



**Plastic Busters MPAs
Mutual Learning Workshop Report
Slashing marine plastic pollution in Mediterranean MPAs:
from field data and knowledge to collective actions
24-25 November 2021, Ebro Delta Natural Park (Spain)**

Photo © Mariano Cebolla

PREPARED BY

**THE INTERREG MED
PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAS PROJECT**

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This document (Deliverable 5.4.1) provides a summary report of the mutual learning workshop on how to implement marine litter prevention and mitigation measures.

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All photos of the report have been taken by Mariano Cebolla.

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1 The Plastic Busters MPAs project in a nutshell

Plastic Busters MPAs is an Interreg Med funded project aiming to maintain biodiversity and preserve natural ecosystems in pelagic and coastal marine protected areas by consolidating Mediterranean efforts against marine litter. The project deploys the multidisciplinary strategy and common framework of action developed within the Plastic Busters initiative led by the University of Siena and the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solutions Network. This initiative frames the priority actions needed to tackle marine litter in the Mediterranean and was labelled under the Union for the Mediterranean in 2016, gathering the political support of 43 Euro Mediterranean countries. Plastic Busters MPAs brings together 15 implementing partners and 17 associated partners from 8 countries, namely Albania, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Italy, Greece, Slovenia and Spain.



Plastic Busters MPAs provides a comprehensive, multifaceted and coordinated approach to fight marine litter in Mediterranean coastal and marine protected areas towards healthy marine ecosystems. Plastic Busters MPAs' main lines of action focus on:

- **Defining and testing harmonized methodologies for monitoring marine litter:** Plastic Busters MPAs will elaborate a harmonized approach for monitoring macrolitter and microlitter in Mediterranean pelagic and coastal MPAs, based on recent scientific and policy advances.
- **Assessing the marine litter impacts on biota dwelling in MPAs:** The harmonized methodologies for marine litter monitoring will be tested in selected sites and the results will feed into a comprehensive diagnostic analysis of the impacts of marine litter on biodiversity and endangered species in Med MPAs.
- **Identifying marine litter hotspots in MPAs:** Plastic Busters MPAs will develop a forecasting model to identify marine litter hotspots in Mediterranean MPAs. The model will provide valuable information to support targeted marine litter prevention and mitigation actions in the most affected Mediterranean MPAs.
- **Showcasing marine litter prevention and mitigation measures:** Plastic Busters MPAs will set-up and implement at least 10 marine litter demonstration projects in pilot MPAs. The demos will showcase MPA-relevant marine litter measures and the learned lessons will be captured in a set of comprehensive guidelines to support replication actions.
- **Building capacities and transferring knowledge on marine litter issues:** Plastic Busters MPAs will implement fit-for-purpose knowledge transfer, capitalization and replication mechanisms to create a truly enabling environment for concrete, effective and continuous actions against marine litter in a network of Mediterranean MPAs.
- **Setting up a joint governance plan for managing marine litter in pelagic and coastal MPAs:** The project will mainstream its results and ensure their uptake via a joint governance plan for managing marine litter in pelagic and coastal MPAs. The plan will consolidate the knowledge gained throughout the life-cycle of the project and will empower MPA managers, decision makers and other stakeholders to undertake coordinated and targeted actions against marine litter.

2 The Plastic Busters MPAs Mutual Learning Workshop 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 marine litter prevention and mitigation actions, the Plastic Busters MPAs team organized in Deltebre, from the 24th to 25th of November 2021, a mutual learning workshop. The workshop, which brought together some 25 Mediterranean MPA managers and other stakeholders, featured and fully exploited the knowledge, know-how, experience and lessons learned from the implementation of the Plastic Busters MPAs demos aiming to prevent and mitigate marine litter. The demos operationalized a set of different marine litter solutions, including the establishment of a derelict fishing gear management scheme, the creation of a SUPs-free HORECAs network, the promotion of best practices for the sustainable management of mussel farming nets, the setup of a reusable cup delivery system for beach bars, the development of a network of collection points for beverage containers, the adopt-a-beach scheme, etc.

