

The background of the entire page is a photograph of marine litter, specifically plastic bags and other debris, floating in the water. The image is split horizontally: the top half is white, and the bottom half is a solid blue color that matches the water in the photograph. The text 'MARINE LITTER' is written diagonally across the center, with 'MARINE' in light blue and 'LITTER' in dark blue.

MARINE LITTER

**ACTION PLAN
FOR THE BALTIC SEA**

An underwater photograph showing a large amount of plastic waste, including several clear plastic bags and smaller pieces of debris, floating in the water. The water is a deep teal color, and some green seaweed or algae is visible in the upper left corner.

**MARINE LITTER
THREATENS HUMAN
HEALTH AND SAFETY
AND HAS SOCIO-
ECONOMIC COSTS**

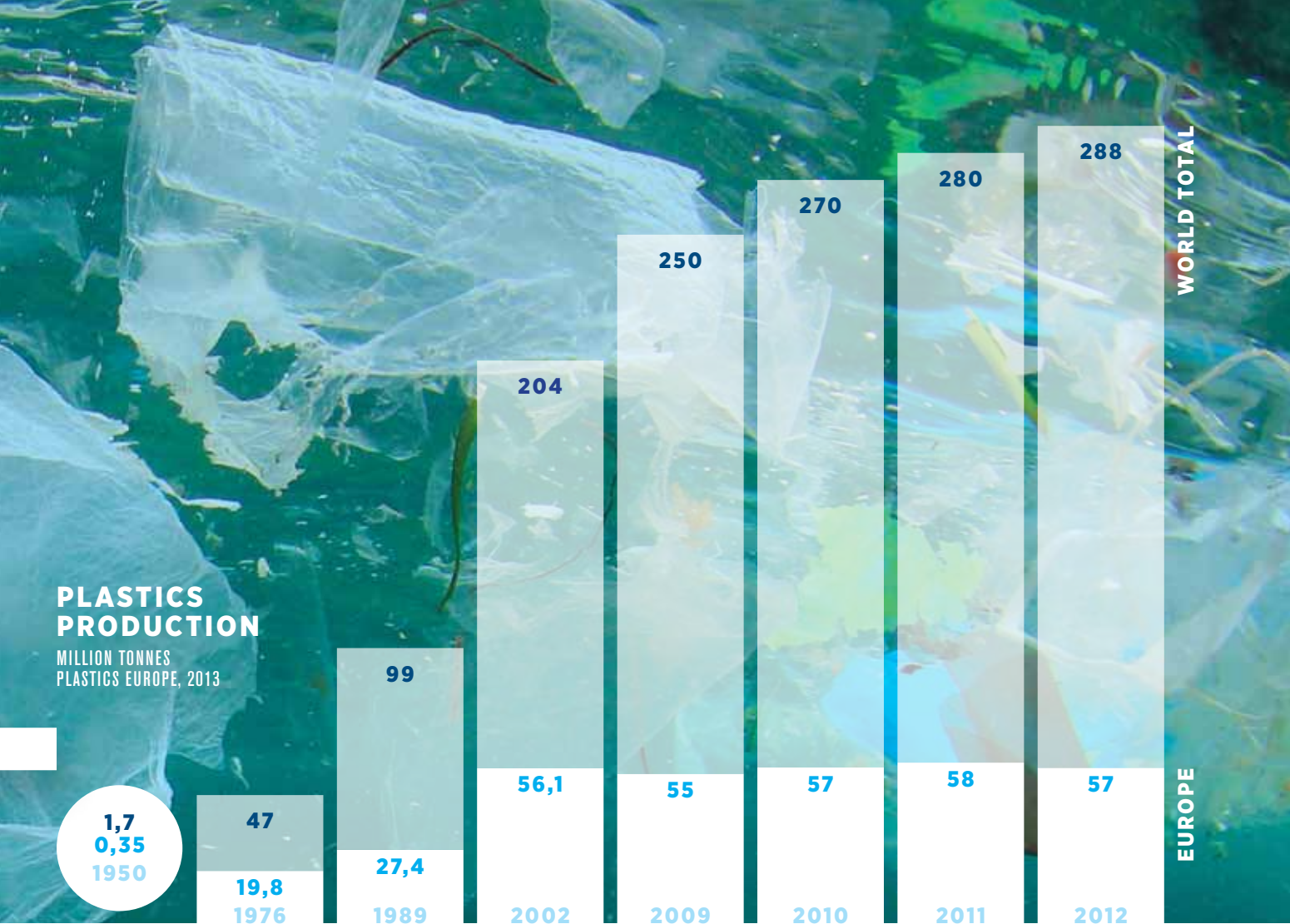
A GLOBAL CONCERN

MARINE LITTER is a global problem with far-reaching implications. While it jeopardises the beauty of our waters, marine litter also impairs marine organisms, threatens human health and safety, and has socio-economic costs.

Marine litter is defined as any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal

environment. As such, it includes items brought into the sea through natural forces, like river flows or wind, as well as other drainage and sewage systems.

There are many land- and sea-based sources of marine debris but the problem can be largely traced to general production and consumption habits. Among other factors, household disposal of waste material, management of waste water as well as shipping



discharges play a significant role in the well-being of marine ecosystems around the world.

