



Plastic Busters MPAs
First Capitalization Conference Report
Slashing marine plastic pollution in Mediterranean MPAs:
The Plastic Busters MPAs results and achievements
12 October 2021, Dubrovnik

Photo © Thomais Vlachogianni

PREPARED BY

**THE INTERREG MED
PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAS PROJECT**

<https://plasticbustersmpas.interreg-med.eu>



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This document (Deliverable 6.4.3) provides a summary report of the First Plastic Busters MPAs Capitalization Conference.

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1 The 1st Plastic Busters MPAs Capitalization Conference in a nutshell

It has been almost 4 years since Plastic Busters MPAs started on its journey to address marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs. and the project has achieved a lot: a first-of-its-kind comprehensive diagnostic analysis of the presence and effects of marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs; marine litter monitoring and assessment tools and approaches; showcases and guidelines of best practice measures particularly focused on slashing single-use plastics in Mediterranean MPAs, and so much more.

Seeking to share its experiences and knowledge products and catalyse replication and upscaling actions addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, the Plastic Busters MPAs team organized in Dubrovnik, on the 12th of October 2021, a hybrid capitalization conference featuring the Plastic Busters MPAs results and achievements. The half-day conference brought together some 70 participants (40 attended physically, 30 attended virtually) to review and discuss the project advances and achievements addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation. The event brought forward the recent policy and scientific advances with regards to marine litter in the region, provided a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter outputs and results, highlighted local experiences and lessons learned, and created the enabling conditions for building synergies and fostering exchanges among stakeholders active on the science-policy-society interface.

The capitalization event was organized by the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE), the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia and the University of Siena. The event's participants came from Albania, Algeria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Morocco, Spain, Slovenia and Tunisia.

IN BRIEF

- ▶ **Event title:** Slashing marine plastic pollution in Mediterranean MPAs: the Plastic Busters MPAs results and achievements
- ▶ **Event date:** 12 October 2021
- ▶ **Event location:** Dubrovnik, Croatia
- ▶ **Participants number:** 70

AIM

- ▶ The Plastic Busters capitalization event aims to showcase the Plastic Busters MPAs advances and achievements addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation. The event will bring forward the recent policy and scientific advances with regards to marine litter in the region and will provide an opportunity for creating synergies and fostering exchanges among stakeholders active on the science-policy-society interface.

ORGANIZERS

- ▶ MIO-ECSDE
- ▶ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia
- ▶ University of Siena

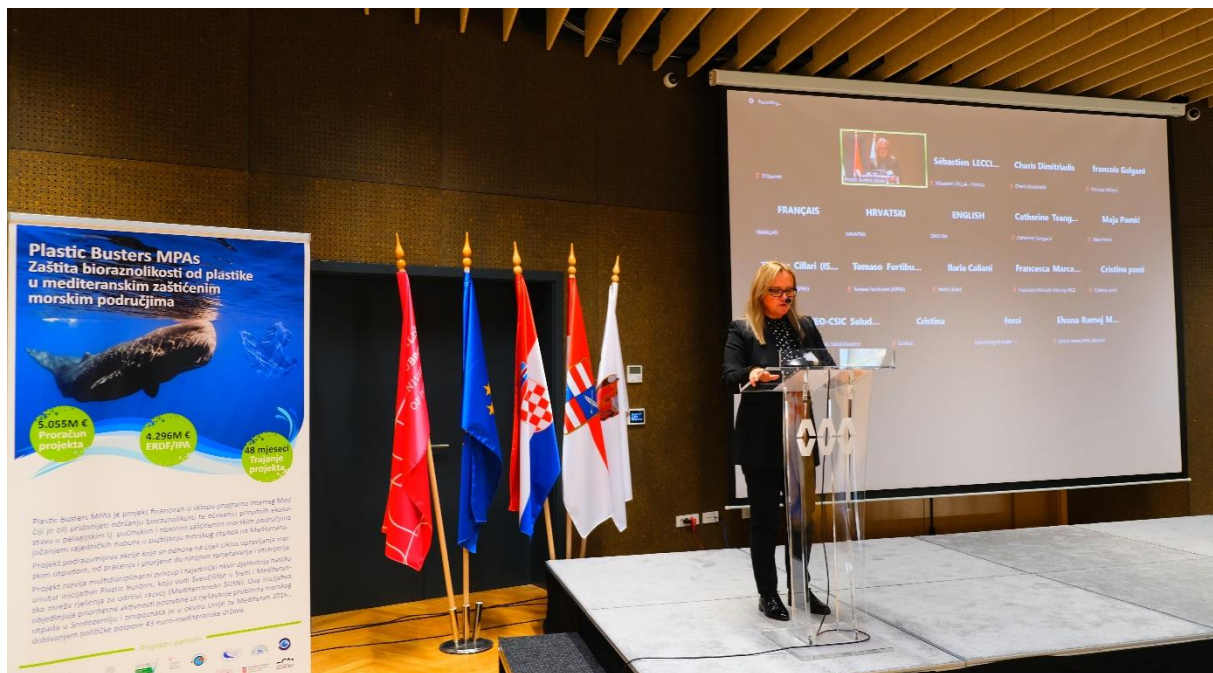
2 The Plastic Busters MPAs Capitalization Conference Programme

