

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop BLUEMED Pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean

Rue du Champ de Mars 21, 1050 - Ixelles / Elsene

Room: -01/044

**Brussels, 3 July 2019**

An estimated 211,425 tons of plastic enter the Mediterranean annually. Approximately 250 billion plastic items are floating at its surface with concentrations of up to 64 million items/km<sup>2</sup> and up to 1,000,000 items/km<sup>2</sup> on the seafloor. These concentrations are higher than in the five great oceanic gyres. This pollution has a large environmental impact on the ecosystem as marine animals ingest and get entangled in plastic, or raft on plastic particles leading to the transport of alien (invasive) species to new ecosystems. 263 million EUR is the estimated resulting socio-economic impact, including on sectors such as tourism and fisheries and aquaculture. This comes against a backdrop of rising plastic production, which is forecasted to double by 2036 and almost quadruple by 2050.

The countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea have therefore agreed to launch a Pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean Sea under the umbrella of the BLUEMED initiative, as agreed by the Group of Senior Officials (GSO) BLUEMED Working Group. This pilot initiative aims at mobilising key actors to tackle plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea.

At a first exploratory workshop on 12 March 2019 several potential actions were identified:

1. **Defining and assessing the problem:**
  - a) build a denser marine sampling network with scientists/ citizens of the area; b) identify the local land-based sources of litter; c) build a Mediterranean marine litter data base.
2. **Implementing site specific strategies for reducing and removing marine litter:**
  - a) removal of microplastics from surface, water column, seafloor and shore via pelagic and benthic trawlers; b) regular removal of beached debris, plastics from rivers, watercourses and continental runoff waters, via fishermen and citizens; c) stimulate in situ biodegradation of marine litter components, and d) development of treatments for valorising the collected materials to produce energy, new products or chemical building blocks.
3. **Preventing marine litter:**
  - a) selectively collect and recycle waste plastics by reducing use landfills; b) eliminate the land-based open and open-air dumps, c) remove (via filtration) plastics and tire fragments from highway and urban runoff, and wastewater treatment effluents; d) restrict use of mono-use products, non-essential plastic products and micro-granules in products; e) gradually adopt biodegradable (bio)plastics, by starting from those used in marine habitats (for fishing gears, tubular net for marine aquaculture, additives for painting and maintenance of ships and leisure boats).
4. **Developing and promoting:**
  - a) effective and robust regulations/legislation, b) tailored incentives (for recovering plastics from the sea, for recycling plastics, etc.), c) R&I actions to underpin what is outlined above, d) education and communication and outreach plans, e) robust partnerships between academia, industry, public institutions, regulatory bodies and the society, and f) long-term coordination of Mediterranean countries.

The GSO BLUEMED WG is in the process of identifying and creating BLUEMED Pilot local hubs in each of the 16 BLUEMED countries of Mediterranean, which will function as one-stop shop to channel all relevant information and actions in relation to the Pilot. The different hubs shall be connected to each other under the umbrella of the BLUEMED Initiative.

## WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

This second workshop aims at operationalising and implementing the BLUEMED Pilot for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean Sea. In particular, the workshop is intended to discuss (i) the progress made in setting-up of local hubs in BLUEMED countries and best practice examples for tackling plastic pollution; (ii) the connection of the different country hubs, projects and initiatives via an overarching digital platform hosted at the Startup Europe MED platform. (iii) next steps in the implementation of the pilot and additional ideas for enhancing cooperation between BLUEMED countries. The agenda includes also a number of introductory sessions featuring on-going initiatives relevant for a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean Sea.

