MARITIME FORUM

Map of the week – Waste discharge in ports

The map of the week shows the location of reported waste discharge from ships.

Every year, millions of tonnes of waste, including garbage, sewage and oil spills, make it into the ocean, where it pollutes beaches and threatens both marine life and human health. Animals can become tangled in larger pieces of trash or mistake smaller pieces for food[1]. Spilled oil sticks to the feathers and fur of marine birds and mammals, eliminating their insulating capabilities and exposing them to toxic chemicals and the cold, harsh environment[2]. Sewage poisons the marine environment and its high nutrient content can lead to harmful algal blooms which can release toxins and deplete the oxygen in the water, suffocating marine life[3]. These toxins and microplastics eventually move up the food chain and onto our plates when we consume seafood, threatening our own health. For these reasons, it is not surprising that marine pollution is identified as one of the fastest growing threats to the health of the ocean[4].

While some of this waste reaches the ocean through rivers, a significant part originates from ships[5], either accidentally (e.g. oil spill accidents) or through routine operations (e.g. dumping of waste water or garbage). The IMO's International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) [1] aims to prevent and minimize both forms of pollution. It also requires ports to report discharges of waste from ships. The map of the week shows the location of these reported ship waste discharges in Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Portugal and Spain. The EU supports the MARPOL effort in combatting pollution from ships by the Directive on port reception facilities for the delivery and management of waste from ships [2]. It requires ports to have adequate facilities to collect and recycle waste from ships. Furthermore, it also incentivises "green ships" which adopt measures for reduction and sustainable management of waste on board.

Access the map [3]

The data in this map were provided by EMODnet Human Activities [4].

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[1]
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/images/20181011PHT15768/20181011PHT15768_original.png
[5]

[2] https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/oilimpacts.html [6]

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/algal-bloom-and-its-economic-impact [7]

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/index_en.htm [8]

[5] https://seas-at-risk.org/issues/marine-litter/waste-from-ships.html [9]

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[1]
http://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/ListOfConventions/Pages/International-Convention-for-the-Prevention-of-Pollution-from-Ships-(MARPOL).aspx
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https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:571a59f5-fac7-11e7-b8f5-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
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[4] https://www.emodnet-humanactivities.eu/search-results.php?dataname=Waste+at+Ports
[5]
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[6] https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/oilimpacts.html
[7] https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/algal-bloom-and-its-economic-impact
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/index_en.htm
[9] https://seas-at-risk.org/issues/marine-litter/waste-from-ships.html