level of alignment differs throughout WB6 and is expressed as percentage of the target legislation according to the Energy Community methodology;
- ▶ WB6 are committed to Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal and Green Agenda for the Western Balkans;
- ▶ Economic integration (WB6) is an essential driver of growth, job creation, and prosperity. Economic integration provides a fast track to the adoption of new technologies, to the flow of new ideas and innovations, and to the shift to higher productivity that underpins growth in middle-income economies,¹⁰⁷
- ▶ Regional integration is major development target for better CE incorporation,
- ▶ By signing the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in October 2020, leaders from the region recognised the importance of the European Green Deal (EGD);
- ▶ The Green Agenda includes important objectives that are clearly inter-related, representing an ambitious and complex agenda for the Western Balkans Six. The legislative framework regarding the most important issues has been prepared and adopted, but most have not yet implemented the necessary reforms, and some legal documents need to be upgrade or are incomplete;
- ▶ The progress in aligning with waste management legislation, including recycling, plastics, chemicals, eco-design and other circular economy (CE) related provisions is rather slow and limited, while full enforcement of existing legal and policy frameworks represents an even bigger challenge;
- ▶ Percentages of the protected areas in the Western Balkans Six are hardly approaching the 20% mark and some have less than 5% of their territory under protection, as is the case with Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- ▶ Green skills include technical knowledge, expertise and abilities that enable effective use of green technologies and processes in professional settings. They draw on a range of knowledge, values, and attitudes to facilitate environmentally sustainable decision-making at work and in life. WB6 lack green skills at different levels;
- ▶ Exchange of knowledge and resources at the regional level is not adequate;
- ▶ The importance of raising public awareness and changing the mentalities for effective implementation of this Action Plan is important challenge in all WB6.

Status of monitoring deficiencies for Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive:

- ▼ Lacking data for identification of sources of pollution
- ▼ Lacking data on landfills located along the river banks, especially along the intraregional river
- ▼ Lacking data on marine litter in the coastal area

107 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/10/16/world-bank-more-economic-integration-would-help-unleash-the-potential-of-the-western-balkans>

- ▼ The Water FD-compliant monitoring systems in WB6 are still not developed for chemical and ecological status appraisal
- ▼ Typology and waterbody delineation have not been implemented in all WB6
- ▼ Monitoring networks have not been developed according to the WFD requirements, which refers to both surveillance and operational monitoring
- ▼ Low coverage of monitored waterbodies
- ▼ Frequency of monitoring is not sufficient
- ▼ Monitoring of protected areas according to the WFD in WB6 is not established
- ▼ Relevant legislative is not fully established in WB6
- ▼ Background values for river catchments are not identified
- ▼ Analytical capacity is missing
- ▼ Monitoring of ecological status shortcomings: Systems for assessment of ecological status are not developed in all WB6

Status of monitoring deficiencies for Waste Framework Directive

- ▼ Lacking waste management data
- ▼ Lacking data regarding plastic waste
- ▼ Lacking basic service delivery to all residents
- ▼ Lacking infrastructure, especially for recycling and treatment of waste
- ▼ Lacking infrastructure for plastic recycling treatment; some export plastic waste for treatment

6.2. Recommendations and perspectives

- ▶ To facilitate implementation of the Sofia Declaration on GAWB, the following actions are necessary to ensure:
 - ▼ regional ownership and cooperation,
 - ▼ multi-stakeholder approach,
 - ▼ cross-sectoral collaboration through the involvement of all relevant Western Balkans Six authorities, and
 - ▼ strengthening cooperation at different levels¹⁰⁸
- ▶ Further harmonisation with EU legislation, and international conventions
- ▶ Develop inventory of river and sea polluters
- ▶ Strengthening the capacities of relevant stakeholders to implement legislation to reduce plastic production and waste and facilitating exchange on successful measures

¹⁰⁸ rcc.int/docs/596/action-plan-for-the-implementation-of-the-sofia-declaration-on-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-2021-2030

- ▶ Supporting processes based on the concepts of circular economy and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- ▶ Guidelines on application of the Waste Flow Diagram (WFD)¹⁰⁹ method to improve the database on plastic leakages, also in line with international obligations
- ▶ Awareness raising, e.g. through the concept of the Low Plastic Zone and social media activities
- ▶ Establishment of regional exchange for joint prevention of plastic waste discharge into the Adriatic Sea
- ▶ Continue with programmes that increase institutional capacity for water, soil and waste management in WB6
- ▶ Provide more possibilities for collaboration among WB6 in the field of water management, including activities aimed at developing monitoring practice, assessment systems, training on the use of biological quality elements, etc.
- ▶ Develop the methodology of ecological status assessment of transitional and coastal water bodies based on the experience of EU Member States, specifically in the Mediterranean Region (e.g. Greece, Croatia and Italy – Adriatic and Ionian seas)
- ▶ Establish monitoring of water-relevant protected areas according to WtFD requirements
- ▶ Involve research community more actively in the development of status assessment methodology
- ▶ Cooperate closely with EU Member States in the establishment of an effective water, soil and waste management practice in WB6 at different levels – water management, scientific research
- ▶ Support the use of advanced methods in ecological status assessment – e.g. molecular taxonomy and eDNA methods
- ▶ Establish water monitoring system for inland and sea waters
- ▶ Collecting data on marine litter according to the international conventions
- ▶ Control cruisers (Boka Kotorska) and their discharge in water, make contract for waste accepting in ports
- ▶ Support chemical management system required by REACH, establish register of chemicals
- ▶ Control plastic producers and recycling operators considering chemical additives

109 <https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/62153.html>; The WFD was developed in a collaboration between Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, University of Leeds, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (Eawag) and RWA-Wasteaware to help city authorities assess the quantities and fates of unmanaged municipal solid waste (MSW) released into the environment

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PART II: Action Plan



The Regional Action Plan

The Regional Action Plan is developed to enable implementation of the Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter.

With the RCC's pivotal role and substantial contributions, the Western Balkans Six (WB6) Leaders endorsed the Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter (Joint Statement) at the 2023 Tirana Berlin Process Summit.

The intention of this regional plan is to develop appropriate actions and transform them into concrete measures to prevent and reduce marine litter. In doing so, cost-effectiveness of measures and ongoing activities which can be used for the implementation should be considered.