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

<b>Registration</b>	09:00-09:30
<b>1. Introduction and Welcome</b> <i>Sigi Gruber, DG RTD, European Commission; Luca Marangoni, DG MARE, European Commission; Michaelis Papadoyannakis, DG ENV; Alessandra Senssi, UfM.</i>	09:30-9:45
<b>2. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea</b> <b>a) North Africa Blue Economy and Coastal Management technical assistance program</b> <i>Melanie Argimon, World Bank</i> <b>b) The Clean Oceans Initiative</b> <i>Gregory Briffa, European Investment Bank</i> <b>c) EIT Climate-Kick and the Flagship eCircular</b> <i>Sira Saccani, Director of Sustainable Production System, Climate-KIC</i> <b>d) StartupEurope MED</b> <i>Fabrizio Porrino, SVP Global Public Affairs</i> <b>e) Tackling Marine Litter in the Southern Med</b> <i>Thomie Vlachogianni, Water and Environment Support project</i>	9:45-11:00
<b>Coffee Break</b>	11:00-11:10
<b>3. Ongoing initiatives relevant for a healthy plastic-free Mediterranean Sea (2)</b> <b>f) Mismanaged plastic on the seafloor: does it matter?</b> <i>Fabio Trincardi, Italian National Research Council</i> <b>g) Plastics Europe</b> <i>Anne-Gaelle Collot, Senior Manager</i>	11:10-12:30

<p><b>h) CIRCPACK project</b> <i>Aitana Saez, project coordinator</i></p> <p><b>i) PlasticBuster – Interreg project (Remotely WEBEX)</b> <i>Cristina Fossi, project coordinator</i></p> <p><b>j) DEBAG – Life project: Plastic Bags</b> <i>George Papatheodorou, project coordinator</i></p> <p><b>k) BeMed Initiative</b> <i>Antidia Citores, Surfriders Foundation Europe</i></p> <p><b>l) Let's do it!</b> <i>Kadi Kent, Let's Do It Foundation</i></p>	
<b>Lunch Break</b>	<i>12:30-13:30</i>
<p><b>4. Update from invited experts to the first WS (12 March 2019)</b></p> <p><b>a. Nestle</b> <i>Johannes Weber, Nestlé Europe, Middle East and North Africa</i></p> <p><b>b. PANACEA – Interreg project</b> <i>Sonsoles San Roman, project coordinator</i></p> <p><b>c. SEA PLASTICS</b> <i>Aymeric Barre, Founding partner</i></p>	<i>13:30-13:50</i>
<p><b>5. Setting-up of national hubs and connection for synergies and impact</b></p> <p><b>a. Presentation of Local Hubs in BLUEMED countries GSO BLUEMED WG members</b> <i>All GSO BLUEMED WG members (tour de table)</i></p> <p><b>b. Discussion on how to progress their work</b> <i>All GSO BLUEMED WG members (tour de table)</i></p>	<i>13:50-16:00</i>
<b>6. Any other business</b>	<i>16:00-16:15</i>
<b>7. Closing of the meeting</b>	<i>16:15-16:30</i>

## BACKGROUND

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU-MED Group of Senior Officials (GSO) BLUEMED Working Group meeting, in Barcelona in October 2018, the group decided to join forces to work on a concrete action. Considering the alarming presence of plastics in the Mediterranean, affecting many crucial economic activities based on the sea threatening the future of the Blue Economy, the citizens wellbeing and prosperity of the area, the group put forward a pilot: *Towards a healthy plastic free Mediterranean Sea*. This will also support the Action 1.6 of the new Bioeconomy Strategy, the Circular economy package, SDG 14; contribute to the EU environmental policy, as well as bring together different stakeholders, all aiming

to contribute to tackle a major challenge which concerns all citizens leaving on the MED or profiting from the MED for different reasons.

A first exploratory workshop in Brussels on 12 March to defined (i) what would constitute a successful pilot plastic-free ocean in the Mediterranean, (ii) the required portfolio of actions and concrete measures to make the pilot a success as well as (iii) how to build partnership that could successfully implement these actions.

The GSO BLUEMED Working Group agreed on the following at its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting on 4 April 2019:

- It was decided to implement the Pilot at national level through the creation of BLUEMED Pilot **local hubs**. These hubs will bring together and create a national community that together can deliver on the aims of a plastic-free, healthy Mediterranean. The hubs will function as a one-stop shop to channel all relevant information and actions in relation to the Pilot. Each GSO BLUEMED WG member will create its local/national Hub, which will be connected to all other Mediterranean hubs under the umbrella of the BLUEMED Initiative.
- The national hubs should identify one or two **best-practice examples** showcasing what the Pilot can achieve. GSO BLUEMED WG members should inform about the two showcase examples in the coming 2 weeks.
- A **platform** to host information and connect the various hubs and activities will be created. The Startup Europe MED programme has offered to host this Pilot platform, which was welcomed by the Working Group. Other options could also be explored.