



**Black Sea Advisory Council /BISAC/
CONSILIUL CONSULTATIV PENTRU MAREA
NEAGRA**

Association, entered in NPLER

Asociatie, inregistrata in Registrul
of the Republic of Bulgaria
UIC 176964109
Headquarters and management address:
Varna Town, 26 Ohrid Street, 1st floor
office@blsaceu.eu

persoanelor juridice fara scop patrimonial
al R Bulgaria, CUI 176964109
Sediu si adresa de conducere:
Mun. Varna, str. "Ohrid" N 24-26, etaj 1
office@blsaceu.eu

MINUTES

From the meeting of Focus Group 6 of BISAC – 11 May, 2022

Subject: "Marine litter"

On 11 May, 2022, a meeting of Focus Group 6 of BISAC was held in Continental Forum Hotel, Constanta City via video link in ZOOM, on the following topic: "Marine Litter".

The meeting was attended by: Mrs. Yana Velina from the Ministry of Environment and Waters, Mrs. Alena Petrikovikova – Marine Litter Policy Officer in General Directorate "Maritime Affairs" of the EC, Mr. Alexandru Simeonov - NARA, Constanta.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of BISAC - Mr. Daniel Buhai.

The next is a presentation by Mrs. Alena Petrikovikova on the following topic: "Fishing devices in EU legislation, related to the marine litter".

Mrs. Petrikovikova acquainted the members of the BISAC with aspects of the **Directive for Reducing the Environmental Impact of Certain Plastic Products (EU) 2019/904**. First, she pointed to the extended liability schemes for manufacturers of fishing devices containing plastic, which cover separate collection, transport, treatment and awareness-raising measures. The definition of "manufacturer" is clearly described: "one who professionally produces, fills, sells or imports, regardless of the technique used to sell and place on the market fishing devices, containing plastic".

According to this Directive, the Member States have the obligation to set national minimum annual targets for collecting the marine litter by the end of 2024. The separate collection of the marine litter is very important. In this regard, the EC has asked the European Organization for Standardization to develop harmonized standards relating to the circular design of fishing devices - by May 2024. In, the Member States must monitor and report to the Commission on fishing devices - by mid-2024, what are the fishing devices, placed on the market and how is the litter from fishing devices collected.

The EC has also revised the **Port Reception Facilities Directive (EU) 2019/883**. The changes are related to the reduction of ship-generated litter in the sea via combination of incentive and enforcement measures, and it is the responsibility of the Member States to set up appropriate port reception facilities. A new requirement for all ships, including the fishing vessels and recreational crafts, is to deliver all their litter before departure. Particular emphasis is placed on marine litter from ships, including this one from fishing ships and fishing devices, passive fishing litter, and the preparation by Member States of an adequate separate collection plan, litter collection and treatment plans, as well as electronic reporting

and information exchange. Since 1 January, 2022 the Member States must report on the quantity and characteristics of passive fishing litter delivered to the ports, as the reporting is mandatory and voluntary. The mandatory one includes the total mass and total volume of all passive fishing litter, and the voluntary one - the mass and volume of passive fishing litter, sorted by material type.

EC also introduces litter fishing schemes and litter collection activities. Under the new Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2021-2027 in Art. 25 (2) "a" and "b" it is envisaged financial support for the passive collection by fishermen of lost fishing devices and marine litter, as well as for investments in ports, in order to provide appropriate facilities for receiving lost fishing devices and marine litter.

The next steps of the EC are aimed at:

- Implementation of the measures set out in the Port Reception Facilities Directive and the Disposable Plastics Directive;
- Support for litter fishing schemes;
- Development of a circular design for fishing equipment;
- Working together with the Member States and stakeholders;
- Collecting data from monitoring obligations;
- Assessment of the Plastics Directive by 3 July 2027;
- The EC will present a report based on the assessment;
- If appropriate, the report shall be accompanied by a legislative proposal;

Discussions follow:

Mrs. Michaela Candea-Mirya: BISAC has sent recommendations regarding the marine litter, to both Member States - Bulgaria and Romania, so that the legislation can be implemented, but they have not been taken into account, even those for the construction of port facilities for litter collection. On the other hand, some members of the BISAC have dedicated their work to the collection of marine litter and are looking for ways to better implement the European directives. Mrs. Michaela Mirya asks how BISAC can help to implement the directives in both countries. Under the previous Maritime and Fisheries Fund, there were measures for collecting the marine litter, but they were not attractive to fishermen and were not implemented in practice.

