

Flemish Action Plan for Marine Litter

May 2019

1. Context

On 5 October 2016, the Flemish Parliament adopted a resolution requesting the Flemish Government to develop an 'integral action plan, containing goals in the short, medium and longer term, aiming to reduce plastic pollution'. The plan had to, in addition, include measures related to the increased gathering of scientific knowledge, focus on communication/awareness raising and propose field activities.

In response to this resolution, the Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM)¹, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders (governmental bodies, local authorities, port and waterways authorities, NGOs and industry), drafted a plan for marine litter. The plan addresses all sources of marine litter, and contains 21 specific goals and 36 measures to prevent the leakage of all types of solid waste into the marine environment.

The plan was approved by the Flemish Minister of Environment on 20 February 2018.

2. Scope and goal

The sources and composition of marine litter can be very diverse: relevant sources on land include land-based litter, substandard waste management, illegal dumping and waste from tourism. Relevant sources at sea can be linked to shipping (commercial shipping, fishing and recreational shipping), offshore activities and aquaculture. The Flemish plan for marine litter therefore focuses on all sources/types of waste that can have an impact on the marine environment, these being:

- waste generated on land (incl. litter)
- waste generated by shipping, offshore activities and aquaculture
- floating litter in rivers, waterways and ports
- plastics and microplastics (incl. industrial pellets)
- beach litter

The goal of the plan is to:

- provide an overview of all activities in Flanders that have a significant impact on the leakage of waste into the marine environment; and
- propose measures to reduce marine litter and define goals/targets.

¹ The Public Waste Agency of Flanders (OVAM) is a technical, government agency falling under the Flemish Ministry of the Environment.

3. Overview of goals and measures

The Flemish plan for marine litter contains 21 goals and 36 measures.

GOALS
Knowledge gaps: need for additional scientific research
<p>Goal No. 1: By 2025 the needs for additional scientific research as identified by the Flemish Marine Institute (VLIZ²) in its 2017 overview note must be completed to the maximum extent possible, and the results implemented via policy measures.</p>
Monitoring
<p>Goal no. 2: Optimal and coordinated installation and execution of monitoring programs for the Belgian coast achieved by 2020, and both beach litter (according to OSPAR Guidelines) and microplastics in sediment, seawater, rivers, lakes and biota (according to the MSFD/Water Framework Directive) are being monitored.</p>
Sea-based sources: commercial shipping
<p>Goal no. 3: By 2022 at least half of the non-exempted ships calling on the ports of Antwerp, Ghent and Zeebrugge must deliver their garbage to a port reception facility.</p>
Sea-based sources: fishing
<p>Goal no. 4: By 2022 the Belgian fishing fleet must be a European frontrunner in sustainable waste management.</p>
Sea-based sources: aquaculture
<p>Goal no. 5: The application of sustainable waste management practices must reduce the impact on the marine environment of litter from aquaculture to a minimum by 2022. The practices applied in Flanders must be considered as among the best in Europe.</p>
Sea-based sources: offshore activities
<p>Goal no. 6: The application of sustainable waste management practices must reduce the impact on the marine environment of litter from offshore activities to a minimum by 2022. The practices applied in Flanders must be considered as among the best in Europe.</p>
Land-based sources: waste management and circular economy
<p>Goal no. 7: Implementation of the goals agreed in the Flemish 'Vision 2050', with the closing of materials cycles resulting in a significant reduction of leakage of materials/waste into the marine environment.</p>
Land-based sources: prevention and management of litter
<p>Goal no. 8: The amount of litter must decrease by 2022. This decrease will be measured using the following parameters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Litter generally accumulates in highway parking areas and at public transport stops and waste collection points. These locations must show a 10% improvement

² The Flemish Marine Institute (VLIZ) is a scientific government agency that coordinates research related to the marine environment and the use of the sea.

