



European Maritime Day 2016

Marine litter and derelict fishing gear: from observation to blue growth

A workshop organized by MIO-ECSDE

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Interesting insights were shared at MIO-ECSDE's workshop on "Marine litter and derelict fishing gear: from observation to blue growth", held in Turku during the European Maritime Day 2016. The implications of marine litter and particularly of derelict fishing gear on what constitutes the basis of Blue Growth: the core functioning, productivity and resilience of marine ecosystems, were at the heart of the workshop with special emphasis given to experiences and lessons learned from establishing derelict fishing gear management schemes in ports; fishing for litter activities; piloting business scenaria within a circular economy context; exploring options for reduced surveillance costs, etc.

MIO-ECSDE presented highlights and outcomes obtained from the IPA-Adriatic funded DeFishGear project on the socio-economic implications of marine litter to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. In addition, it shared some of the results of a UNEP/MAP supported Mediterranean-wide survey targeting mostly fishermen which explored various elements linked to marine litter and derelict fishing gear in the marine environment. The Irish Seas Fisheries Board showcased its experiences in carrying out fishing-for-litter activities and setting up derelict fishing gear management schemes, while Healthy Seas provided information on their initiative, a good example for circular economy. Discarded fishing nets are used to produce top-quality nylon yarn for textile products.

The event, organized by MIO-ECSDE in the framework of the DeFishGear project, was moderated by Günter Hörmandinger, European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment while the panelists were Thomais Vlachogianni, Programme Officer of MIO-ECSDE; Catherine Barrett, Marine Technical Development Officer of the Irish Sea Fisheries Board; and Veronika Mikos, Project Coordinator of Healthy Seas.

In a fruitful and lively discussion that followed among the panelists and the audience alike, the factors that enhance and inhibit the fisheries and aquaculture sector in taking up action were outlined.

The main conclusions and key messages of the workshop are summarized below:

- Marine litter is a growing environmental threat, posing risks to wildlife and humans and impacting crucial Blue Growth economic sectors, such as fisheries and aquaculture, marine and coastal tourism.
- Abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) is a significant and very persistent type of marine litter with numerous harmful effects for the marine and coastal environment and human livelihoods and well being.
- Sound, shared scientific knowledge and coordinated and multi-sectoral action at local, national, regional and international level are key to combating marine litter.
- The maritime sector needs to take its share of responsibility and be part of the solution.
- Creating motivational strands and forging community connections within the maritime sector are essential towards triggering change and establishing an enabling mindset for reducing the plastic footprint and the amounts of litter entering the coastal and marine environment.
- Even though the amounts of litter collected by fishing for litter initiatives and targeted recovery of ghost nets is on the rise, the real added value of these measures lies in enhancing the awareness of the sector with regards to prevention measures and this where the maritime industry can and do make a difference.
- There are successful circular economy initiatives in Europe that showcase the fact that "waste is too valuable to be wasted" and we should make best use of them.