2.1. Opening remarks

The opening of the conference was made by representatives of the organizers and the local authorities, while also the Interreg Med project manager addressed the audience remotely. The complete list of speakers is shown below:

- ▶ **E. Kos**, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia
- ▶ **M. Franković**, City of Dubrovnik
- ▶ **N. Dobroslavić**, Dubrovnik-Neretva County
- ▶ **M. Pecarević**, University of Dubrovnik
- ▶ **Th. Vlachogianni**, MIO-ECSDE
- ▶ **C. Fossi**, UNISI
- ▶ **F. Marcato**, Interreg Med Joint Secretariat

All speakers warmly welcomed the participants and firmly acknowledged everyone's outstanding job in drawing attention to the challenging issue of marine litter and more specifically in Marine Protected Areas.



2.2. Session #1 - Setting the scene

The session focused on featuring the policy advances regarding marine litter within the scope of the EU and the Mediterranean.

G. Hanke from the JRC and representative of the MSFD TGML presented the most recent advances made within the framework of the MSFD TGML with regards to marine litter monitoring. A massive beach litter data collection has been implemented yielding data from 7715 surveys; a report on top marine litter items on beaches has been elaborated as well as a document on beach litter baselines. Two of the most outstanding developments have been: (i) the adoption of a threshold value for beach litter at 20 items per 100 m stretch of beach; (ii) the elaboration of the joint list of litter categories for macrolitter monitoring.

Ch. Ioakeimidis from UNEP/MAP provided an overview of all policy developments on marine litter within the framework of the Barcelona Convention. One of the key issues addressed by his intervention was the updating and upgrading of the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean. The Plan which is expected to be submitted to the COP22, features new measures that address: the phasing out of single-use plastic items, the reduction of microplastics, the introduction of environmental taxes, the inclusion of marine litter related measures in the SPAMIs, the strengthening of sanctions in case of non-compliance with the measures identified in the regional plan. In addition, attention was placed on the updated list for beach marine litter items to include COVID-19 related items, the updated Baseline Value and proposed Threshold Value for IMAP EO10 CI22 and CI23.



2.3. Session #2 - The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring actions

Within this session a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and assessment outputs and results was presented by **C. Fossi** from UNISI, while also emphasis was placed in featuring the Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on monitoring; to that end interventions were made by:

- ▶ **C. Tsangaris**, HCMR & National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece)
- ▶ **C. Panti**, UNISI & Tuscan Archipelago National Park (Italy)
- ▶ **S. Deudero**, IEO & Cabrera National Park (Spain)
- ▶ **M. Smodlaka**, Rudjer Boskovic Institute & National Park of Brijuni (Croatia)

Within 2019 and 2020, harmonized methodologies for monitoring the presence of marine litter in Mediterranean pelagic and coastal MPAs and its impact on marine wildlife have been tested in the Pelagos Sanctuary, the Tuscan Archipelago National Park, the National Marine Park of Zakynthos and the Cabrera Archipelago National Maritime-Terrestrial Park. Currently, the project team is fine-tuning the soon-to-be launched diagnostic analysis of the presence and effects of marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs; the preliminary results though confirm that marine litter is building up even in MPAs threatening habitats and species. The tested methodologies are currently being transferred to MPAs across the Mediterranean region, paving the way for a consolidated common framework of action against marine litter in the region, thus contributing to the preservation of natural ecosystems across the Mediterranean basin.