MAIN GOAL: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF MARINE AND RIVERINE ENVIRONMENT, AND MARINE RESOURCES, SEA WATER, GROUND AND ASSOCIATED SURFACE (INLAND) WATERS AND THEIR ECOSYSTEMS

The actions are divided into regional and Individual level actions.

- ▶ The regional actions are those requiring a joint approach by the WB6 and of a large-scale, widespread, and intraregional character.
- ▶ The Individual level actions are concern and responsibility of the each of WB6 themselves.

Both types of actions are divided into six themes (Specific goals).

Two themes are directly linked to the sources of marine pollution:

Specific goal 1: MANAGEMENT OF LAND-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION

Specific goal 2: MANAGEMENT OF SEA-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION

and four themes are cross related to the first two:

Specific goal 3: HARMONISATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITH EU FRAME FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

Specific goal 4: HARMONISATION OF PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT WITH THE EU PLASTICS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY

Specific goal 5: DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Specific goal 6: STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF SUBJECTS OF CONCERN IN MARINE PROTECTION IN WB6 REGION

Producing less litter by means of smart production is treated as an integral theme. Measures followed by specified activities are identified for each specific goal.

Note

Draft Desk Study and Action Plan was disseminated to list of stakeholders (Annex I)

List of interviews is presented in Annex II

List of received written comments is presented in Annex III

Draft Action Plan was presented at 2 meetings of RCC held on 14 and 16 of April 2004 in Podgorica (list of participants, Annex IV)

REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION INCLUDING MARINE LITTER

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance ¹¹⁰
MAIN GOAL	Percentage of sea water bodies with status of Descriptor as per Annex I the Marine Directive i	GES for marine water	2022		2030	Article 8.9 of Marine Directive	EEA Report	MARPOL and , Barcelona Conventions; Strategy for CE and Plastics; 2008/56/ EC Marine Strategy Directive Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region; Waste Directive
DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF MARINE and RIVERINE ENVIRONMENT, AND MARINE RESOURCES, SEA WATER, GROUND AND ASSOCIATED SURFACE (INLAND) WATERS AND THEIR ECOSYSTEMS	Percentage of water bodies status for all rivers, lakes and transitional waters with G ES as per The Water Framework Directive	Good ecological status for inland waters	2022		As per GAWB 2030	Water Directive	Report of the WB6	Urban Water Directive Water Directive; Other EU directives and Multilateral Environmental Agreements and International Conventions of concern

Note: The timeline of implementation could be further determined for Western Balkan Six in the framework of negotiations or enlargement process

110 See Part I of this Report for details

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 1.	%	Waste collected, disposed or treated or reused (of total generated) in the WB6 region	2022	70-80 ¹¹²	2030 ¹¹³	100	EEA report, individual level	Waste Directive
MANAGEMENT OF LAND-BASED SOURCES OF SEA POLLUTION INCLUDING INLAND WATERS	%	Waste water collected and treated (of total generated) in WB6	2021 ¹¹¹	50-70	2030 ¹¹⁴	100	Statistic Report RCC- GARI report	Water Framework Directive, Urban Water Directive Directive 2008/56/EC Other EU directives and multilateral conventions of concern: Barcelona GAWB
Measure 1.1. Harmonisation of the legal framework with the EU Directive on the protection of surface waters (inland)	% of legislation No of trainings	Harmonised legal framework with the EU Directives Continuous improvement	No		2030	100	EC Report on negotiation Individual level reports RCC Training reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Urban Water Directive Water Directive Waste Directive Other EU directives of concern
Activities								
1.1.1. Prepare and agree on guideline to develop/upgrade marine strategies per each WB6 considering impact of inland water pollution	Agreement	WB region adopted the instruction through WG and upgraded legislation	No		2030	Total	Individual level report	Directive 2008/56/EC Urban Water Directive Water Directive Waste directive Directive 2019/904 Directive 2008/56/EC Other EU directives of concern EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy

111 <https://www.wareg.org/articles/water-sector-challenges-in-the-western-balkans/>

112 <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/municipal-waste-management-in-western>

113 The timeline of implementation could be further determined for Western Balkan Six in the framework of negotiations or enlargement process

114 The timeline of implementation could be further determined for Western Balkan Six in the framework of negotiations or enlargement process

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
1.1.2. Prepare and agree on guidelines on development and roadmap for implementation of EU directives particularly related to marine litter and plastic pollution in WB6	Agreement	WB region adopted the instruction through WG and upgraded legislation	No		2030	Total	Upgraded/new laws Continuous improvement	
Measure 1.2. Harmonisation of the legal framework with International Conventions	Share of legislation Signed and ratified conventions % No of trainings	Harmonised and upgraded legal framework for Conventions	No		2025 2030	100 100	Upgraded/new laws IMO ¹¹⁵ Report RCC Training reports	Barcelona Convention Basel Convention MARPOL Convention Other related conventions and MEAs Convention of Danube River
Activities								
1.2.1. Prepare and agree on guidelines on implementation of Basel convention, Barcelona Convention, which provides recommendations on how to integrate recently endorsed Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter, at 2023 Tirana Berlin Process Summit to protect the region's biodiversity and water ecosystems under the framework of the WB6 Biodiversity Strategic Plan.	Agreement No of trainings	WB region adopted the instruction through WG;			2027	Total I	Individual level reports RCC Training reports	Barcelona Convention and amendments, Other related conventions as per chapter 3
1.2.2. Monitor and Support the action under the Basel Convention, particularly for the implementation of the toolkit on environmentally sound waste management ¹¹⁶	Toolkit Guideline No of trainings	Toolkit accepted	No		2027	100	Report to Basel Convention Individual level report RCC Training reports	Basel Convention Other related conventions

115 International marine organisations

116 <https://www.basel.int/Implementation/CountryLedInitiative/EnvironmentallySoundManagement/ESMToolkit/Overview/tabid/5839/Default.aspx>

