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MARLIN will ensure the continuity of solutions to marine litter issue

“Lack of comparable and reliable data is the major gap in marine litter issues in the Baltic sea”, was said by HELCOM. And MARLIN started as a project, who would provide these important data. However it was not the only aim of MARLIN. In combination with opinion building activities, measurements could become a part of mitigation strategies to reduce littering.

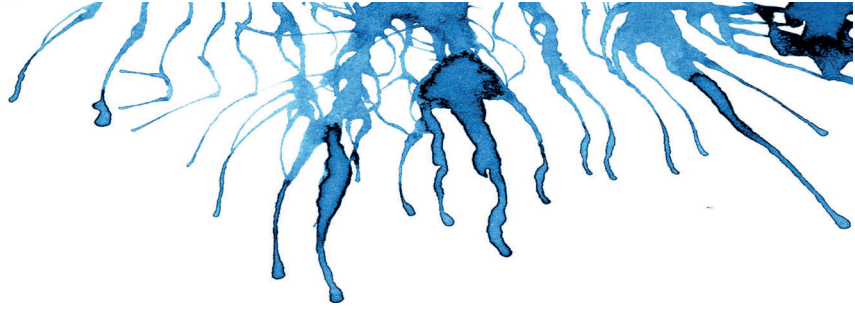
During two years the Baltic Marine Litter project has introduced a harmonized monitoring program of marine litter in the Baltic Sea in combination with several successful campaigns. During this time, marine litter is finally on the Baltic Sea Agenda, and Helcom has decided to develop a regional marine litter action plan by 2015.

The final project conference took place 22nd - 23rd of October in Stockholm. National and local authorities, researchers, NGOs and private companies participated in small round table discussions to discuss marine litter issues relevant for the Baltic Sea. Some results from the discussions were:

- Marine litter is one of the top-three major problems for the Baltic Sea
- Main sources of marine litter are believed to be tourism, riverine transport of waste from landfills and discharge of untreated municipal sewage
- The main reasons for littering is due to our throw-away society, laziness and lack of education

For the first time a common monitoring method in the Baltic Sea has been used and a common database has been developed. We have a structure to ensure the quality of litter assessments from 25 reference beaches carried out by local organisations. The monitoring result of marine litter, such as composition, amounts and seasonal trends is a good baseline for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The outputs constitute a possible platform for member states, authorities and other organizations to continue this work.





EU action plans towards marine litter for the future

Announced in HELCOM ministerial meeting in Copenhagen, October 2013.

Helcom determined to take further measures, initiatives or efforts needed to reach a healthy marine ecosystem supporting a prosperous Baltic Sea region, including addressing pollution of the marine environment by litter.

Helcom is seriously concerned about the growing evidence of harmful effects of marine litter on wildlife and habitats and on marine biodiversity and the environment with a dominance of plastics of different sizes (ranging from macro- to microparticles);

Helcom agrees to prevent and reduce marine litter from land- and sea-based sources, causing harmful impacts on coastal and marine habitats and species, and negative impacts on various economic sectors, such as fisheries, shipping or tourism, and to this end decides to develop a regional action plan by 2015 at the latest with the aim of achieving a significant quantitative reduction of marine litter by 2025, compared to 2015, and to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment;

Helcom agrees to continue the intensified efforts to improve data and information quality and availability as well as coordinated monitoring practices, constituting the basis of HELCOM work, which is to ensure a sufficient knowledge base for devising cost-efficient measures and overall the implementation of the ecosystem approach and management of human activities in the Baltic Sea;

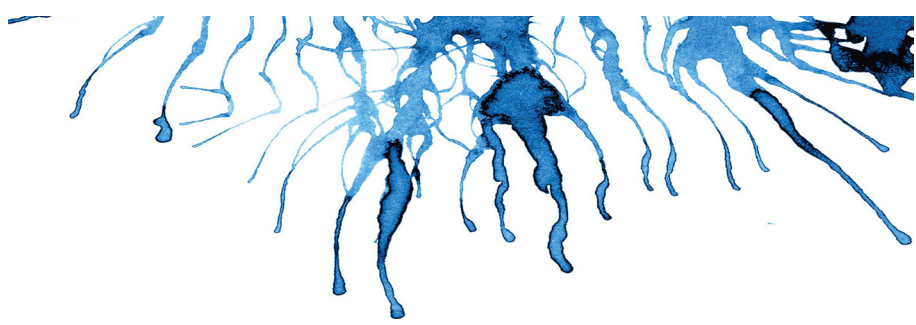
Helcom agrees that the regional action plan on marine litter should allow to:

- carry out concrete measures for prevention and reduction of marine litter from its main sources with the aim of achieving significant quantitative reductions focusing inter alia on working with industry to reduce or phase out microbeads in certain products in the market develop and test technology for removal of microplastics and nanoparticles in municipal waste water treatment plants by 2020 and inter alia work with industry to ban the use of microplastics and on the assessment of the use of nanoparticles within the production process (e.g. in cosmetics);
- utilize existing networks to address marine litter issues;
- develop common indicators and associated targets related to quantities, composition, sources and pathway of marine litter, including riverine inputs, in order to gain information on long-term trends, and carry out the monitoring of the progress towards achieving the agreed goals and to gain an inventory of marine litter in the Baltic Sea as well as scientific sound evaluation of its sources. Where possible, the harmonized monitoring protocols based on the recommendations of the EU Technical Subgroup on Marine Litter will be used;
- identify the socio-economic and biological impacts of marine litter, also in terms of toxicity of litter;
- review regularly the effectiveness of the measures, for the first time by 2020.





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Two years of project – what has been experienced?



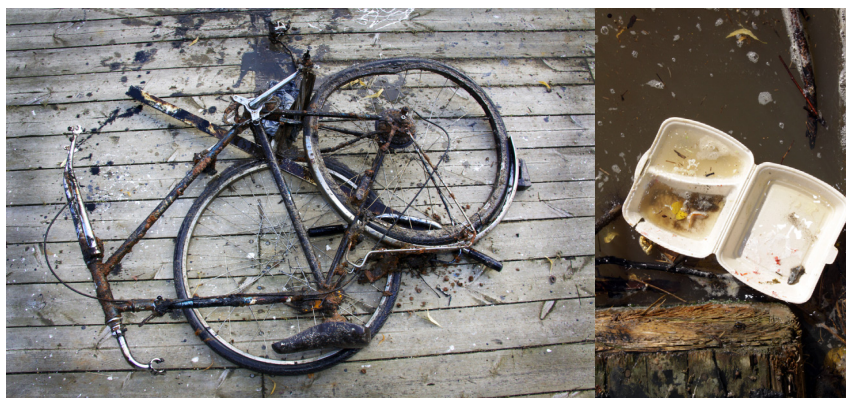
Marlin gathers together people (Latvia, campaign "My Sea")



Discoverings about Baltic Sea bed (Sweden, Litter free marinas)



Communication about marine litter can be thrilling (Estonia, Kuressaare Maritime festival)



Every little action matters. As well as people attitude (Finland, findings from Baltic Sea)