Mrs. Yana Velina: deals with biodiversity and the material in Mrs. Petrikovikova's presentation is new information for her. The Ministry of Environment and Water has already taken some measures regarding marine litter and is well aware of this problem. She asked Ms. Petrikovikova if there was any territorial division in the exclusive economic zones of Bulgaria and Romania, how the litter was collected - mainly from inland waters and if it was concentrated in areas with valuable habitats.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: According to Directive 904/2019, it is envisaged to develop standards for the production of fishing devices and it is clear from the presentation that their implementation will be voluntary and when it will become mandatory. Also, which institution will be involved in the control of this activity - the environmental services or the National Fisheries Agencies?

Mr. Yordan Gospodinov: In Bulgaria, the Executive Agency for Fisheries and Aquaculture is responsible for this control.

Mrs. Alena Petrikovikova: response to Mrs. Michaela Mirya - how the Advisory Councils can help in measures implementation - by gathering all stakeholders at the table for discussions and consultations, because this is not one-way process. The role of fishing devices manufacturers is very important and they need to be controlled because they are at every link in the chain from production to collection, sorting and recycling of discarded fishing devices. Regarding the new Maritime and Fisheries Fund, it is simpler and fishermen could benefit from the measures. To Mrs. Yana Velina: Marine pollution is the biggest aggressor for ecosystems and biodiversity. The litter collection must be performed in a sustainable way for the environment - passive collection should be applied when the litter enters the fishing nets during fishing, not actively or purposefully search for litter. The latter is also possible, but when there is litter accumulation somewhere in the sea. If this targeted active collection is performed, it must be environmentally friendly.

To Mr Buhai: So far, it is not planned when the standards for the production of fishing devices will become mandatory, because it is related to many specifics in different countries and it will be difficult to have a single mandatory standard. Perhaps in a few years it will be possible, but for now this is not the goal of the EC. It is up to the Member State to decide which administration will be responsible for controlling the marine litter collection.

Mr Laurentiu Mirea - President of the Federation of Black Sea Fisheries Organizations: The idea of collecting litter is very good, but it is very difficult to do it all over the Romanian coast because even there are no ports, so we can't talk about litter collection facilities. First of all, the state must build ports, and then we can only talk about the marine litter collection.

The next is a presentation by Mrs. Madalina Galacki - a researcher at the Grigore Antipa Institute, on the following topic: "The bottom litter condition in Romanian coastal waters". The Institute's survey was conducted with a bottom trawl by a team of researchers from the Department of Living Marine Resources, and monitoring activities were carried out on benthic litter at depths between 12 and 65 m, in the sector between Vama Veke and Sulina. The methodology of the guide, applied in the European maritime area, has been used and the observance of the MEDITS protocol, 2017 has been taken into account. Bottom trawling is used for sampling of demersal fish, as well as for collecting litter from the seabed of 22 / 27-34 m, by towing fishing facilities.

In 2021, three expeditions with a 10-day bottom trawl were conducted and 108 trawls were carried out, and litter was found in 27 trawl operations. During the bottom trawling fisheries, the area covered by the trawling is 7779.34 m² and the total amount of litter collected is 11.65 kg. Compared to previous years, the composition of benthic litter in 2021 is dominated by plastic and textile materials.

Labels of some litter findings have been identified as Russian, Bulgarian, Turkish and Romanian. According to the conclusions of the study in recent years, there is downward both in the amount of the identified litter and in its number. The downward trend is very important and is a result of the implementation of the Marine Litter Framework Directive.

Discussions follow:

Mr. Daniel Buhai: The presentation mentions that the amount of bottom litter has decreased and it has been said that labels in Bulgarian, Turkish and Russian have been found, which is strange because the Black Sea current that runs along the Romanian coast takes everything to the south and it is not logical to have litter with labels in Bulgarian and Turkish.

Mrs. Madalina Galacki: the mentioned litter is most likely from Turkish, Russian and Bulgarian ships, not from those coming from the coasts of Bulgaria and Turkey.

Mr. Marian Payu: I would like to ask Mrs. Galacki what depth was the study done at? And in which zone?

Mrs. Madalina Galacki: The study was conducted at a depth of 12 - 65 m in different areas.