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measure 1.3. Development of inventory of land based sea polluters (Identification of regional inland sources of pollution)	No of trainings Data base on regional level	Platform with regional database of pollution sources established Monitoring of polluters established	No		2030/ 35	100	EEA Report RCC platform for GAWB Based on reports provided by each WB6 RCC Training reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Directive on Landfills Water Directive Waste Directive Other EU directives of concern EU Soil Strategy for 2030 COM(2021) 699 final COM(2023) 416 final Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law)
Activities								
1.3.1. Development of database of inland/sea coastal polluters	No of inland river polluters	Database of land based sea coast polluters of total	2025	30%	2030/ 2035	100%	EEA Report Individual level report Individual level monitoring report RCC platform	Directive 2008/56/EC Directive on landfills Water Framework Directive Waste Directive Other EU directives of concern
1.3.2. Collected data on environmental status of water bodies of inland waters	Laboratory results	Quality status of inland waters as per Directive 2008/105/EC	2024	30%	2030	50% better Based on negotiation position	EEA Individual level report Individual level- monitoring report RCC platform	Directive 2008/56/EC Landfill Directive Water Framework Directive 2008/105/EC setting environmental quality standards in the field of water policy Other EU directives of concern
1.3.3 Identify and monitor uncontrolled and sanitary landfills, industrial polluters, municipal waste and water discharge in the region	%	of uncontrolled landfills vs controlled Municipal discharges without treatment Industrial discharge	2025	50	50	100	EEA Individual level report Individual level- monitoring	Directive 2008/56/EC Water Framework Other EU directives of concern

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
1.3.4. Monitor and Improve storm water management to prevent litter, including microlitter, to enter the marine environment from heavy weather events.	Decision	Developed and adopt a plan for regional storm water management and responsibilities	no		2027	Plan	Individual level report Individual level document	Directive 2008/56/EC Water framework Other EU directives of concern
1.3.5. Develop monitoring of marine litter, improve monitoring and mapping of marine litter, including microplastics, based on EU harmonised methods and waste flow diagrams ¹¹⁷	Guideline No of trainings	Preparation and guideline for WB6 Adoption at regional level as tool	no		2027	Tool developed	WB6 adopt and implement RCC Training reports	(Marine Strategy Framework Directive) Water and Urban Water Directives Barcelona Convention Other related EU directives and conventions
Measure 1.4. Combating sea and river litter pollution	Decision No of trainings	Decision on joint actions and responsibilities in cleaning sea coastline and cross boarder river banks	no		2030	30% of coast clean	WB6 adopt and implement RCC Training reports	(Marine Strategy Framework Directive) Water and Urban Water Directive Barcelona Convention Other EU directives of concern
Activities								
1.4.1. Develop a dedicated plan for significantly reduced waste generation collecting, cleaning, treatment, final disposal, and monitoring of marine and river litter as well as waste water discharge polluters in WB6 region	No of trainings Plan for actions	Developed individual level/regional plan for cleaning and monitoring of discharge of litter in the coastal area			2027	100	WB6 adopt and implement regional actions RCC Training reports	(Marine Strategy Framework Directive) Other EU directives of concern Barcelona Convention MARPOL Convention

117 Project "The Integrated Waste Management and Marine Litter Prevention Programme in the Western Balkans (MLP)", funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
1.4.2 Establish institutional framework, responsibilities, and management for coastal region	No	Number of beach areas in coastal region in function (vs total in preparation)	2025	50	2030	100	Individual Reports on environment RCC report;	Marine Directive Barcelona Convention MARPOL convention Other EU directives related to water, waste and soil protection
	No	Number of protected areas related to plans for protection	2025	50% of seacoast and river banks	2030	100	List of protected areas List of coastal areas under control	
1.4.3. Develop a plan and establish/purchase necessary infrastructure on beaches	No of trainings	Developed plan Qualitative and quantitative analysis of needs Procurement of beach infrastructure	2025	30	2030	100	Individual Reports on environment Reports of managers Green procurement Contract RCC Training reports	Marine Directive
1.4.4. Establish and monitor river and sea protection areas and other protected areas, management structure and database of biodiversity and vulnerable species	No of trainings	Number of protected areas	2025	50	2030	100	Individual level report	Strategy for biodiversity, Barcelona Convention Marine Directive, Habitat Directive and Birds Directive Directives related to water, soil, waste, EIA and SEA
		Number of protected species	2025	30	2030	100	WB Biodiversity Report RCC Training reports	
1.4.5. Establish Public Enterprises (PE) and define responsibilities in marine litter management, in protected areas and at municipal level	No	Number of contracts with PE considering marine litter collection	2025	30	2030	100	Individual level report	Marine directive Waste Framework Directive other directives related to water, soil, waste and nature protection

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
1.4.6. Identify transport and distribution pathways and hotspots of marine litter where high litter concentrations are likely to affect coastal or marine biodiversity, and ways to clean up and develop Recovery and Resilience Plans for these hotspots through cooperation at the party and regional levels	Number of actions No of trainings	Agreement between WB6 related to joint action in combatting intraregional pollution	2025	20	2030	100	Individual level report EEA Report RCC Training reports	Marine Directive Waste Framework Directive

Note: Activities related to marine and river litter and connected to waste management system and specified under **Measure 3.4.:** Promote specific activities related to marine and river litter

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 2. MANAGEMENT OF SEA-BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION	Generation of waste Tons	Degree of managed waste from identified sources	2025	30	2030	70	EEA Reports from PE, Report from managers of marine protected areas	Directive 2008/56/EC Other EU directives and conventions of concern: MARPOL, Barcelona, Convention on the Sea GAWB
Measure 2.1. Harmonisation of the legal framework with the EU Directive on the protection of sea waters	Harmonisation of legislation	Degree of harmonisation	0		2027	100	EC reports, Individual level reports,	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive Ship-source Pollution Directive Other EU directives of concern MARPOL, Barcelona, Convention on the Sea GAWB
Activities								
2.1.1. Prepare and agree on guidelines on development and roadmap for implementation of EU directives related to sea and river water pollution and plan for air, soil and water protection	Agreement signed No of trainings	Guidelines accepted by WB6	no		2026	100	RCC Reports WB6 reports on agreement	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive Ship-source Pollution Directive Other EU directives of concern

