



This Project is funded  
by the European Union

# Water and Environment Support

in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region



## WES Information Bulletin

# Phasing Out Single Use Plastics in the Mediterranean

## Online Webinars

13 and 28 January, 2021

11 and 25 February, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

---

Plastics have become the basic component for manufacturing numerous everyday products, and since the 1950s, their production has consistently grown, with their global production reaching 322 million tons in 2015 and expected to double by 2035. The durability of plastics and their potential for diverse applications, including widespread use as disposable items, were anticipated, but the problems associated with waste management and plastic waste were not.

Plastic pollution is now recognised as one of the major pollution problems of our times that damages the environmental, economic and cultural value of the natural environment. In particular, the issue of marine plastic pollution has gained increasing attention in the last decades and has been characterised as the new millennium's tragedy of the commons, as it poses a complex and multi-dimensional challenge with significant implications for the marine and coastal environment and human livelihoods all over the world.

Single-use plastics (SUPs) that make up the vast majority of plastic pollution, refer to products that are made wholly or partly from plastic and that are not conceived, designed or placed on the market to accomplish, within their life span, multiple trips or rotations by being returned to a producer for refill or re-used for the same purpose for which they were conceived. SUPs commonly include plastic bags, cutlery, straws and stirrers, food and beverage containers, packaging, cups and cup lids, cotton bud sticks, wet wipes, balloons, etc.

As part of the Water and Environment Support (WES) project, **an online training was held on Phasing out SUPs in the Mediterranean**. The training was delivered through four webinars, between January 13 - February 25, 2021.

**The purpose of this regional WES training was to strengthen the skills and capacities of the participants to identify, prioritise and operationalise targeted measures to phase out Single-Use Plastics.**

The training aimed to enhance participants competences in terms of:

- Technical aspects of SUPs (definitions, types, pathways, impact, etc.)
- Analysis of baseline situation: production, consumption, leakage of SUPs into the environment, etc.
- Identification of SUPs of concern in each partner country
- Pros/cons of alternatives to SUPs
- Policy options to reduce and better manage SUPs
- Impact assessment of policy options
- Policy and decision-making based on sound scientific evidence

The regional training also aimed to contribute to the development of the **Regional Guidelines on measures to phase out Single-Use Plastic items**, that will eventually be adopted by the Barcelona Convention at the next Meeting of the Contracting Parties later this year.

This bulletin intends to also inform stakeholders that have not directly participated in the training and to provide them with a summary of points discussed and useful links to explore in order to gain a better understanding of the various ways to phase out Single-Use Plastics.

## OBJECTIVES

---

The objective of this training was to strengthen the skills and capacities of the participants to identify, prioritise and operationalise targeted measures to phase out Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) and included:

- Sharing knowledge on challenges related to SUPs
- Sharing expertise on solutions to manage and reduce SUPs
- Boosting South-to-South and North-to-South cooperation
- Building lasting relations and exchanges

## WEBINARS

---

The four training webinars tackled the following issues:

### Webinar 1: 13 January 2021

- **Introduction to SUPs: what are they & why are they a problem:**

Introduction of key terms and definitions related to SUPs and overview of the main challenges, taking into consideration technical, environmental and health perspectives. Focus on the EU SUPs Directive, the most groundbreaking piece of legislation on the issue of SUPs worldwide.  
by Thomais Vlachogianni (WES, Non Key Expert)

- **Marine plastic pollution: key facts and figures related to the leakage of SUPs in the coastal and marine environment**

Overview of the marine plastic pollution threat in the Mediterranean and presentation of key facts and figures related to the leakage of SUPs in the coastal and marine environment. The importance of a comprehensive marine plastic pollution monitoring scheme: identifying targeted measures and assessing their effectiveness.  
by Thomais Vlachogianni (WES, Non Key Expert)

- **The COVID-19 pandemic and SUPs: potential impacts and solutions**

Raising participant's awareness on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic related to the increased use of SUPs and personal protective equipment (e.g. masks). Overview of their potential leakage in the environment and potential solutions.  
by Thomais Vlachogianni (WES, Non Key Expert)

## Webinar 2: 28 January 2021

- **Alternatives to SUPs: issues with Bio-based and compostable options.**

Definitions and limitations in preventing environmental impacts.

by Ayesha Bapasola (Technical Expert)

- **Alternatives to SUPs: Single-use non-plastic and multi-use option**

Review and how to assess them from an environmental and socioeconomic perspective.

by Ayesha Bapasola (Technical Expert)

- **Policy measures to address SUPs**

Description and potential feasibility, including private initiatives and introduction to business models (reuse). This section also addressed how policy design is linked to alternatives availability.

by Chris Sherrington (WES, Non Key Expert)

## Webinar 3: 11 February 2021

- **Studying SUPs baselines in selected countries**

Learning how to assess a baseline situation in a given country in terms of SUPs production, consumption, waste management practices, and leakage in the environment.