The workshop brought together two major groups of participants: (i) MPA managers that have a central role to play in initiating the implementation of marine litter measures in their MPAs; (ii) environmental NGOs and decision-makers at regional, national and local levels that not only are key actors for the development of marine litter measures, but also are instrumental in promoting replication and upscaling actions. The participants of the workshop had the opportunity to intensively network on the issue of marine litter as well as to contribute to enriching and strengthening the project actions with their experiences.

The workshop was organized by SCP/RAC, MIO-ECSDE and ISPRA, in close cooperation with the Management Body of the Ebro Delta Natural Park and partook in the celebrations of the 1st Day of the Mediterranean of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and during the 13th edition of the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR). The workshop's participants came from Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Spain and Slovenia.

IN BRIEF

- ▶ **Event title:** Slashing marine plastic pollution in Mediterranean MPAs:
from field data and knowledge to collective actions
- ▶ **Event date:** 24-25 November 2021
- ▶ **Event location:** Deltebre, Spain
- ▶ **Participants number:** 25

AIM

- ▶ The mutual learning workshop will feature and fully exploit the knowledge, know-how, experience and lessons learned obtained by the implementation of the Plastic Busters MPAs demos aiming to prevent and mitigate marine litter.

ORGANIZERS

- ▶ SCP/RAC
- ▶ MIO-ECSDE
- ▶ ISPRA
- ▶ EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK

“The Ebro Delta Natural Park is honoured to co-organise and host this important workshop and to share its experience in tackling the marine litter issue. We fully support the Plastic Busters MPAs project that empowered us to undertake concrete action to mitigate the marine litter global problem at local level”, says Xavier Abril Ferrer, technical advisor of the Ebro Delta Natural Park. Within the framework of Plastic Busters MPAs, the Ebro Delta Natural Park launched this summer a pilot action on establishing a reusable cup distribution system for beach bars and festivals in the 7 municipalities of the Park. To date, more than 22,000 reusable cups have been distributed to 14 beach bars and 9 popular festivals, contributing to the significant reduction of single-use cups used.



“This mutual learning experience marked the end of a long process of preparation and implementation of marine litter mitigation demo projects within selected MPAs. It has been a great satisfaction to see Mediterranean MPA managers and experts sharing their on-the-ground experiences with other participants willing to transfer this knowledge to their own area. We were glad that this exchange could finally be in-person, in the amazing Natural Park of Ebro Delta, which made this workshop even more special after so many months of online exchanges and virtual activities with the partners.”, says Magali Outters, Team Leader, Policy Area of SCP/RAC.

“This workshop has been truly a rewarding experience highlighting that MPAs can serve as a unifying force and catalyst for change towards litter-free coasts and seas through the collective operationalization of targeted prevention and mitigation actions. We have learned so much from each other in just two days and we go back home with renewed inspiration and impetus for accelerating our efforts to slash marine plastic pollution in the Mediterranean.”, concludes Thomais Vlachogianni, Senior Programme Officer of MIO-ECSDE.



3 The Plastic Busters MPAs Mutual Learning Workshop Programme

2.1. Session #1: Opening remarks

The opening of the workshop was made by representatives of the organizers and the local host. The complete list of speakers is shown below:

- ▶ **Magali Outters**, Team Leader Policy Area, SCP/RAC
- ▶ **Thomas Vlachogianni**, Senior Programme/Policy Officer, MIO-ECSDE
- ▶ **Francesc Vidal**, Director, EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK

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 #2: Introduction

Within this session an overview of the workshop was provided by **Magali Outters** from SCP/RAC, while the participants through an ice-breaking activity introduced one another and shared their expectations related to workshop.

Matteo Baini from UNISI provided a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and assessment outputs and results, while also emphasis was placed in featuring the Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on monitoring. 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 it has been 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.



2.3. Session #3: Setting the scene

Within this session a synthesis of the science and policy advances at EU level and at Barcelona Convention level regarding marine litter was presented, as well as the policy brief on the issue developed by Plastic Busters MPAs.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Setting the scene: a synthesis of the science and policy advances at EU level and at Barcelona Convention level ▶ Tackling marine litter in MPAs: policy tools and key messages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Thomas Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ Magali. Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ Pedro Fernandez, SCP/RAC ▶ Michela Angiolillo, ISPRA |
|--|---|



Some of the key messages of the session, depicted also in the Plastic Busters MPAs policy brief, 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;
- ▶ MPAs can pave the way for improved policy implementation and legislation enforcement regarding marine litter;
- ▶ MPAs can address the marine litter threat by directly operationalizing targeted prevention and mitigation measures.