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measure 2.2. Harmonisation of the legal framework with International Conventions	Harmonisation No of trainings	Rules for implementation	0		2030	100	RCC Report Individual level report	Barcelona , MARPOL Convention (SDG) 14 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea UNCLOS) Other conventions
Activities								
2.2.1. Develop guidance on management of data and reporting as required by conventions at the regional level	Agreement No of trainings with port managers	Developed guidance Trainings			2030 2027	12	Individual level report Training reports	MARPOL Convention UN Convention on the Law of the Sea UNCLOS) Other conventions
2.2.2. Develop and exchange best practice in relation to inspections for MARPOL Annex V	No of cases No of trainings	Trainings, workshops	2025	6	2030	12	Exchange of best practice among WB6 RCC Training reports	MARPOL Convention Other conventions
Measure 2.3. Develop port accepting system	% of ports No of trainings	Establish full control of sea pollution in ports and accepting of waste and waste waters	2025	30% ports	2030	100	Exchange of best practice among WB6 RCC Training reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive Ship-source Pollution Directive Other directives MARPOL and Barcelona Conventions
Activity								
2.3.1. Develop a regional database on ship transport and system of early warning	Number of ships in ports	Number of transport ships Number of cruisers	2025	30	2030	100	Exchange of best practice amongst WB6 Reports from WB6	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive Ship-source Pollution Directive Other directives MARPOL and Barcelona conventions

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
2.3.2. Legislative proposal and rules on port reception facilities for delivery of waste from ships, garbage, and litter to assess full implementation of MARPOL Convention	No t	No Contracts with: - ports and Cruisers, transport ships - Quantity of delivered waste, ballast waters	2025	30	2030	100	Reports from port managers Public enterprise Reports to MARPOL Convention	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive Ship-source Pollution Directive Other directives , MARPOL and Barcelona Conventions Other conventions Waste directives
2.3.3. Implementation and harmonisation of fee system in ports addressing enforcement and practices concerning shipping		- % of continuous contract vs total number in ships	2025	30	2030	100	Individual level reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive, MARPOL Convention Ship-source Pollution Directive Other directives
2.3.4. Implementation of ISO standard (ISO 201070:2013) in relation to port reception facilities	No	Number of ports equipped with facilities as per MARPOL Convention	2025	30	2030	100	Individual level reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Port Reception Facilities Directive, MARPOL Convention Ship-source Pollution Directive Other directives
Measure 2.4. Promote and disseminate best practice in relation to all relevant aspects of waste management within the fishing sector, private and industrial producers in fish sector	Number of trainings	Platform with best practices Decreased quantity of litter from fishing sector	2024	0	2030	100	Individual level reports RCC reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Other directives
Activity								
2.4.1. Prepare guidance and rules for fishermen and deliver trainings	Agreement No per each WB6	Adopted guidance in WB6 Decrease of litter from fishers Trainings	2024	0	2026 2030 2030	100 100 12	Individual level reports RCC reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Other directives MARPOL Convention

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
2.4.2. Prepare guidance and rules for aquaculture and trainings	Agreement Trainings per each WB6	Guidance developed and adopted Decrease of litter from aquaculture trainings	2024	0	2026 2030 2030	100 100 12	Individual level reports RCC reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Other directives MARPOL convention
Measure 2.5. Combating historic dumping on the sea coast	No of remediated sites	Sea water area clean of dumped waste and hazardous materials			2030	100	Individual level reports RCC Reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Other directives
Activity								
2.5.1 Support to local self-government units for rehabilitation and closure of unsanitary landfills, reduction of soil pollution and enhancement of restoration Mapping of sites of historic waste dumps at the seacoast (old ships, chemicals, hazardous materials)	Number per each WB6	Mapping of historic waste dumps at the seacoast	2026	30	2030	100	Individual level reports RCC Reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Waste Directive Other directives
2.5.2. Risk assessment of sites and identification of possible threat to the environment	Trainings Data base of sites developed	Number of trainings per WB6 Developed list of waste and contaminated sites with highest risk	2025	30	2030	100	Individual level reports RCC Reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Waste Directive Other directives
2.5.3. Remove and remediate materials which pose risk	No of cleaned sites	Waste disposed of Coastal area clean			2030	100	Individual level reports RCC Reports	Directive 2008/56/EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive Waste Directive Other directives

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measure 2.6. Improved monitoring and mapping of marine litter, including microplastics, based on harmonised EU methods¹¹⁸	Laboratory analysis	Data base on monitoring	2024	0	2030	100	Individual level reports	EU directives Conventions
Activities								
2.6.1. Develop guidance for marine litter collection, in correlation with Marine Strategy	Agreement No of Trainings	Guidance developed and accepted	2024 2025	0 6	2027	18	Individual level reports on marine litter RCC Reports	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
2.6.2. Develop monitoring of marine litter based on harmonised EU methods, improve monitoring and mapping of marine litter, including microplastics, based on harmonised EU methods	Quantity of marine litter Trainings	Monitoring system and Data base for Marinelitter established at Individual level	2024 2025	0 6	2027	18	Individual level data base on marine litter RCC Reports	Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Note: Activities related to marine and river litter and connected to waste management system and specified under **Measure 3.4.:** Promote specific activities related to marine and river litter

118 The MSFD Technical Subgroup on Marine Litter was tasked to deliver guidance so that European Member States could initiate programmes for monitoring of Descriptor 10 of the MSFD. <https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/main/dev.py?N=41&O=439>

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 3 HARMONISATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITH EU FRAME FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT ¹¹⁹		Harmonised legal framework with the EU Waste Framework Directive			Depends on negotiation process		EC Report Individual level reports RCC report	EU membership obligation GAWB
Measure 3.1. Revision of waste and other EU legislation of concern	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	Legal framework with the EU Waste and related Directives established and implemented	% as per EU negotiation report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation
Activities								
3.1.1. Upgrade legislation related to Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive		Legal framework with the Packaging Directive established and implemented	% as per EU negotiation report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation
3.1.2. Upgrade legislation related to Waste Framework Directive and Marine Litter	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	Legal framework with the Waste Directive established and implemented	% as per EU negotiation report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation
3.1.3. Evaluation/review of Eco-design Directive	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	Legal framework with the Eco-design Directive established and implemented	% as per EU negotiation report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation
3.1.4. Accept ISO standards for eco design and LCA	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	ISO standards accepted at regional level, particularly LCA 14040 and for eco design, and implemented	% as per EU negotiation report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation

119 Consolidated text: Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives (Text with EEA relevance)
Access current version (18/02/2024)

**REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT
ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
3.1.5. Reporting system on waste management harmonised with EUROSTAT according to EU regulations	To be decided by region Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	Legal system on waste management established and implemented in relation with EUROSTAT	% as per EU negotiati on report		2030	100	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation
Measure 3.2. Developing extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes and deposit system	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	Finalise the process of implementation of EPR Scheme in WB6 policy			2027	100	Individual level report RCC report/ platforms	EU membership Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive Other Directives
Activities								
3.2.1. Put in place well-designed EPR schemes and deposit systems, in consultation with the relevant sectors	Harmonisation and upgrade Ongoing activity	EPR scheme introduced in WB6 policy			2027	100	Individual level report	Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive Other Directives
3.2.2. Pilot implementation for selected products	Trainings	Pilot project implementation	2025	6	2030	18	Individual level report	Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive Other Directives
3.2.3. Establishment of collective operators /regional for special waste flows (eg for plastic waste, etc.) according to the principle of EPR	Tonnes	Performance indicators measured include: Quantity put on the market (tonnes), collection total (tonnes) and Recycling Rate.1	2025	6	2030	18	Individual level report RCC	Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive Plastic Strategy Other Directives

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measure 3.3. Expanding the scope of collection and recycling of waste	Share in %	Scope of total number of population	2025	60	2030	100	Individual level report RCC reports	Waste Directive Other Directives
Activities								
3.3.1. Establishment of a system of regional centres for waste management and development of recycling schemes	No centre/each WB6	New regional waste management centres in WB6	2026	2 Total 12	6 per WB6 Total 36	2030	Individual level report RCC Report	Waste Directive Other Directives
3.3.2. Monitor extended collection of waste in WB6	Share %	Collection coverage of waste	2025	60	2030	100	Individual level report EEA Report	Waste Directive Other Directives
3.3.3. Monitor the volume of recycling in WB6 region	% in total	Degree of separately collected municipal waste, share of plastic waste	2025	30	2030	80	Individual level report EEA Report	Waste Directive Other Directives
Measure 3.4. Promote specific activities related to marine and river litter	Quantity No of trainings	Collected	2025	6	2030	18	WB6 Reports	EU Directives International Conventions
Activities								
3.4.1 Develop specific guidelines for best practice routines about cleaning and collection systems to prevent litter from land entering the aquatic environment	Agreement Trainings	WB6	2025	6	2030	18	WB6 reports	EU Directives
3.4.2. Monitor and upgrade waste collection near the coasts, tourist, and port facilities, and improve coordination between the authorities responsible for waste management, water, and marine environment ¹²⁰	% Share of total	Waste collected near the coasts, tourist, and port facilities	2025	30	2030	80	Individual level report EEA Report	EU Directives

¹²⁰ Single-Use Plastics Directive requires that extended producer responsibility schemes are established for certain types of packaging including takeaway food containers, packets and wrappers, plastic drinks containers and drink cups including covers and lids

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ON PREVENTION OF PLASTIC POLLUTION, INCLUDING MARINE LITTER**

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
3.4.3. Include management of marine litter, on shipboard and at harbours in waste management plans	Waste management plan per each WB6	Plan developed and upgraded			2027	6	Individual level report EEA Report	EU Directives
3.4.4. For those in the WB6 that are landlocked, include waste management in rivers and ports in waste management strategies, including waste from river boats and river fishermen	Plan	Plan developed and upgraded			2027	6	Individual level report EEA Report	EU Directives
3.4.5. Share best practices on waste management to identify the main sources of marine litter (landfills, fishing, and aquaculture industry, etc.) which could contribute to marine pollution	No /year per each WB6 No of trainings	Trainings, campaigns, workshops	2025	12	2030	24	WB6 report RCC reports on trainings	EU Directives
3.4.6. Monitor reduction of marine plastics pollution comprising macro & micro plastics flowing into the sea through land-based activities	%	Quantity of macro & micro plastics decreased	2024	???	2030	50	Laboratory reports Individual level reports	EU Directives
Measure 3.5. Promote remediation and removal actions	Clean marine coast	Close and remediate landfills with marine litter Close and remediate landfills at the river bank	2024	20	2030	100%	Municipal report Individual level reports RCC report	Landfill Directive Other Directives
Activities								
3.5.1. Identify a database of dumps and sites with highest environmental risk and prioritise them for clean-up, especially those located along the river banks	No of dumps identified Trainings	Database on landfills along the river banks	2025	30 6	2027	100 24	Municipal report Individual level reports	Landfill Directive Other Directives

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
3.5.2. Step up efforts to eradicate illegal and non-compliant landfills/dumps	No closed	Closing of illegal landfills	2027	6	2030	18	Municipal report Individual level reports	Landfill Directive Other Directives
3.5.3. Support local self-government units in rehabilitation and closure of unsanitary landfills, develop a plan of actions for remediation and closing	Plan No of trainings	Plan and activities implemented Landfills closed	2027	6	2030	18	Municipal report Individual level reports	Landfill Directive Other Directives
Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 4. HARMONISATION OF PLASTIC MANAGEMENT WITH THE EU STRATEGY FOR PLASTICS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY¹²¹	Strategy for circular economy developed in WB6	Harmonised plastic management with EU requirements	2023	1	2025	6	EC Report Individual level reports	EU membership obligation EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy GAWB
Measure 4.1. Pursue work on life-cycle impacts of alternative feedstocks for plastics production	Develop guidance and deliver trainings	Alternatives developed	2024	no	2030	12	EEA report EC Report	REACH Legislation on chemicals IED EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy GAWB ISO standards
Activities								
4.1.1. Develop guidelines and promote development of individual strategies for plastic pollution	Acceptance by WB6 No of trainings	Guideline developed and accepted by WB6	2024	no	2025	6	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy GAWB
4.1.2. Develop guidelines and promote development of individual strategies for circular economy	Acceptance by WB6 No of trainings	Guideline developed and accepted by WB6	2024	no	2024	6	WB6 Report	Circular Economy GAWB