<p>according to the Flemish Cleanliness Index (in comparison with 2014), by 2022. At other locations, the Flemish Cleanliness Index should at least be maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compared with 2013, litter must be reduced by 20% (by weight) by 2020. This means that in 2022 the total amount of litter must not exceed 14,000 tons.
<p>Goal no. 9: By 2025 the leakage of waste from Flanders into the marine environment must be reduced by 75%</p>
<p>Goal no. 10: Implementation of economic instruments to address marine litter is to be assessed in the context of the 2018 evaluation of the policy on litter.</p>
<p>Land-based sources: beach tourism</p>
<p>Goal no. 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2020, sufficient beach litter bins must be installed in all coastal municipalities, including at non-tourist beaches and in periods outside the tourist season, in order to facilitate collection of waste derived from voluntary cleaning by individual beach visitors. The provision of beach litter bins must be complemented by a coordinated sensitisation campaign about marine litter.
<p>Land-based sources: plastics</p>
<p>Goal no. 12: By 2018 the Flemish Region must have developed an ambitious policy aimed at reducing the use of lightweight plastic carrier bags.</p>
<p>Land-based sources: microplastics</p>
<p>Goal no. 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2020 the Flemish Region must be a frontrunner in the support of an international ban on the use of primary microplastics in healthcare products. The Flemish Region must support the implementation of the Belgian agreement on voluntary phasing out of microplastics, concluded with the manufacturers and importers of healthcare products. The Flemish Region must support further awareness – and sensitisation campaigns regarding microplastics.
<p>Floating litter in rivers, waterways and ports</p>
<p>Goal no. 14: By 2020 all Flemish port and navigable waterway authorities must have adequate technical means for the collection of floating litter in an effective and cost-efficient way, in order to limit the leakage of floating litter into the sea via Flemish navigable waterways and ports to the minimum.</p>
<p>Goal no. 15: By 2020 clear insight must have been achieved into the efficiency of the removal of microplastics by the various types of sewage treatment facilities currently operated in Flanders, based on in and outflow of microplastics. Different types of sewage treatment facilities are being monitored in order to assess the quantity of microplastics that enter the environment. When this has been measured, the most efficient reduction technologies can be selected, and the technical options and additional cost necessary to upgrade the sewage treatment facilities can be assessed.</p>
<p>Education and communication/awareness-raising</p>

Goal no. 16: communication/sensitisation

By 2020, at least one national communication/awareness campaign must have been launched, focusing on the sources and impact of marine litter on the environment and on the human food chain. Apart from this national campaign, specific communication campaigns are to be developed for specific target groups (e.g. the fishing industry).

Goal no. 17: education

In close cooperation with the Flemish educational authorities, schools, industry and the relevant governmental bodies (environmental as well as scientific organisations), a high-quality, tailor-made, educational package must be developed for the specific target groups by 2019.

Cooperation

Goal no. 18: cooperation in Flanders

By 2018, all relevant stakeholders must be represented in a Flemish working group on marine litter. The main goals of this steering group are to exchange information regarding marine litter, to stimulate and coordinate activity and to advise on the identification of priority measures.

Goal no. 19: international cooperation

- The Flemish government must engage itself in the establishment of specific, international cooperation on marine litter, and by 2018 reserve a relevant budget in order to fund specific cooperation with one of the five countries that are responsible for more than half of the leakage of plastic waste into the world's oceans.
- This international cooperation, in which Flemish expertise on waste management will be shared with a foreign region in which there is substantial leakage of plastic waste into the marine environment, must directly improve local waste management practices and significantly reduce the leakage of waste into the marine environment.

Enforcement

Goal no. 20: enforcement regarding land-based sources

Within one year after the finalisation of the "Flemish guidelines on the enforcement of littering and illegal dumping", an exchange platform on enforcement must be installed, to facilitate exchange of information between all enforcing bodies on litter and illegal dumping.

Goal no. 21: enforcement of shipping

By 2019 an annual coordination meeting must take place between the various authorities competent to inspect ship waste management practices.

