



WES INFO BULLETIN REGIONAL ACTIVITY ON UNDERSTANDING BETTER MICROPLASTICS AND IDENTIFYING HOW TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE

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Overview

It is widely acknowledged that the Mediterranean Sea is one of the most affected seas by marine litter. In particular, the emerging issue of microplastics and nanoplastics is considered to be a severe environmental and health challenge, including in the MENA countries.

Addressing this hot issue, the Water and Environment Support (WES) in the Southern Neighborhood region project, designed a tailor-made **Regional Activity focusing on ‘Understanding microplastics and identifying how to address the issue’** (RE-2-REG) to involve designated participants, representing different stakeholders from the WES Partner Countries (PCs), namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia.

The activity was delivered in three online sessions from May to June 2022.

The regional activity aimed to provide technical assistance and strengthen the capacities of the WES Partner Countries to effectively address the issue of microplastics in the Mediterranean marine environment. It included state of the art information related to microplastics production and leakage into the environment, monitoring methods, best practices in addressing the problem, and regional and national frameworks within which countries tackle the issue.

Objectives

The objectives of this training were to:

- » Improve the knowledge of participants on the threats that microplastics pose on the environment and human livelihood.
- » Enhance the capacity of the targeted stakeholders to monitor and assess primary and secondary microplastics.
- » Facilitate the competent authorities of the WES PCs to design and coordinate actions in preventing the use of primary microplastics, and to design and implement related national programs and policy measures.
- » Develop the necessary competences of key non-state stakeholders of the WES PCs to design and implement programs and actions to reduce and eventually phase out the use of primary microplastics and prevent the leakage of plastic litter into the environment.
- » Support the WES PCs (competent national authorities and other stakeholders) in engaging further with regional plans to address the issue of microplastics.

Methodology and Implementation

This Regional Training was a direct request emanating from the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties. At the same time, tackling pollution from plastics and marine litter (including microplastics) is at the core of the Union for the Mediterranean's 2030 GreenerMed Agenda and its three priority axes of work: a) Support the transition to a green, circular and socially inclusive economy; b) Prevent and reduce pollution on land, air and sea; c) Protect, preserve, manage and restore natural resources in the Mediterranean region within an integrated, ecosystem-based approach, including terrestrial, marine and coastal dimensions.

The team of WES environment and marine litter Experts organised a **3-day online Regional Training in May-June 2022**, during which a number of focused and easy to follow presentations, training questionnaires and Q&A, quizzes, as well as background material and exercises were used. Interventions from trainees generated very good discussions and valuable information was shared between all participants.

The training was structured in three modules:

- **Module 1:** Understanding the issue of microplastics in the marine environment: amounts, types, sources, effects, and monitoring approaches;
- **Module 2:** Understanding the issue of primary microplastics: impacts, existing measures and the way forward;
- **Module 3:** Understanding the issue of secondary microplastics: impacts, existing measures and the way forward.

Main topics:

A range of topics was covered by the training related to microplastics, including basic terminology and definitions, key facts and figures regarding their production, consumption and leakage into the environment, potential effects on the environment and human health, monitoring techniques, and the difference between primary and secondary microplastics. The training also included case studies and key concepts related to microplastics, as well as an overview of international and regional initiatives aiming at addressing the issue.

Results

The online Regional Training consisted of three sessions, each lasting three hours. The training was held on the 12th and 14th of May 2022, and 2nd of June 2022. A total of 52 representatives from 10 Mediterranean countries participated, including representatives from Ministries of Environment, Health, and Industry, Government Agencies related to Waste Management, Business Organisations, Academia, and NGOs. Marine litter experts and experts on plastic pollution prevention measures provided participants with the opportunity to:

- ✓ Deepen their knowledge on the problem posed by microplastics, particularly related to their leakage into the coastal and marine environment.
- ✓ Understand the implications of microplastics in the environment.

- ✓ Gain a clear understanding of the effects and impacts of primary and secondary microplastics.
- ✓ Learn about various measures to reduce and better manage leakage of microplastics.
- ✓ Acquire knowledge on the current status of responses to manage the problem of microplastics in the WES PCs.
- ✓ Enhance their capacities to assess the impact of various measures (private and public) aimed at tackling the problem.
- ✓ Strengthen their capacity to implement policy measures to address microplastics and monitor its presence.
- ✓ Reinforce a regional network of stakeholders dealing with marine plastic pollution in the Mediterranean.

Useful Link

https://www.wes-med.eu/activities_type/re-2-reg-understanding-better-microplastics-and-identifying-how-to-address-the-issue/

WES Project

The EU funded 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 Partner Countries are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. However, 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 Neighbourhood region.

For any further information on WES project, please visit: www.wes-med.eu

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