¹²¹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy , 2018 . COM/2018/028 final

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
4.1.3. Develop guidance on how to use standards for plastic products related to content of recycled plastics in cooperation with the European Standardisation Committee	Acceptance by WB6 No of trainings	Guideline developed and accepted by WB6	2024	no	2025	6	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy GAWB
4.1.4. Develop guidance and instructions on how to carry out harmonisation of products and recyclables according to REACH	Acceptance by WB6 No of trainings	Guideline developed and accepted by WB6	2024	no	2026	6	WB6 Report	REACH Legislation on chemicals IED
4.1.5. Promote and monitor activities to favour reusable and recycled plastics in public procurement	Number per region	Trainings	2024	no	2028	12	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Measure 4.2 Promote better product design in relation to CE	Number of events in the region	New product design promotion	2024	no	2030	12	report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy ISO standards
Activity								
4.2.1. Establish a dialogue on and negotiate solutions with businesses and industry to (i) develop design improvements that reduce the negative impacts of products entering the marine environment and on environment more broadly, and (ii) reduce over-packaging and promote wise packaging	No of events at regional level	Trainings Roundtables Panels Workshop	2025	3	2027	6	RCC report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy LCA Standards
4.2.2. Decrease use of plastic by developing new alternative materials and sharing experiences and good practices in material and product design aspects	No of events at regional level	Trainings Roundtables Panels Workshop	2025	3	2027	6	RCC report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy LCA Standards

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
4.2.3. Make voluntary commitments in support of the strategy's objectives as regards the uptake of recycled plastic in new product	No of events at regional level	Trainings Roundtables Panels Workshop	2025	1	2027	3	RCC report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Standards
4.2.4. Promote and monitor content of plastics in packaging	% Share	Decrease the amount of plastic compared to original packaging	2025	10	2030	80	Reports on packaging materials	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Standards
4.2.5. Promote repair & reuse market for durable consumer products containing plastics at regional level	No of trainings	Trainings, campaigns, workshops	2025	3	2030	10	RCC Reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Measure 4.3. Reducing¹²² plastic pollution within our rivers, coastal areas and marine environments	Quantity	Decrease amount of plastic waste	2025	20	2030	80	EEA report	Waste Directive EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
4.3.1. Phase out the identified single-use consumer plastic items (plastic bags, bottles, and containers) and monitor further use	% Share	Phased out	2025	50	2030	100	EEA Reports RCC Report Individual level reports	Directive on single-use plastic products and fishing gear Other directives
4.3.2. Implement and monitor the Low Plastic Zone Initiative in HORECA sector	No (year/per each WB6	Low plastic zones along seacoast and river banks established	2025	6	2030	60	EEA Reports RCC Report Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.3.3. Promote and monitor collection of recyclable and non-recyclable plastics and e-waste containing plastics from households	Share %	Amounts collected	2025	30	2030	80	RCC Report Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy

122 Project "The Integrated Waste Management and Marine Litter Prevention Programme in the Western Balkans (MLP)", funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
4.3.4. Development of guidance for implementation of a system for Ecolabel of products and Green Public Procurement	Acceptance Trainings	Guideline developed with RCC support and accepted by WB6	2026	6	2030	12	RCC Report Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.3.5. Promote and monitor implementation of circular plastics economy through policy dialogue on trade, industry, and environment, as well as economic diplomacy	No of events per year	Trainings Roundtables Panels Workshop	2027	6	2030	12	RCC Report Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Measure 4.4. Further incentivise the use of recycled plastics	RCC coordination and networking							EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
4.4.1. introduce incentive for Reduction of plastic waste from industrial and service sectors other than packaging waste	%	Reduced amount of plastic waste from other sectors	2022	starting	2030	50	Individual level report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.4.2. Promote and monitor development of compostable and biodegradable plastic	NO	Events	2024	1	2026	3	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.4.3. Start the process to restrict the use of oxo-plastics via REACH	NO	Events, trainings, workshops	2024	2	2026	2	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy REACH
4.4.4. Start the process to restrict the intentional addition of microplastics to products via REACH	NO	Events organised by RCC, trainings, workshops	2025	2	2027	2	WB6 Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy REACH

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measure 4.5. Introduction of economic instruments to encourage changes in the municipal waste management sector		Introduced			2027		RCC Report Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
4.5.1. Establish a tariff system based on pay-as-you-go principle		Tariff system established			2030		Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.5.2. Introduce additional tariff for disposing of waste at unsanitary landfills and environmental taxes		Fee introduced			2030		Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.5.3. Subsidies to companies to encourage the reuse and utilisation of waste as secondary raw materials, or to obtain energy, as well as to encourage the production of biodegradable bags		Subsidies to companies			2030		Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.5.4. Use bilateral, regional, and thematic funding in EU development, neighbourhood and enlargement policies to support the plastics strategy and circular economy through programmes and instruments		Regional funding			2030		Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
4.5.5. Support an integrated, intraregional circular plastics economy, including through the development of a global protocol for plastics		Regional cooperation on intraregional			2030		Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 5. DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	NO	Guidance prepared and distributed among WB6						EU Membership Smart Specialisation Strategy GAWB
Measures 5.1. Issue new guidelines/studies/rules to promote new education	Guidelines	Guidelines with analysis of missing education accepted in WB6			2025	100	Individual level reports	Legal frame for sea protection
Activities								
5.1.1. Prepare information sheets to assist WB6 in developing material for education programmes	Information sheets	Information sheets for education programmes developed Trainings			2025	100 6	Individual level reports	Legal frame for sea protection
5.1.2. Guidelines on waste legislation, separate collection, and sorting of waste – ensure better implementation of existing obligations on separate collection, particularly related to plastic waste	No	Guidance on waste management with emphasis on marine protection accepted Trainings			2025	100 6	Individual level reports	Legal frame for sea protection and waste management
5.1.3. Develop guidance for trade and exchange	No	Guidance on trade concerning plastic management, with emphasis on circular economy and plastic recycling Trainings			2025	100 6	Individual level reports	Legal frame for SMEs, plastic waste management, trade in recyclables
5.1.4. Creation of a repository of useful documents, such as books, papers, studies, toolkits, etc.	Database	Documents database			2025	100	Individual level reports	Legal frame for sea protection