MEASURES
Monitoring
<u>Measure no. 1:</u> Research and monitoring of the presence of marine litter in the stomachs of seabirds in the North Sea (in cooperation with IMARES).
<u>Measure no. 2:</u> Voluntary monitoring of beach litter (implementation of the SeaWatch-B Citizen Science initiative).
<u>Measure no. 3:</u> Research and monitoring of the presence and composition of seabed litter.
Sea-based sources: commercial shipping
<u>Measure no. 4:</u> Optimisation of the fee system for ships' waste, specifically focusing on maximum delivery of ships' garbage (MARPOL Annex V).
<u>Measure no. 5:</u> Encourage and facilitate separated delivery of ships' garbage, incl. plastics.
Sea-based sources: fishing
<u>Measure no. 6:</u> Reduce the leakage of dolly rope into the marine environment, by applying alternative and more sustainable materials.
<u>Measure no. 7:</u> Optimisation of the practices for the collection of waste from fishing vessels, focusing on maximum participation (incl. recreational fishing), international harmonisation, separated delivery and collection and recycling of fishing gear.
<u>Measure no. 8:</u> Incorporation of waste management practices as a criterion for a sustainability label for fishing.
<u>Measure no. 9:</u> Maximum support for the Fishing For Litter project.
<u>Measure no. 10:</u> Assess potential measures to reduce the risk of losing fishing nets, and facilitate their collection.
<u>Measure no. 11:</u> Assess the use of economic and market-based measures, incl. extended producer responsibility (e.g. return schemes), in order to discourage illegal dumping of fishing nets.
Sea-based sources: recreational shipping
<u>Measure no. 12:</u> Optimisation of the practices for the collection of waste from recreational craft, with a specific focus on the separate collection of waste.
Sea-based sources: aquaculture
<u>Measure no. 13:</u> Assess the impact on the marine environment of aquaculture in Flanders and develop adequate remediation measures.
Sea-based sources: offshore activities

<p><u>Measure no. 14:</u> Assess the impact on the marine environment of offshore activities in Flanders and develop adequate remediation measures.</p>
Land-based sources: prevention of littering
<p><u>Measure no. 15:</u> Stop littering and illegal dumping in the short-term, through the implementation of specific measures.</p>
Land-based sources: beach tourism
<p><u>Measure no. 16:</u> Provide litter bins on remote beaches and during the winter season.</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 17:</u> Support voluntary clean-up activities by private individuals, schools and associations.</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 18:</u> Focus on measures to tackle beach litter (cigarette butts, beach bars/pubs/restaurants, communication and education).</p>
Land-based sources: plastics
<p><u>Measure no. 19:</u> Assess the impact on the marine environment of the use of balloons in Flanders, and develop remediation measures.</p>
Land-based sources: microplastics
<p><u>Measure no. 20:</u> Assess the use of microplastics during maintenance of ships, and develop remediation measures.</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 21:</u> Facilitate/propagate the implementation of the Operation Clean Sweep programme by private companies that produce, store, transport or process industrial plastic pellets.</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 22:</u> Assess alternatives and best practices (measures and techniques) regarding the loss of plastic textile fibres during washing (both industrial and household).</p>
Floating litter in rivers, waterways and ports
<p><u>Measure no. 23:</u> Assess the implementation of measures and techniques for the effective and cost-efficient collection of floating litter in waterways and ports.</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 24:</u> Identify emission into the environment of microplastics in sewage treatment facilities and assess the options for cost-effective technological upgrades of existing sewage treatment facilities in Flanders.</p>
Education and communication/awareness raising
<p><u>Measure no. 25:</u> General awareness campaign on marine litter, about the issue of land-based litter as a possible source of marine litter and its possible impact on the human food chain</p>
<p><u>Measure no. 26:</u> Communication campaign to encourage beach visitors to, even if for just a few minutes, voluntarily collect some beach litter.</p>
<u>Measure no. 27a:</u>

Increase awareness regarding marine litter among professional and recreational fishermen (focus on waste management).

Measure no. 27b:

Increase awareness regarding marine litter among professional and recreational fishermen (focus on marine environment).

Measure no. 28:

Awareness campaign about the impact of the sea on human activities, incl. marine litter.

Measure no. 29:

Further develop educational packages on marine litter, focusing on avoiding single-use items and promoting the use of reusable recipients.

Measure no. 30:

Implement the issue of marine litter in existing educational packages about the sea.

Measure no. 31:

Assess the desirability and possibility of implementing the issue of marine litter in the official learning packages developed by the Flemish Ministry of Education.

Cooperation

Measure no. 32:

Establish a steering group on marine litter in which all relevant Flemish stakeholders (public and private) are represented.

Measure no. 33:

Incorporate the issue of beach litter into the existing working group on waste management in coastal municipalities.

Measure no. 34:

Assess the relevance, options and cost for a specific, international, collaborative project on marine litter, in order to upgrade waste management practices in a region where there is a substantial leakage of waste into the marine environment.

Enforcement

Measure no. 35:

Optimise enforcement regarding land-based littering through the establishment of a specific platform for the exchange of information.

Measure no. 36:

Optimise enforcement of ships' waste management practices through the establishment of a specific platform for exchanging information.