As highlighted by the MPA managers involved in the monitoring activities, the Plastic Busters MPAs project has provided significant knowledge on the magnitude of the problem; increased the carrying capacity of the MPAs Management Bodies to monitor and assess the problem in terms of know-how, man power and equipment; has enabled them to design and operationalize tailored-made mitigation actions; and has concretely illustrated what joint efforts of MPA managers and researchers can achieve on the ground.



2.4. Session #3: The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions

Within this session a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions and their respective results was presented by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE, while local experiences prevention and mitigation actions were shared by:

- ▶ **B. Knez**, Strunjan Landscape Park (Slovenia)
- ▶ **G. Garcia Hoyo**, National Park of Cabo de Gata Níjar (Spain)
- ▶ **H. Dimitriadis**, National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece)
- ▶ **X. Abril Ferrer**, Ebro Delta National Park (Spain)

To-date 10 marine litter prevention and mitigation demos have been implemented, while 5 replication actions are in full-swing. These showcase the following measures: phasing out single-use plastics, establishing derelict fishing gear management schemes, setting up an extended producer responsibility scheme, banning specific activities and kick-starting awareness raising campaigns. The MPAs that have been the testing grounds for the aforementioned measures are:

- 1 FRANCE - Pelagos Sanctuary
- 2 GREECE - National Marine Park of Zakynthos
- 3 GREECE - Thermaikos Gulf Protected Areas
- 4 ITALY - Miramare MPA
- 5 ITALY - Pelagos Sanctuary
- 6 ITALY - Tuscan Archipelago National Park
- 7 SLOVENIA - Strunjan Landscape Park
- 8 SPAIN - Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park-UNESCO Global Geopark
- 9 SPAIN - Cabrera Archipelago Maritime-Terrestrial National Park

- 10 SPAIN - Natural Park of Ebro Delta
- 11 CROATIA – Brijuni National Park
- 12 ALBANIA – Karaburun Sazan MPA
- 13 ITALY- Capo Milazzo MPA
- 14 SLOVENIA - Debeli Rtič Landscape Park
- 15 MONTENEGRO – Platamuni MPA

Some of the points that were stressed by the MPA managers in this session included the following: involving everyone at once in the implementation of the demos is challenging; demo actions won't last for ever and therefore their sustainability needs to be sought well in advance; special attention needs to be placed on communicating the right messages and avoid misconceptions in particular related to alternative materials.



2.5. Session #4: Creating synergies & fostering exchanges with relevant initiatives and projects

Within the context of the capitalization and cross-fertilization actions of the Plastic Busters MPAs, the fourth session of the project focused on fostering exchanges with the following projects:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| ▶ The MARLESS project | ▶ A. Torresan, ARPAV |
| ▶ The MARGNET project | ▶ J. Basta, Blue World |
| ▶ The CAPIMED-ISLANDS project | ▶ M. Outters, SCP/RAC |
| ▶ The DEFISHGEAR project | ▶ P. Tutman, IOF |

- ▶ The Interreg Med Italy-Croatia MARLESS project focuses on implementing concrete and joint interventions that will address different aspects of the marine litter issue, through utilizing different methods and different intervention points. The project actions deal with monitoring, management, prevention and removal of marine litter. Read more at: <https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/marless>
- ▶ The MARGNET project focused on setting up and testing multi-level solutions to monitor, map, prevent, remove and recycle marine litter removed from the sea. Some of its key actions were: the monitoring of marine litter originating from fisheries and aquaculture related activities through combined multi-sensor high resolution acoustic mapping, data analysis, underwater surveys; the forecasting of marine litter accumulation hotspots on the sea-floor; the promotion of the

sustainable removal of marine litter from the sea-floor by capitalising and strengthening existing removal protocols; the improvement of the environmental sustainability and efficiency of the recycling process of marine litter by engineering a prototype that exploits a low temperature pyrolysis method to transform the marine litter into an energy source with reasonable costs. Read more at: <https://www.margnet.eu>