The next is a presentation by Mr. Costin Timofte from the NGO "Mare Nostrum" on the following topic: "Black Sea free of nets (Net free Black sea)". According to the Marine Litter Watch application, developed by the European Environment Agency, the Black Sea is the most polluted sea in the regional seas in terms of marine litter on the beaches, 652 pieces of litter per 100 m of beach, 85% of which is plastic. In 2022, two expeditions were made to collect litter on the beach (February and April) and 5785 pieces were registered, which is 50% less than the expeditions for the same period in 2021 (11305 pieces). During the last decade, the academic teams, NGOs and the fishing industry have been alerting for abandoned, lost or discarded fishing facilities - also known as "ghost facilities", as well as their impact on the aquatic environment. "The ghost facilities" are unwanted by-product of fishing and are especially deadly, as they are designed to catch marine inhabitants. They pose a significant threat, especially to sensitive habitats and endangered species, as they can alter and degrade marine habitats through physical damage caused by abrasion, suffocation, and alter the physical and chemical composition of the marine sediments. Modern plastics are thought to last up to 600 years in the marine environment, so the effects of plastic uptake and toxicity may continue long after fishing facilities have lost its shape. The goals of the Net free Black Sea initiative are the following:

- Removal of phantom fishing facilities from two areas of the Romanian coast, between Midia Cape and Vama Veke;
- Creating a working network for effective knowledge transfer between the world of research, industry, local government and local communities;
- Raising awareness of the social, economic and environmental damage caused by abandoned / lost nets in the Black Sea region.

The implementation period is from May 2022 to April 2023. The project is financially supported by the Ocean Conservancy Global Ghost Gear Initiative Small Grants Program, where the NGO "Mare Nostrum" is the only member organization from the Black Sea. The next steps of the project are:

- Removal of about 1000 kg of abandoned or accidentally lost fishing nets from the waters of the Black Sea;
- Reporting the accumulation points of these types of litter in the portal / application of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative;
- Organizing a public event and exhibition for the local community / general public;
- Organizing a seminar for stakeholders to develop and implement new measures to reduce marine fisheries litter;

The NGO "Mare Nostrum" needs the assistance of the members of BISAC, which consists of reporting abandoned or accidentally lost fishing nets by fishermen via GPS location or

photos. Fishermen should also restore these facilities whenever possible and if the necessary resources are available.

Discussions follow:

Mr. Alexandru Simeonov: It was mentioned that the collection of these nets will take place between Midia Cape and Vama Veke, but are there more specific areas and how will it be determined whether these nets are lost or abandoned? And have such nets already been in place? There are also legal requirements for how these nets should be collected and it should be good to contact NARA, in order to avoid breaches.

Mr. Costin Timofte: Surveys have been conducted by local fishermen and they have given the coordinates for the places.

Mr. Laurentiu Mirya: recommends NGO "Mare Nostrum" to get in touch at the regional level in Constanta City with a newly established association that deals with collecting and recycling various types of litter.

Mr. Daniel Buhai: The tasks of this initiative are limited, relying only on questionnaires addressed to fishermen, perhaps NARA and the Border Police should be contacted because they have information when the fishing nets are abandoned and when they are result of poaching.

Mr. Marian Payu: This initiative of the NGO "Mare Nostrum" is has just begun, there will be litter collection via trawling and by divers, who will also take photos of the abandoned nets. But we also should actively seek a solution for the places of ports where these nets should be collected, because as fishermen have repeatedly warned, they must hand them over for recycling at their own expense.

Mrs. Dimitrina Kostova: Can the found fishing nets be repaired and used again?

Mr. Marian Payu: Certainly yes, but it is a great effort to clean and repair them. Some parts of the nets can be used - for example, the lead elements in them.

Mrs. Dimitrina Kostova: Her organization is currently launching an environmental project for northeastern Bulgaria, which is creating software to share information about unnecessary items, tools, machines, etc. that are disposed by citizens, so checking what is uploaded in the platform, you can go to get it for free. In this way the litter is reduced, the only condition is to note the weight of the item. A contractor for the software is currently selected, the contract with Android and iPhone is about to be signed.

Mr Marian Payu: The NGO "Mare Nostrum" also has its own marine litter collection initiative, providing fishermen with large sacks, where to collect it. There is only one such application missing, which Ms. Kostova mentions, so that those who recycle, can see what the weight of the litter is.

The next is closing the meeting.

Minutes keeper of the meeting: Mrs. Elena Peneva

Chairman of BISAC: Mr. Daniel Buhai

