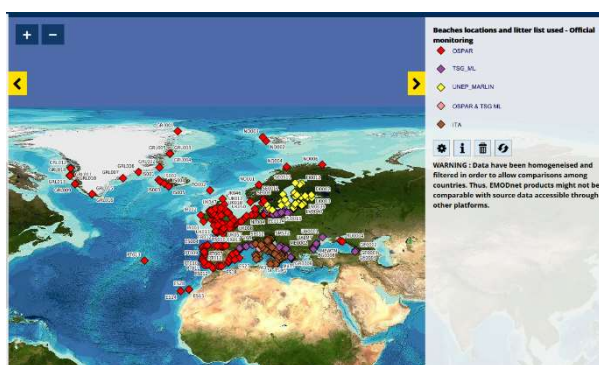


Press release

New maps show the extent of marine litter in European seas

European marine data integrator EMODnet launches new digital maps of beach and seafloor litter, providing a comprehensive information tool for marine policy and wider society.

Increasing concentrations of plastic in our environment are a growing threat to ecosystems and human health. Plastic has been detected in nearly all marine life – from whales to molluscs. In order to fight this threat, there have been calls in international fora such as G7, G20 and the United Nations to bring the many measurements and observations together to create a complete picture. Europe is now leading the way. Authorities and the wider society now have a new tool to help track, map and identify where litter ends up in our seas and oceans and check how it is affecting ocean health.



Beach litter – official monitoring locations



Seafloor litter – locations of trawl surveys collecting marine litter

Alessandra Giorgetti, Coordinator of EMODnet Chemistry, stated that: *“These maps are a significant achievement for EMODnet and the wider European community since it required a large community effort to gather, integrate and standardise datasets from many sources. All maps are free to view, download and use making it an excellent open access product that can be used for many different purposes.”*

Morgan Le Moigne and François Galgani (IFREMER, partner of EMODnet Chemistry) added: *“The data and integrated maps on marine litter will allow us to detect trends for litter on beaches and the seafloor. These maps will also enable society to evaluate the efficiency of reduction measures (bans, taxes, rules, etc.) launched by both the European Commission and Member States, which will address marine litter in general, with two specific types being single use plastics and fishing gear. Finally, the database and visualisation tool will support a better definition of environmental reduction targets to be decided by policy makers.”*

Background information

The production of the maps is based on data from hundreds of data providers and monitoring efforts to gather marine litter information scattered over Europe. The maps show, among others, the spatial and temporal distribution of beach and seafloor litter based on official monitoring surveys and wider sampling efforts across European countries. The types of litter are also identified, from plastics to glass, wood and metal, and from fishing related items to land-based products such as cigarettes.

The first step in the production of the new marine litter maps consisted in collecting and storing beach and seafloor litter data in the EMODnet Chemistry Marine Litter Database, which is the first pan-European Litter Database. A number of processing and harmonisation steps were applied to the data, which is explained in detail in the metadata available for download. Finally, the harmonised data were processed using a number of data management and computation methods to create the variety of maps. Data collection and processing was a collaborative effort among the consortium and various stakeholders among others the MSFD Technical Group on Marine Litter, Member States, Regional Sea Conventions, EMODnet Chemistry project partners, ICES Database of Trawl Surveys (DATRAS), Joint Research Centre (JRC) and specific EU projects. A more dynamic and tailored set of products is currently under discussion and could be developed in the future phase.

To access the marine litter maps, visit the EMODnet Chemistry Portal:
www.emodnet-chemistry.eu

Source and information:

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EMODnet is a gateway to marine data in Europe with free, open access to data, data products and metadata from more than 150 organisations. Explore data and maps of bathymetry, geology, physics, chemistry, biology, seabed habitats and human activities on www.emodnet.eu.