- ▶ The BeMed CAPIMED-ISLANDS project actions are two-fold: (i) actions focused on fostering collaboration among island-based projects in order to adopt a coherent and complementary approach related to marine litter; (ii) actions focused on transferring the project approach, results, know-how, and lessons learned by the BeMed projects to other islands. Read more at: <https://www.beyondplasticmed.org/en/the-call-for-projects-in-the-mediterranean-islands>
- ▶ The IPA-Adriatic DeFishGear project has implemented pioneer actions addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter. It elaborated the first of its kind marine litter assessment report presenting the results of one-year long marine litter surveys in all marine matrices carried out in all seven countries sharing the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The project developed a set of marine litter monitoring methodologies and carried out a survey-based assessment of the socio-economic implications of marine litter in the Adriatic and Ionian macroregion. The project also pilot marine litter prevention and mitigation measures focused on the establishment of a derelict fishing gear scheme, setting up a fishing for litter scheme and implementing targeted recovery of ghost nets. Read more at: <https://mio-ecsde.org/project/defishgear>

2.6. Session #5: Wrap up & take-home messages

The event was closed by **E. Kos** from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia and by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE. Some take-home messages of the event are listed below:

- ▶ MPAs are at great potential risk from the impacts of marine litter pollution and urgent action is needed.
- ▶ MPAs can serve as a unifying force and catalyst for change towards litter-free coasts and seas through the participatory elaboration and implementation of MPA-specific marine litter action plans (including fit-for-purpose monitoring schemes).
- ▶ The wise use of plastics within a circular economy context that fully respects the waste hierarchy is the key to addressing the issue of marine plastic pollution.
- ▶ MPAs can address the marine litter threat by directly operationalizing targeted prevention and mitigation measures.

The presentations of the conference are available at:

<https://bit.ly/3EPdMgU>

3 Annex - The agenda of the capitalization conference

| TIME (CET) | CONTENT | NAME |
|---------------|---|---|
| 9:15 – 9:45 | Registration | |
| 09.45-10.10 | Welcome addresses & opening remarks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ E. Kos, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia ▶ M. Franković, City of Dubrovnik ▶ N. Dobroslavić, Dubrovnik-Neretva County ▶ M. Pecarević, University of Dubrovnik ▶ Th. Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ C. Fossi, UNISI ▶ F. Marcato, Interreg Med Joint Secretariat |
| 10.10-10.30 | Session 1: Setting the scene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ EU policy advances on marine litter ▶ Barcelona Convention policy advances on marine litter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ G. Hanke, EC & JRC, MSFD TGML representatives ▶ Ch. Ioakeimidis, UNEP/MAP representative |
| 10.30-11.30 | Session 2: The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and assessment outputs and results ▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on monitoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ C. Fossi, UNISI ▶ C. Tsangaris, HCMR & National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece) ▶ C. Panti, UNISI & Tuscan Archipelago National Park (Italy) ▶ S. Deudero, IEO & Cabrera National Park (Spain) ▶ M. Smodlaka, Rudjer Boskovic Institute & National Park of Brijuni (Croatia) |
| 11.30 – 11.45 | Coffee break | |
| 11.45-12.45 | Session 3: The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation outputs and results ▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on prevention and mitigation actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Th. Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ B. Knez, Strunjan Landscape Park (Slovenia) ▶ G. Garcia Hoyo, National Park of Cabo de Gata Nijar (Spain) ▶ H. Dimitriadis, National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece) ▶ X. Abril Ferrer, Ebro Delta National Park (Spain) |
| 12.45-13.15 | Session 4: Creating synergies & fostering exchanges with relevant initiatives and projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The MARLESS project ▶ The MARGNET project ▶ The CAPIMED-ISLANDS project ▶ The DEFISHGEAR project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A. Torresan, ARPAV ▶ J. Basta, Blue World ▶ M. Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ P. Tutman, IOF |
| 13.15 – 14.00 | Session 5: Discussion & take-home messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Interactive session |
| 14.00.-14.15 | Wrap up and closure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ E. Kos, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia ▶ Th. Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE |
| 14.15 – 15.15 | Lunch | |



PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs

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