2.4. Session #4: From field data and knowledge to collective actions

Within this session, the workshop participants were grouped into four teams and they were given a certain type of litter item. Their group assignment involved the following steps:

- ▶ Identification of the sources of the selected marine litter item and the creation of a pool of measures to tackle it;
- ▶ Selection of five measures and their corresponding prioritization considering the following criteria: feasibility, effectiveness, social acceptance;
- ▶ Presentation in plenary of a summary of the overall process and the associated results.

For prioritization of the measures a 5 X 5 matrix, namely the DeCyDe-4 scoreboard¹, was used for each criterion, whereby the measures appear on both the horizontal and the vertical axes. Proceeding horizontally along the matrix, each measure was compared against all others in a pair-wise manner and scores were agreed and assigned according to a scoring scale.



¹ Loizidou et al., 2021. A community-based approach for site-specific policies and solutions on marine litter: the example of Paphos, Cyprus, *Environment Systems and Decisions*, 41, 33–44.

2.5. Session #5: The Plastic Busters MPAs testing and replication actions

Within this session an overview of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions and their respective results was presented by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE.

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

THE PLASTIC BUSTERS TYPES OF MEASURES IMPLEMENTED





Networking during the coffee break



Bird-watching at Ebro Delta Natural Park



Flamingos at Ebro Delta Natural Park

2.6. Session #6: Speed presentations, breakout groups & role play: operationalizing selected marine litter measures

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

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The CAPIMED ISLANDS project ▶ The ML-REPAIR project ▶ The EKOKVARNNER marine litter related activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Patricia Puerta, BALEARIC PLASTIC FREE-SAVE THE MED ▶ Tomaso Fortibuoni, ISPRA ▶ Vjeran Pirsic, EKOKVARNNER |
|--|--|



In addition, within this session, the participants were divided in three groups and they were asked to define the methodological steps, the target groups, the challenges and hindrances for operationalizing the shortlisted measures of #Session 4. The measures selected for this assignment were the following:

- ▶ Setting up a deposit refund for coffee to go cup scheme
- ▶ Establishing a derelict fishing gear management scheme
- ▶ Establishing a SUPs-free coastal HORECA network



