Co-funded by the European Union

german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by
giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

EXPERTISE FRANCE

Rethinking Plastics
Circular Economy Solutions to Marine Litter

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 plastics** is rapidly increasing worldwide. At the same time, **waste management systems** still lack effectiveness in terms of environmentally sound collection, sorting, recycling and disposal of packaging waste. These trends significantly contribute to **marine littering** – a growing global threat to marine ecosystems, fisheries, health 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 it consists of plastics[2] and much comes from single-use plastic packaging and products, such as straws and bags. In total, 5 to 13 million tons of plastic waste find their way into the world's oceans every year.[3] Microplastics, entering food chains and drinking water, are of particular concern due to their potential toxicity and size.

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, while the **European Union** (EU) produced about 18.5%.[4] Within the EU, separate collection and recycling of plastic waste increased over the last decades but parts of its plastic waste have however been exported to East and Southeast Asian countries. Strengthened cooperation between the EU and partner countries in Asia in the areas of circular economy, plastic waste management and marine litter reduction thus provides mutual opportunities.

Joining efforts for a circular economy

Governments, businesses, academia and civil society increasingly recognise that a switch towards a **circular economy** approach to plastics is necessary to tackle these challenges. In a circular economy, resources are used and managed in a more efficient and sustainable way through the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. Countries in East and Southeast Asia and the EU already contribute to the implementation of

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)

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. Working towards a circular economy is also essential to meet the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Numerous initiatives at national, regional 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 others adopted the **East Asia Leaders' Statement on Combatting Marine Plastic Debris**. In 2019, the ASEAN **Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris** followed**,** committed to reduce and tackle marine debris, including by prioritising circular economy principles.

In Europe, the European Commission presented an ambitious **European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy** in 2018. The strategy envisages that by 2030 all plastic packaging placed on the EU market will either be reusable or recyclable. It intends to prevent plastic waste, expand recycling capacities 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. It also includes product and consumer information requirements, extended producer responsibility (EPR) and separate collection principles. In addition, the European Commission introduced a new **Circular Economy Action Plan** in March 2020 as one of the main blocks of the European Green Deal for sustainable growth. Actions in the plastic sector include new mandatory requirements for recycled content and special attention on microplastics as well as biobased and biodegradable plastics.




Project objectives and areas of action

The project 'Rethinking Plastics – Circular Economy Solutions to Marine Litter' is well aligned with these efforts and contributes to tackle the marine litter challenge. It supports the transition towards a circular economy for plastics in East and Southeast Asia to reduce plastic waste leakage into the sea and thus marine litter. It also contributes to strengthening the cooperation between the EU and seven countries in the region in the areas of circular economy, plastic waste management and marine litter reduction as outlined in the EU Plastics Strategy. 'Rethinking Plastics' is **funded** by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and **jointly implemented** by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Expertise France.

The project is active in the following areas:

1) Enhancing the basis for **policy dialogues** between the EU, regional organisations and partner countries in East and Southeast Asia concerning circular economy, plastic production and management.

2) Implementing activities on **managing plastic waste**, including extended producer responsibility (EPR) and deposit return schemes for packaging and plastic products, following the waste hierarchy.

3) Implementing activities for the **sustainable consumption and production** of plastic. This covers design for reuse and recyclability, identifying and promoting alternatives to plastics as well as standards for plastic recyclates.

4) Enhancing efforts for the **reduction of litter from sea-based sources**, such as working on port reception facilities for waste from commercial ships and fishing boats and fishing-for-litter schemes.

5) Strengthening **green procurement** policies, processes and cooperation (Japan and Singapore only).

6) Increasing **awareness** of public authorities and citizens about sustainable consumption and production of plastic and the impacts of littering on the environment.

Ongoing activities

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 focuses on the transition to a circular economy through plastic waste prevention and management. Current priorities include, for example, initiatives to reduce single-use plastics in food delivery and take away, which saw a rise due to COVID-19 related restaurant closures, support for waste management in ports and consultancy regarding extended producer responsibility for packaging. EPR is an approach based on the principle that whoever introduces packaging or packaged goods into a country's market remains responsible for it until the end of the packaging life cycle, including the time after disposal.

Cooperation in **Japan and Singapore** particularly focuses on policy dialogues covering plastic waste management and green public procurement.

The project **provides advice, fosters exchange, implements activities and supports more than 20 pilot projects** in China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. These pilots were identified to establish and disseminate new approaches or up scaled good practices in the areas of plastic waste management, sustainable consumption and production of plastic or litter reduction from sea-based sources. Knowledge exchange is fostered, for example, through workshops and conferences, webinars, study trips and awareness raising activities.

A **regional team** of international key experts based in Bangkok and national senior advisors in China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam implement the activities and advisory services in the different areas of action.

[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,
Phayathai, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

As at: January 2021

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

Photo credits:
Page 1: GIZ/Lena Kampe, Thailand
Page 2 from left to right: GIZ/Sandra Fuhr, Vietnam; GIZ/Pascal Renaud, GIZ/Johannes Paul, Philippines; GIZ/Lena Kampe, Thailand

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.

More information: https://beatplasticpollution.eu/rethinking-plastics/