

**PROJECT:** Coastal City Plastic-0 (Coastal City Plastic Zero)

**TO6 – Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency**

**OBJECTIVE:**

To cocreate a strategic plan to deal with the plastic pollution that represents a big challenge for coastal cities, and to reduce the consumption of plastics in the public sector in order to make cities free of plastic.

**DESCRIPTION:**

In Europe, 26 million tons of plastic waste is produced every year, but only about 30 percent is recycled. This means that 70% ends up in landfill or being burned. More sustainable and circular plastics economy can be achieved in Europe, but only by 2040 estimates say that 50% of plastics will be recycled, which is still far from being enough. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation forecasts that it's likely that there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by weight, in the coming 30 years. This is clearly a huge challenge for sea life and coastal cities, meaning plastics will increasingly come to shore, damaging natural reserves, beaches, and enter the food chain with significant risks to health.

The European Union published, in January 2018, a plastics recycling strategy paper, aiming to develop recycling efforts through all industries, ensuring that all plastic packaging is recyclable by 2030, without endangering jobs in the European plastics industry, which employs an estimated 1.5 million people. This strategy is expected to make a tangible contribution for reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, giving that it delivers a strong commitment for action at EU level. However, in order to reach those goals, it's key to mobilize the private sector, national and regional authorities, cities and citizens.

Cities are a key actor for mobilizing peers and the public sector, along with citizens, third sector and also the local private sector. Its influence is critical for changing behaviors, for educating for recycling and reuse, for decreasing the consumption and the demand, and for giving best practices on how to value alternatives to plastic, without endangering jobs, but by developing a new circular plastics economy.

The identification of the origin of the plastics that reach the coast seems to be of paramount importance. Coastal cities are the "deposit" of this type of waste. Thus, the involvement in this network of municipalities with rivers, and where wastewater facilities are installed, seems to be of the greatest importance, since a significant quantity of the plastics that arrives to the sea comes from rivers and their tributaries.

This project, which aims to protect the environment and promote resource efficiency, can go beyond the problems of coastal zones, such as identifying sectors of activity dependent on a significant use of plastics and the destination that is being given.

The network will look at the best way to efficiently diminish plastic waste, to reduce the demand, the production and the consumption of plastics, notably the single-use ones. But it will look also at how to defend coastal cities from the crisis that is hurting oceans, sea life and European shores, and how to transform the waste collected into value for industries and the economy. Cities can become a key player in activating a new plastics circular economy and that is exactly

what this network is all about. This is actually key in the recently published Action Plan for Circular Economy, in the frame of the Urban Agenda for the EU, and the aim of the network is also to contribute to this Action Plan and to the present European debate.

The work of the network will be organised over the foundations of 3 pillars, which are here presented with some ideas to be further developed and discussed:

### 1 – Capitalisation

- recognition of the role of coastal cities and their respective public entities as sustainable management models, which can and should serve as examples in their community (change must start from within public organizations);
- the importance of establishing information-sharing partnerships/networks and positive experiences in managing the coastline, being able to successfully replicate initiatives and promote actions on a European scale;
- enhancement of the role of the fishing community as key agents in the whole process;

### 2 – Education

- the role of information, awareness and education of the population in the construction of an effective strategy to reduce the consumption of the so-called disposable plastics;
- the importance of the involvement and commitment of citizens in solving the problem, either by changing consumption habits or by participating as volunteers in actions aimed at mitigating the problem;
- linking the fight against marine pollution, particularly the problem of micro-plastics, to the need to ensure the quality of sea food, not forgetting the commitment of the municipality to encourage consumption of fish over other diets, which have superior carbon footprints;
- the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of wastewater treatment systems as part of a larger problem-solving strategy; and may include public awareness campaigns to clarify some incorrect practices and include the disposal of waste through wastewater drainage systems;
- the importance of water streams as a means of transporting plastic waste to the oceans and the role played by it in the urban environment as a distinctive landscape and ecological element;

### 3 - Mobilisation

- action on the origin of plastics that continuously come to the shores (identification of types of marine litter and respective plan of action having as focus – production, consumption and disposal);
- the role that municipalities can play when they are given incentives for the construction of municipal recycling and valorisation facilities, which will allow awareness, delivery and collection

closer to the population and where they can verify the destiny that is given to the residues of this type;

- emphasize the importance of developing action programs aimed at the fishing community, with the aim of including them in the process as part of the solution, namely through raising awareness about the problems of plastics in the sea and the problems that may arise for the fishing activity, as well as the problems that fishing may cause if it is not aware of the consequences of abandoning its fishing gear in rivers and sea;

- highlight the costs associated with cleaning beaches. The mitigation of the problem will allow the redirection of the investment, in the improvement of the infrastructures and equipment related to the use of the coastline, as well as good practices in the use of public spaces by rivers and sea, on bathing areas during summer season, especially in non-concession areas.

Cities are the main stakeholders in the ecological transition and influence, thanks to their proximity, citizens, young people, economic sectors and peer cities as well. In most cases, cities hold a major role in waste management, recycling and waste reduction and valorization. Thus, the network will work on sustainable and integrated methods to best defend cities, nature and people from plastic, and alternative ways to best capture value from it, activating the full potential of cities in this regard.