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
5.1.5. Increase population awareness of waste management, circular economy, plastic pollution, marine protection, implementation of information campaign	No per each WB6, yearly No at regional level/year	Training Workshops Booklet Exercise Campaigns			2025	3 3	Individual level reports	Legal aspects of waste management, circular economy, plastic pollution, marine protection
5.1.6. Enhance knowledge and competency of relevant stakeholder groups in plastic waste management	No at regional level/year	Training Workshops Booklet Exercise			2025	3	Individual level reports	Circular economy, plastic pollution, marine protection
5.1.7 Establish a financing mechanism to facilitate the need for improvement in plastic waste management sector in consultation with private sector	No at regional level/year	Training Workshops			2025	3	Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy,
Measure 5.2. Investigate and promote best available techniques and research, and develop additional techniques in production, especially in waste and water treatment plants	No	Events on regional cooperation			2024	3	Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
5.2.1. Promotion of BAT Waste water treatment plants to prevent micro particles entering the marine environment	No trainings	Events on regional cooperation	2025	3	2030	3	Individual level reports RCC GARI Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
5.2.2. promotion of BAT Recycling plants for plastic waste	No trainings	Events on regional cooperation	2025	3	2030	3	Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
5.2.3. Promotion and development of new technologies at the regional level/ chemical plastic recycling	No trainings	Events on regional cooperation	2025	3	2030	3	Individual level reports	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
Measures 5.3. Establish an exchange platform for WB6		Platform established in coordination with RCC			2025		RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
5.3.1. Establish RCC platform- such as Green and Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform	No of trainings	Established and functional			2024	3	RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
5.3.2. Establish platform for waste data exchange; possible WSDA ¹²³ (GIZ model)	No of events	Established Events on regional cooperation			2025	3	RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
5.3.3. Development of a regional database with producers, recyclers, and users	No of events	Established Events on regional cooperation			2025	3	RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
5.3.4. Establish a dedicated website and social media pages (e.g. RCC Regional Platform)	No of events	Established Events on regional cooperation			2025	3	RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Measure 5.4. Promote innovation towards circular solutions and marine protection		Platform established in coordination with RCC	2025	3	2027	3	RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy
Activities								
5.4.1. Examine the feasibility of a private-led investment fund to finance investments in innovative solutions and new technologies aimed at reducing the environmental impacts of primary plastic production	No of events	Regional meetings with stakeholders	2025	3	2027	3	WB6 Report RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Marine strategy

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
5.4.2. Development of a Strategic Research Innovation Agenda on Plastics to guide future funding decisions	No of events	Regional meetings with stakeholders	2025	3	2027	3	WB6 Report RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Marine strategy
5.4.3. Use smart specialisation strategy to foster transition to circular economy and plastics strategy	No of events	Regional meetings with stakeholders			2027	3	WB6 Report RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Marine strategy
5.4.4. Include academia in development of new curricula concerning circular economy, plastic pollution, combined with marine protection and biodiversity protection	No of events No of programmes per each WB6	Regional meetings with stakeholders New programmes that cover CE and plastic pollution.			2027 2027	3 2x6=12	WB6 Report RCC Report	EU Strategy for Plastics and Circular Economy Marine strategy

Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
SPECIFIC GOAL 6. STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF SUBJECTS OF CONCERN IN MARINE PROTECTION IN WB6 REGION		Strengthened capacities of institutions Regulations established			2030		RCC Report	EU Regulations Individual level regulations
Measure 6.1. Strengthening the capacities of institutions	Regional trainings	Strengthened capacities of institutions	2026	3	2030	3	RCC Report	EU Regulations Individual level regulations
Activity								
6.1.1. Develop a communication strategy for this Regional Action Plan linked in a coherent way with Individual level initiatives/actions		Communication strategy for this Regional Action Plan			2026		RCC Report	EU Regulations Individual level regulations
6.1.2. Strengthening administrative and institutional capacities of competent institutions for the management of the sea, surface waters, coast, and waste	No of events on regional cooperation	Strengthened capacities for management	2025	3			WB6 report	EU Legislation

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Goals	Unit	Indicators	Baseline year	Target value	Year	Target	Source of verification	Relevance
6.1.3. Strengthening the capacities of public enterprises, and managers of protected areas responsible for the management of the sea, surface waters, waste	No of events/trainings	Strengthened capacities for management	2025	3	2030		WB6 Report	EU Legislation
6.1.4. Strengthening the capacities of SMEs concerning the management of the sea, surface waters, waste, recycling	No of events/trainings	Strengthened capacities	2025	3	2030	12	WB6 Report	EU Legislation
6.1.5. Strengthening the capacities of NGOs related to requirements in the management of the sea, surface waters	No of events/trainings	Strengthened capacities	2025	3	2030	3	WB6 Report	EU Legislation
Measure 6.2. Strengthening the capacities of education and research institutions	No of curricula for university and other per each WB6	Closing the gap in education and public awareness	2025	2 Universities 4 other research institutions	2030	5 Universities 10 of the research institutions	University reports RCC report	GAWB Barcelona Marine strategy
Activity								
6.2.1. Identify and promote curricula for marine related education, including both professional seafarers and recreational sector (e.g. diving and sailing schools), which develop awareness, understanding, and respect for the marine environment and secure commitment to responsible behaviour at personal, local, and individual level	No/year and per each WB6 No at regional level	-curricula per each WB6 courses trainings campaigns	2025	4 Each WB6 level 2 Regional level	2030	24 Each WB6 level Regional level	Individual data	GAWB Barcelona Marine strategy
6.2.2. Foster development of institutions related to monitoring of marine and coastal pollution	Smart specialisation	Upgrade of capacity of institutions for monitoring			2030		Second Strategy for Smart Specialisation	Strategy for innovation and research

