

# MARINE LITTER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

In the Mediterranean, marine litter is generated mainly from land based activities. On its shores, the most frequently recorded items are cigarette filters, plastic bottles and bags, and aluminium beverage cans, while in its seas 83% of the floating items are plastic.



Certain features of the Mediterranean region make the issue of tackling the marine litter issue quite difficult:

- Most of the big towns and industries are situated along its coasts.
- Waste disposal sites are often located close to the coasts.
- It is a hot touristic spot receiving every year approx. 200 million tourists.
- It is a "closed" sea with a slow renewal rate.
- It has a lot of maritime traffic.
- It is a deep sea (up to 4.000 meters) and litter "trapped" at these depths acts as a "time bomb" taking many years to decompose.
- High temperatures accelerate litter degradation into secondary products that are difficult to collect or treat.

A major factor for the persistence of marine litter in the Mediterranean is the weak enforcement of existing laws in most countries. While most polluting countries already have measures in place to prevent litter from reaching the sea, implementation is inadequate due to poor administration, unfavourable budget allocation, weak technical capacity etc.

To face these challenges the necessary measures needed at regional level include:

- A region-wide legal framework, with "upstream" waste reduction measures;
- Proper implementation of existing legislation dealing with waste;
- Training of those involved in litter management;
- Strengthening of regional coordination and cooperation;
- A monitoring system for marine litter in the Mediterranean Sea;
- Regional awareness raising campaigns with adequate duration and follow-up