

Reducing the impact of marine litter in the form of derelict fishing gear on the Baltic Sea environment

→ *Derelict fishing gear (DFG) is addressed worldwide as a source of marine litter with extensive hazardous effects on the marine ecosystem.*

Despite intense media focus, the problem is poorly known in the fisheries industry and among politicians.

The project will be the first transnational initiative in the world providing an operation oriented, all target groups involved, all-in-one solution to turn a diffuse problem into a clear, transparent and apprehensible topic contributing to an enhanced international readiness to act.

The project will create the basis for all future dragging operations in the Baltic Sea. It will contribute to a Baltic Sea free from marine litter and hazardous substances and it will increase sustainable treatment of derelict fishing gear.

Priority area	Natural resources
Specific objective	Clear waters
Project acronym	MARELITT Baltic
Lead Partner	Municipality of Simrishamn, Sweden
Project budget*	Total EUR 3,752,348.00
*preliminary figures before contract signature	

Summary

Derelict fishing gear (DFG) is addressed worldwide as a source of marine litter with extensive hazardous effects on the marine ecosystem. Despite intense media focus the problem is poorly known in the fisheries industry and among politicians. The project will be the first transnational initiative in the world providing an operation oriented, all target groups involving, all in one solution to turn a diffuse problem into a transparent and apprehensible topic contributing to an enhanced international readiness to act.

The aim is to developing cost efficient, safe and environmentally sound DFG cleaning methods identified through demonstration actions for sampled targets (soft sea bed/wrecks/rocky bottoms) incl. an environmental impact assessment analysis for sensitive areas. As a result a handbook on DFG cleaning methodologies consisting of evaluation of dragging operations and documentation of lessons learned arise.

The project will constitute a baseline for future cleaning measures while gaining an overview on host areas in the Baltic Sea in the form of a map and developing a plan for post project operations.

It also aims to increase responsible fisheries, while developing a code of conduct for the fishing industry. Other objectives include the improvement of fishing gears for responsible fishing and a minimization of the DFG problem, while improving the retrieval of DFG giving an overview about technologies to reduce gear loss.

The project will compile recommendations for regulations on prevention in the form of a recommendation paper on national and EU levels. It should result in long-term impact on changed fishing strategies and legislations on the different spatial levels.

An overview of harbour reception facilities for old fishing gear and DFG aims at improving reception facilities in harbours including an environmentally sound waste management for DFG. A feasibility study on economic solutions for DFG recycling should find efficient ways to reuse/recycle DFG in the best possible way. A DFG treatment scheme should point out solutions on how to prepare DFG for processing and finding economical solutions for recycling small volumes.

To ensure the project sustainability it is essential to use intensive external communications to increase capacities of target groups (e.g. decision makers, the general public, fisherman etc.). Involving target groups leads to awareness raising, knowledge increase, attitude and behavioural change. This will be achieved through conferences, workshops, trainings for divers and fishermen, site visits for media and decision makers, campaigns & publications via various media channels. The regular internal communication for an effective coordination & consultation among project partners is essential to the achievement of project objectives.

All project activities, outputs and results will create the basis for all future dragging operation in the Baltic Sea. It will contribute to a Baltic Sea free from marine litter and hazardous substances and it will increase sustainable treatment of derelict fishing gear.