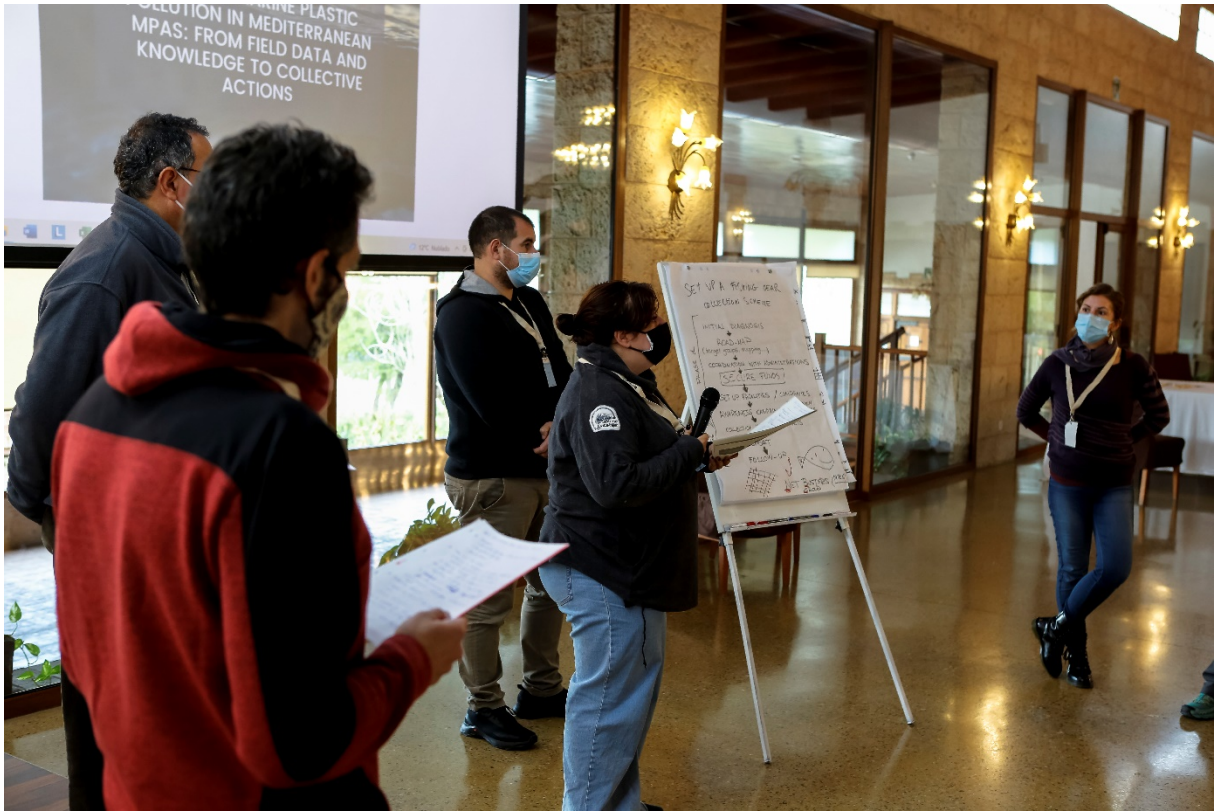




2.7. Session #7: Breakout groups: operationalizing selected marine litter measures (cont.)

Within this session the participants presented in plenary the outcomes of their collective assignment.





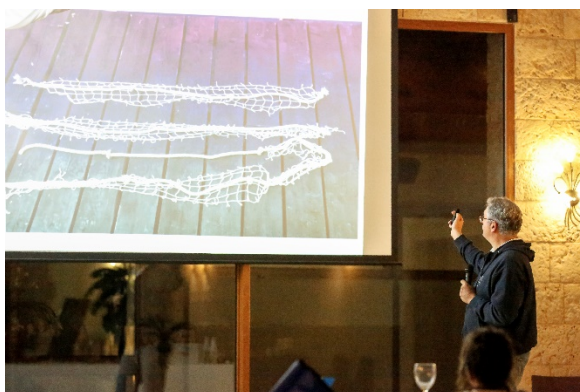
Field visit by boat to the Ebro Delta Natural Park



2.8. Session #8: The Plastic Busters MPAs piloted measures: methodological approach & local experiences

The last session of the event focused on the Plastic Busters MPAs piloted measures. A summary of the methodological steps for implementing the piloted measures was presented by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE, while local experiences on prevention and mitigation actions were shared by:

- ▶ **Anastasia Charitou** from iSea presented the local experiences from establishing a derelict fishing gear management scheme to tackle fisheries and aquaculture related litter in Thermaikos Gulf Protected Areas (Greece).
- ▶ **Gloria Garcia Hoyo** from the National Park of Cabo de Gata Nijar (Spain) presented the local experiences from developing a network of collection points for beverage containers made of PET and aluminium.
- ▶ **Carlo Franzosini** from Miramare MPA (Italy) presented the local experiences from promoting the sustainable management of mussel farming nets;
- ▶ **Xavier Abril Ferrer** from Ebro Delta National Park (Spain) presented the local experiences from setting up a reusable cup delivery system for beach bars and festivals.





2.9. Take-home messages

The event was closed by **Magali Outters** from SCP/RAC and by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE. Some take-home messages of the event are listed below:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ There is a need for more testing and/or replication actions related to the operationalization of marine litter measures; we know enough to accelerate actions on the ground.
- ▶ Involving everyone at once in the implementation of the demos is challenging, but it pays back big time as multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary actions are key to addressing the marine litter problem effectively.
- ▶ 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 marine litter related messages and avoid misconceptions in particular when it comes to alternative materials.
- ▶ Bottom up approaches and scientifically-sound approaches are essential for mitigating the effects of marine litter.



