



Rethinking plastics – circular economy solutions to marine litter

Marine litter – a growing global challenge

Driven by rapid urbanisation, economic development and changing consumption and production patterns, the amount of **single-use packaging** is rapidly increasing worldwide. At the same time, **waste management systems** still lack effectiveness in terms of environmentally sound collection, sorting, recycling, energy recovery and disposal of packaging waste.

These trends significantly contribute to **marine littering** – a growing global threat to marine ecosystems and fisheries, as well as the tourism sector. Marine litter including abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear, affects over 800 species in marine and coastal environments.¹ About 60 to 90% of marine litter consists of plastics², of which much comes from single-use plastic products and packaging. Estimates based on 2010 data suggest that worldwide 5 to 13 million tons of plastic waste find their way into the oceans every year.³ Microplastics are of particular concern due to their potential toxicity and size, entering food chains and drinking water, harming animals and representing a potential threat to human health.

East and Southeast Asia belong to the major hotspot regions worldwide for plastic waste leakage into the ocean and its potential impacts on biodiversity. Asia accounted for about 50% of global plastics production in 2017, with China alone producing around 29% of the world's plastic. The **European Union** accounted for about 18.5% of global plastic production.⁴ Separate collection and recycling of plastic waste has been increasing over the last decades within the EU. Parts of the EU's plastic waste have however been exported to East and Southeast Asian countries. Strengthened cooperation between the EU and partner countries in East and Southeast Asia thus provides mutual opportunities.



Partner countries: China, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

Duration: May 2019 to April 2022

Budget: 10 million EUR

Commissioned by: European Union (EU), German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Implemented by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Expertise France (EF)

Joining efforts for a circular economy

Governments, businesses, academia and civil society increasingly recognise that a switch towards a **circular economy** approach to plastic waste is necessary to tackle these challenges. Countries in East and Southeast Asia as well as the EU already contribute to the implementation of multilateral agreements such as **the United Nations Environment Assembly's resolutions on marine litter**, waste management and single-use plastics as well as the **G20 Action Plan on Marine Litter**, adopted in 2017 under the German G20 presidency. Working towards a circular economy is also an essential step to meet the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

In East and Southeast Asia, numerous initiatives at national, provincial and local level have emerged to reduce plastic leakage into the ocean. In 2018, the heads of state and governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries, China, Japan and other countries adopted the **East Asia Leaders' Statement on Combatting Marine Plastic Debris**. In June 2019, ASEAN member countries adopted the **Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris**, committing to enhanced efforts to reduce and tackle the marine debris challenge, including by prioritising circular economy principles.

In 2018, the European Commission presented an ambitious **European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy**. As part of its Circular Economy Action Plan, the strategy envisages that by 2030 all plastics packaging placed on the EU market will be either reusable or recyclable. It intends to prevent plastic waste, expand recycling capacity and increase the market demand for recycled plastics. Furthermore, it seeks to enhance international cooperation on circular economy and marine litter prevention. In 2019, the EU adopted a new **Directive on reducing the impact of certain plastic products on the environment** banning certain single-use plastic

products by 2021. The Directive contains product and consumer information requirements, and expands extended producer responsibility, separate collection and awareness raising for single-use plastics.



Project objectives and areas of action

The project supports a transition towards sustainable consumption and production of plastic in East and Southeast Asia to contribute to a significant reduction of marine litter. It thereby contributes to strengthening EU cooperation with countries in the region in the areas of circular economy, plastic waste and marine litter reduction as outlined by the EU Plastics Strategy. To reach these objectives, the project covers the following areas:

- 1) Enhancing the basis for **policy dialogues** between the EU, regional organisations and partner countries in East and Southeast Asia concerning plastic production and management, e.g. in the areas of environment, fisheries and industry
- 2) Implementing activities on **managing plastic waste**, including extended producer responsibility and deposit return schemes for packaging and plastic products, following the waste hierarchy
- 3) Implementing activities for **sustainable consumption and production of plastic**, including design for reuse and recyclability, standards for plastic recyclates as well as alternatives to plastics and the use of microplastics in products
- 4) Enhancing efforts for the **reduction of litter from sea-based sources**, including port reception facilities for waste from ships, fishing-for-litter schemes, marine litter from aquaculture and fishing gear
- 5) Strengthening **green procurement** policies, processes and cooperation
- 6) Increasing **awareness** of public authorities and citizens about sustainable consumption and production of plastic and the impacts of littering on the environment

Project implementation

Project activities are defined and implemented in close cooperation with **regional, national and local partners** and the respective EU Delegations in East and Southeast Asia. On-going initiatives by other international organisations, the public and private sectors, civil society and academia are also taken into account.

In **China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam** the project supports activities for the transition to a circular economy with a focus on waste prevention and management. In addition, cooperation in **Japan and Singapore** particularly focuses on green public procurement.

The project is **co-funded** by the European Union and the Federal Republic of Germany through the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It is **jointly implemented** by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Expertise France.

A **regional team** of international key experts based in Bangkok and national senior advisors in China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam implement activities and advisory services in the different areas of action. To establish and disseminate good practices, pilot projects by diverse partners and organisations will be identified and supported. Backstopping is provided by the headquarters of GIZ in Germany and Expertise France in Paris.



¹ Secretariat of the CBD (2016) Marine Debris: Understanding, Preventing and Mitigating the Significant Adverse Impacts on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity. CBD Technical Series no. 83, p. 16-18.

² UNEP, GRID-Arendal (2016) Marine Litter Vital Graphics. P. 7

³ Jambeck, J.R. et al. (2015) 'Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean'. Science, vol. 347, issue 6223, p. 768-771.

⁴ PlasticsEurope (2018) Plastics the Facts 2018. P. 19.

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
www.giz.de

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Rethinking plastics – circular economy solutions to marine litter
c/o Pollution Control Department (PCD)
92 Soi Phahonyothin, Phahonyothin 7,
Phahonyothin Road, Phayathai, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

Contact:
Alvaro Zurita, Team Leader, alvaro.zurita@giz.de

Photo credits:
GIZ/Johannes Paul, Philippines, p. 1, GIZ/Sandra Fuhr, Vietnam, p. 2;
GIZ/Joachim Stretz, Indonesia, p. 2

The project is funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

Bangkok, July 2019