



MARITIME FORUM

Map of the week – Seabed litter – Plastic bags density

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This map of the week shows the density of plastic bags in the European seas.

Plastic material is increasingly polluting our shores and oceans. Currently, the oceans contain over [150 million tonnes](#) [1] of plastic and this amount is estimated to grow by a staggering [4.8 to 12.7 million tonnes](#) [1] each year. The plastic pollution does not just clutter our beaches, it forms a deadly trap for many marine animals. They get tangled up in larger pieces of plastic or mistake smaller pieces for food. Microscopic pieces of plastic also end-up in our food and although their effects on our health are yet unknown, they may expose us to harmful chemicals.

The first step in addressing this alarming problem is to reduce the production of single-use, throw-away plastic items like bags, cups, cutlery, etc. which make up about [49 %](#) [2] of the marine litter. The prevalence of these items can be seen on our map of the week. It shows the density of plastic bags at the seafloor expressed as the average number of bags collected by fish-trawl surveys over the period of one year. You can see that plastic bags have made it to almost all corners of the European seas with some areas like the French Riviera, the Cantabrian coast and parts of the North Sea being particularly polluted. Note that the absence of collected data in some areas does not mean they are free from plastic bags.

Fortunately, the European Parliament has taken action by adopting [new rules](#) [3] to reduce the use and ban the production of single-use plastics. Nevertheless, there is a need for continued global effort to move to a more sustainable, circular economy and to clean up the existing plastic pollution. You can be a part of this effort by signing up to the global [Plastic Free July](#) [4] movement and taking on the challenge to refuse single-use plastics.

[Access the map](#) [5]

The data in this map were provided by [EMODnet Chemistry](#) [6].

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Links

- [1]
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/images/20181011PHT15768/20181011PHT15768_original.png
- [2]
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/images/20181011PHT15771/20181011PHT15771_original.png
- [3] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-19-1873_en.htm
- [4] <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>
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- [6] <http://www.emodnet-chemistry.eu/welcome>