Notably, plastics make up the most significant part of marine litter – a challenge made even more difficult in light of the ever-growing levels of plastic production and the resistant nature of the material. However, plastics degrade over time into smaller particles due to UV exposure as well as currents and waves at sea;

these secondary microplastics should be distinguished from primary microplastics specifically produced for industrial and commercial purposes. Both, regrettably, have serious consequences for the marine environment. It is estimated that three-quarters of marine litter is made up of plastics, including microplastics (<5mm in diameter), which may accumulate through the food chain.

OTHER 2%

RECREATIONAL
FISHING 3%

FISHING 3%

SHIPPING 4%

CONSTRUCTION &
DEMOLITION 3%

RECREATIONAL
BOATING 6%

PORTS 5%

WASTE COLLECTION
TRANSPORT 7%

GENERAL HOUSE-
HOLD 12%

COASTAL TOURISM 25%

SANITARY WASTE 29%

SOURCES OF MARINE LITTER IN THE BALTIC SEA ²

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IS THE NUMBER ONE CONTRIBUTOR OF MARINE LITTER IN THE BALTIC SEA ¹

48% of marine litter in the Baltic Sea originates from household-related (including sanitary) waste, while waste generated by recreational or tourism activities would add up to 33%. ²

LITTER IN

MARINE LITTER in the Baltic Sea has, in recent years, gained more attention as studies have shown significant amounts of beach litter in the region. At the same time, decision-makers under other Regional Sea Conventions have developed action plans to combat problems regionally as well as nationally.

FAST FACTS

- Up to 40 tonnes of microplastics – particles <5mm in diameter – are released annually into the Baltic Sea catchment area through the use of products like body wash, shower gels and scrubs. ³
- Scientific studies show that microplastics can bring serious harm to the marine environment and its

TOP 10 ITEMS FOUND ON BEACHES

CIGARETTE BUTTS

UNIDENTIFIED PIECES
OF PLASTIC

GLASS FRAGMENTS

COTTON BUDS

BOTTLES

FOOD AND SNACK PACKAGING
(FOOD CONTAINERS, CANDY WRAPPERS,
PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS AND LIDS)

FISHING NETS

PLASTIC BAGS

FOAMED PLASTIC

MICRO PARTICLES
& MICRO FIBRES

FOAMED
PLASTIC 6%

METAL 7%

PAPER &
CARDBOARD 9%

OTHER 11%

GLASS &
CERAMICS 11%

PLASTICS 56%

BEACH LITTER IN THE BALTIC SEA ESTONIA, FINLAND, LATVIA, SWEDEN ¹

SOURCES:

- 1 - MARLIN PROJECT, 2013
- 2 - ARCADIS REPORT, 2012
- 3 - BALTIC EYE POLICY BRIEF, 2015
- 4 - WWF POLAND, 2011

THE BALTIC

inhabitants. When in water, microplastics act as magnets, attracting and carrying bacteria and various contaminants that “colonize” the particles. ³

- Around 130 tons of polyethylene particles from personal care products are flushed down the household drains in the Baltic Sea catchment area each year. ³

- The amounts of litter collected from selected Baltic beaches ranged from 76 items per 100m on rural beaches to 237 items per 100m on urban beaches in Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Sweden in 2012-13. ¹
- There are an estimated 150-450 tons of lost fish nets in the seabed of the Polish territorial sea and Polish exclusive economic zone alone. ⁴

PLAN THEMES

**1. GENERAL IMPROVED
WASTE PREVENTION AND
MANAGEMENT ON LAND**

2. MICRO PARTICLES

**3. SEWAGE-RELATED LITTER
INCLUDING SANITARY WASTE**

4. EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE

5. PLASTIC BAGS

6. BOTTLES AND CONTAINERS

HELCOM TAK



HELCOM'S main goal is to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to restore and safeguard its ecological balance. While the issue of marine litter has been recognized and addressed by HELCOM for many years, the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration included a more clear commitment: to develop a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter by the end of 2015.

The Action Plan was fully adopted in June 2015 after an extensive consultation process held with regional stakeholders at various levels.

HELCOM'S REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON MARINE LITTER

for the Baltic Sea has two important aims:

- 1** significantly reduce marine litter by 2025 as compared to 2015 levels
- 2** prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment

**7. REMEDIATION AND
REMOVAL ON LAND**

**8. GENERAL IMPROVED
WASTE PREVENTION AND
MANAGEMENT AT SEA**

**9. WASTE DELIVERY IN
PORTS AND MARINAS**

**10. WASTE RELATED TO
FISHING AND AQUACULTURE**

**11. REMEDIATION AND
REMOVAL AT SEA**

12. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



ING ACTION

There are 30 regional actions in the Action Plan, touching upon waste management and sewage water systems, as well as the remediation and closure of dumpsites. The plan also deals with top items such as micro particles, polystyrene foam, plastic bags, sanitary litter in sewage, and bottles and containers.

Additionally, the plan covers sea-based sources through developing best practices for handling waste from fisheries and ships, as well as the collection of abandoned fishing gear such as ghost nets. Since research has shown that most marine litter derives

from households and consumer practices, actions addressing education and outreach on marine litter are also included.

While the fight against litter is already in gear, the task can only be successful through active and wide involvement. In particular, businesses, governments, industry, non-governmental organizations as well as private citizens in the region are called on to jointly address the issue of marine litter.



HELCOM – BALTIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COMMISSION

KATAJANOKANLAITURI 6 B, FI-00160 HELSINKI, FINLAND PHONE +358 207 412 649 WWW.HELCOM.FI