by Hara Xirou (Technical Expert) and Laurence Elliott (Modelling Expert)

*Contributions from:*

Azra Vukovic, Ayman Rachid, Abdelrahman Fahmy (SCP/RAC national experts)

- **Assessing policy options impact**

Exploring the potential impact that different policy measures would have in a given context through modelling. Exploring the potential impact that different policy measures would have in a given context through modelling.

by Laurence Elliott (Modelling Expert)

- **Breakout group discussions**

Revising country baseline results and reflection on the applicability to each country's context.

by Azra Vukovic, Ayman Rachid and Abdelrahman Fahmy (SCP/RAC national experts)

## Webinar 4: 25 February 2021

- **Actions in response to SUP products**

Latest news from UNEA5, life cycle approach and legislative guide to tackle SUPs.

by Llorenç Milà i Canals, Head of Secretariat, Life Cycle Initiative (UN Environment Programme–Economy Division)

- **Regional guidelines of the Barcelona Convention**

How guidelines are supporting countries in addressing marine plastic litter, with particular focus on plastic bags and the upcoming guidelines on SUPs.

by Magali Outters (SCP/RAC Team Leader)

- **Adoption of policy and accompanying measures**

Key considerations in the legal making process in relation to SUPs, and how key accompanying measures can ensure proper enforcement and smooth implementation.  
by Pedro Fernández (SCP/RAC -WES, Non Key Expert)

- **Video study-visit**

Are compostable plastics a solution to the plastic crisis? The virtual visit to an industrial composting facility allowed participants to reflect on limitations of compostable plastics as a solution to the SUPs issues.

by Núria Admetlla, Albert Garcia (Technical experts of the Catalan Waste Agency)

- **Wrap up of the training webinars and key take-aways for regional guidelines**

A wrap up of all the 4 webinars identified main issues to be considered in the upcoming *Regional Guidelines on measures to phase out Single-Use Plastic items*.

by Ms. Magali Outters and Mr. Pedro Fernández (SCP/RAC –WES)

## USEFUL LINKS AND PRESENTATIONS

---

For further background reading and useful documents, please refer to the links provided here below.

### Presentations:

#### Webinar 1

- Introduction by Professor Scoullou, WES Team leader
- The problematic of single use plastics
- Plastic pollution on Mediterranean beaches

#### Webinar 2

- Responses to Single Use Plastics

#### Webinar 3

- Feasibility and impact of measures in the Mediterranean

#### Webinar 4

- Implementation of measures and co-development of regional guidelines + Video/Study visit

### Background documents:

#### Webinar 1:

- UNEP, Single Use plastics a Roadmap for Sustainability
- DIRECTIVE (EU) 2019/on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

#### Webinar 2

- Plastic to go containers are bad but are the alternatives any better?
- Single-use plastic take-away food packaging and its alternatives
- Single-use plastic bags and their alternatives, UNEP
- Single-use plastic bottles and their alternatives, UNEP
- Reuse Rethinking Packaging
- The business case for tackling plastic packaging
- Relevance of Biodegradable and Compostable Consumer Plastic Products

#### Webinar 3

- Info document for the preparation of guidelines to tackle SUPs in the Mediterranean

#### Webinar 4

- The Global Commitment 2020 Progress report
- Guidelines to address SUPs through public procurement in the Mediterranean
- Guidelines to phase out SUP bags in the Mediterranean
- Moving away from Single Use
- National Guidance for Plastic Pollution Hotspotting and Shaping Action
- Tackling Plastic Pollution: Legislative Guide for the Regulation of Single-Use Plastic Products

## WES PROJECT AND WES SUPPORT

---

The Water and Environment Support (WES) is a regional project designed to contribute to the implementation of an integrated approach to pollution reduction and prevention, in line with the Union for the Mediterranean agendas and the Barcelona Convention. WES is also meant to contribute to a more efficient management of scarce water resources in the ENI Southern Neighbourhood region.

The project aims to do so by increasing the capacity of stakeholders that are involved in pollution reduction and water management and support them in formulating and implementing the environmental and water policies.

WES supports the shift to a more sustainable consumption and production model, promotes an integrated and efficient management of water, combats plastic pollution and marine litter and fosters dialogue on key environmental and sustainable development issues. In this way, WES also supports mutual understanding, cooperation and peace in the region.

The WES Project Countries are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. However, in order to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of

EU funding or to promote regional cooperation, the eligibility of specific actions can be extended to neighboring countries in the Southern Neighborhood region.

This activity was implemented by WES consortium partner Regional Activity Center for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC, [www.cprac.org](http://www.cprac.org)) and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE, [www.mio-ecsde.org](http://www.mio-ecsde.org)).

For further information of the WES project, please visit:

[www.wes-med.eu](http://www.wes-med.eu)

And follow us for all the latest updates via:

Facebook: [@sustainablemediterranean](https://www.facebook.com/sustainablemediterranean)

Twitter: [@WesMed19](https://twitter.com/WesMed19)