LIST OF ROLES

GOAL/MEASURE	RCC ROLE	POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
MAIN GOAL DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR PROTECTION OF MARINE ENVIRONMENT, AND MARINE RESOURCES, SEA WATER, GROUND AND ASSOCIATED SURFACE(INLAND) WATERS AND THEIR ECOSYSTEMS	Enhance regional dialogue to track progress	Encourage networking and enable experiences sharing
SPECIFIC GOAL 1. MANAGEMENT OF LAND-BASED SOURCES OF SEA POLLUTION INCLUDING INLAND WATERS		
Measure 1.1. Harmonization of the legal framework with the EU Directive on the protection of surface waters (inland	Enhance regional dialogue to track progress, discuss experiences and the potential for regional coordination, Support guidance development	Encourage networking amongst WB6 administration and enable experiences sharing Regional guidance possible
Measure 1.2. Harmonization of the legal framework with International Conventions	Enhance regional dialogue to track progress in WB6, discuss experiences and the potential for regional coordination in implementation. Support guidance development	Share good practice amongst WB6 and neighbourhood Regional guidance possible
Measure 1.3. Development of inventory of land-based sea polluters (Identification of regional inland sources of pollution)	Enhance regional dialogue on data collection and establish regional data base, Explore funding opportunities . Support guidance development	WB6 collection of data for sea and river polluters Regional data base
Measure 1.4. To Combat with sea and river litter pollution	Maintain dialogue within the RWG GAWB to exchange experiences and discuss the potential regional course of actions. Explore funding opportunities	Coordination of strategic directions at the regional level

GOAL/MEASURE	RCC ROLE	POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SPECIFIC GOAL 2.		
MANAGEMENT SEA BASED SOURCES OF POLLUTION		
Measure 2.1. Harmonization of the legal framework with the EU Directive on the protection of sea waters	Maintain dialogue within the RWG GAWB and WB6 to exchange experiences and discuss the potential regional course of actions in the protection of marine waters. Support guidance development	Exchange experience especially in marine inspection Possible joint regional actions
Measure 2.2. Harmonization of the legal framework with International Conventions	Maintain dialogue within the RWG GAWB and WB6 related to international marine conventions	Exchange good practice
Measure 2.3. Develop port accepting system	Maintain and coordinate dialogue and support action for upgrade of port facilities and inspection capacities, Explore funding opportunities. Support guidance development	Exchange good examples of neighbourhood and WB6
Measure 2.4. Promote and disseminate best practice in relation to all relevant aspects of waste management within the fishing sector as well as among private and industrial producers in fish sector	Coordination, workshops, trainings, Explore the possibility of shared actions amongst WB6, Explore funding opportunities	Exchange best practice. Increase awareness in fishing sector Regional trainings
Measure 2.5 Combating historic dumping on the sea coast	Coordinate, explore the possibility of shared inventory and treatment capacities amongst WB6, Explore funding opportunities	Networking in dissemination of knowledge , data and procedures
Measure 2.6. Improved monitoring and mapping of marine litter, including microplastics, based on EU harmonised methods	Coordinate collecting data at regional level based on EU harmonised method	Disseminate of data
SPECIFIC GOAL 3		
HARMONISATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITH EU FRAME FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT		
Measures 3.1. Revision of the waste and other EU legislation of concern	Coordination in upgrade/development of legislation	Exchange experience, Increase awareness
Measure 3.2. Developing extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes and deposit system	Trainings, maintain dialogue within the RWG GAWB to discuss the potential WB6 regional course of action. Explore funding opportunities	Increase awareness of stakeholders on EPR
Measure 3.3. Expanding the scope of collection and recycling of waste particularly plastic waste	Promotion of regional centres for waste management in WB6. Explore funding opportunities	Implementation, construction

GOAL/MEASURE	RCC ROLE	POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
Measure 3.4. Promote specific activities related to marine and river litter	Coordination of WB6 regional activities, Explore funding opportunities	Engage at regional level to develop a global response to the increase in marine litter
Measure 3.5. Promote remediation and removal actions	Promote and coordinate activities relate to remediation. Explore funding opportunities	Remediation of contaminated sites and closure of landfills
SPECIFIC GOAL 4. HARMONISATION OF PLASTIC MANAGEMENT WITH THE EU STRATEGY FOR PLASTICS AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY¹²⁴		
Measure 4.1. Pursue work on life-cycle impacts of alternative feedstocks for plastics production	Enhance WB6 regional dialogue, Coordination of strategic directions at the regional level for deployment of circular economy and plastic production I	Networking and exchange of good practice
Measure 4.2 Promote better product design in correlation with CE	Enhance regional dialogue, Coordination, networking, develop of a Platform for CE. Explore funding opportunities	Implementation, campaigns for designers, producers, SMEs, chambers of commerce
Measure 4.3. Reducing ¹²⁵ plastic pollution within our rivers, coastal areas and marine environments	Coordination activities concerning dialogues on reducing plastic pollution	Best practice exchange
Measure 4.5. Further incentivise the use of recycled plastics	Coordination activities concerning recycled waste	Share experience and good practice
Measure 4.6 Introduction of economic instruments to encourage changes in the municipal waste management sector	Explore the possibility of shared experience in economic instruments	Share good practice and implement
SPECIFIC GOAL 5. DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES		
Measure 5.1. Issue new guidelines/studies/rules to promote new education	Enhance the regional dialogue with stakeholders and experts related to the needs of regional guidelines	Dialogue, acceptance, and Implementation
Measure 5.2. Investigate and promote best available techniques and research and develop additional techniques in; production, especially in waste and water treatment plants	Explore the possibility of shared treatment capacities amongst WB6, Explore funding opportunities	Share experience and proposal
Measures 5.3. Establish an exchange platform for WB6	Explore the possibility of shared data amongst WB6 and coordination	Implementation and delivery of data

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GOAL/MEASURE	RCC ROLE	POTENTIAL AREAS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
Measure 5.4. Promote innovation towards circular solution and marine protection	Coordination of dialogue and promotion, Explore funding opportunities	Reporting
SPECIFIC GOAL 6. STRENGTHENED CAPACITY OF SUBJECTS OF CONCERN IN MARINE PROTECTION IN WB6 REGION		
Measure 6.1. Strengthening the capacities of institutions	Maintain dialogue within the RWG GAWB to exchange experiences and discuss the potential regional course of actions	Implementation
Measure 6.2. Strengthening the capacities of education and research institutions	Coordinate dialogue with academia	Implementation



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