The presentations of the workshop are available at:

<https://arc.fastfolder.net/index.php/s/rr89WpDNJEAKEuN>

Participants impressions from the workshop (obtained via mentimetre)

Finally, meeting people that hearing of them was like knowing them!!! Different needs- different solutions but very similar approaches that made me optimistic!



Be brave and tryNew ideas, new technology to reduce supDouble thinking of the consequencesTrust the expertsIt will not be easyThe result will compensate youThe earth deserves it



I will take some experiences made in some MPA and the main challenges they had to try to implemented in my area. Now I know some of the people behind the experiences, I will be able to contact them, if they are happy with that, and further learn.

Everyone's thoughts are needed on the table: researchers, managers, people, kids, bussiness, craziest dreamers, moody ones...



Different places, same problems. Plastic is everywhere and the situation is getting worst day by day if plastic industries do not stop producing so much (useless) plastic

We would like to continue collaborating in the future, in projects to tackle the marine litter issue. Thank you so much !



Very nice

Great experience. Start with different pilot experiences will motivate more audience and allow to recognized even more the outcomes of this fantastic project! Thanks for the field visits!!





4 Annex - The agenda of the workshop

TIME (CET)	CONTENT	
23 November	Arrivals	
24 November	1st day of the workshop	Speakers/facilitators
09.15-09.30	▶ Registration	
9.30-10.00	Session #1 ▶ Welcome addresses & opening remarks	▶ Magali Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ Francesc Vidal, EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK
10.00-11.00	Session #2 ▶ Agenda overview & workshop structure ▶ Icebreaker & tour de table ▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs in a nutshell	▶ Magali Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ Matteo Baini, UNISI ▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS
11.00-11.15	Coffee break	
11.15-13.00	Session #3 ▶ Setting the scene: a synthesis of the science and policy advances at EU level and at Barcelona Convention level ▶ Tackling marine litter in MPAs: policy tools and key messages ▶ Discussion	▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ Magali Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ Pedro Fernandez Bautista, SCP/RAC ▶ Michela Angiolillo, ISPRA ▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS
13.00-14.30	Lunch break	
14.30-15.45	Session #4 ▶ Breakout groups: from field data and knowledge to collective actions	▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS
15.45-16.00	Coffee break	
16.00-17.30	Session #5 ▶ Breakout groups: from field data and knowledge to collective actions (cont.) ▶ Plenary: The Plastic Busters MPAs testing & replication actions in brief	▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS ▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE
20.30	Dinner at Delta Hotel	

TIME (CET)	CONTENT	
25 November	2nd day of the workshop	
07.00-08.45	Bird-watching (07.00 departure from Hotel Rull; 07.10 departure from Delta Hotel)	▶ Abril Xavier, EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK
9.30-11.00	<p>Session #6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Speed presentations on relevant projects & initiatives (CAPIMED ISLANDS PROJECT, ML-REPAIR PROJECT, EKOKVARNER MARINE LITTER RELATED ACTIVITIES) ▶ Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Patricia Puerta, BALEARIC PLASTIC FREE-SAVE THE MED ▶ Tomaso Fortibuoni, ISPRA ▶ Vjeran Pirsic, EKOKVARNER ▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS
11.00-11.15	Coffee break	
11.15-12.45	<p>Session #7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakout groups/role play: operationalizing marine litter measures to address sea-based sources of litter 	▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS
12.45-16.00	Lunch break & field visit/boat trip	
16.00-17.30	<p>Session #8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breakout groups (cont.) ▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs piloted measures: methodological approach ▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs piloted measures: experiences & lessons learned (EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK, CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURAL PARK, THERMAIKOS GULF PROTECTED AREAS, MIRAMARE MPA) ▶ Discussion & take-home messages ▶ Wrap up and closure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ALL PARTICIPANTS ▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE ▶ Gloria Garcia Hoyo, CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURAL PARK ▶ Anastasia Charitou, iSea ▶ Carlo Franzosini, MIRAMARE MPA ▶ Abril Xavier, EBRO DELTA NATURAL PARK ▶ Magali Outters, SCP/RAC ▶ Thomais Vlachogianni, MIO-ECSDE
20.30	Dinner at Delta Hotel	
26 November	Departures (group transfer at 07.30 from Hotel Rull)	



THE PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs PARTNERSHIP

