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## Plastian the Little Fish

WFO has recently partnered with Nicole Intemann, teacher and author of the children's book *Plastian the Little Fish* with the goal to raise awareness on the issue of marine litter and educate children aged five to ten of the problem and its solutions.



WFO was immediately swept away with the story of a brother and sister who embark on a sea adventure and become concerned by the amount of marine litter in the water. With the help of Plastian and other animal friends, they construct a trawl to collect the floating debris on their way back to land.

Readers of the book are also invited to send in to WFO their ideas on solutions to the marine litter problem for which there will be a contest and award organized, tailored to the country and sponsorship programme.

The book is a useful instrument for those looking for educational material to work around the theme of marine litter. It can be used in schools, for communities involved in beach clean-ups or during other awareness raising projects as well as for national and international marine litter related events. The aim is to distribute the book worldwide with the hopes of inspiring children to build for a future where the oceans are waste free.

Besides WFO, the book will have a minimum of three paying sponsors and a maximum of five paying sponsors per country, in proportion to the country's population size. A beneficial sponsorship package has been developed around the book and the contest. If you are interested in becoming a part of this project, please contact [Marguerite](#) to discuss how the concept of the project can be adapted to fit your needs.

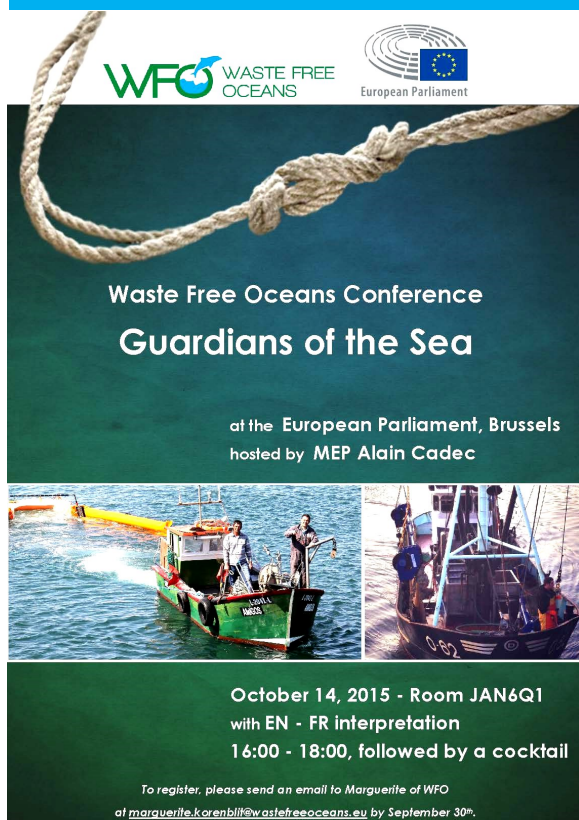
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## WFO Conference in the European Parliament: Guardians of the Sea



This year, **WFO's** annual conference will be held in the European Parliament on October 14<sup>th</sup> and will bring together policy makers, the plastics industry, the fisheries sector, NGOs and various stakeholders relative to the issue of marine litter. The conference will mainly focus on fishermen and their role as Guardians of the Sea, working to reduce the amount of debris in our oceans, seas and rivers.

The conference will begin with an opening speech by the event's host MEP Alain Cadec, Chairman of the Fisheries Committee **WFO** Champion, and with welcoming words by **WFO's** Bernard Merckx.

Ms. Elisa Roller of the European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) will discuss funding opportunities with the European Maritime Fisheries Funds regarding marine litter related activities. The programme includes Mr. Massimo Bellavista, President of Bellaria Pesca Producers Organization and Italian Member of Europêche who will present the Ecodria-Fisherman European Project. The project, following the European guidelines on Blue Growth and the European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, actively involves fishermen of the region. For more information on the Ecodria-Fisherman Project, view the brochure [here](#).

Fisherman Luc Bogaert of the O.62 'Dini' will talk about his investments in making his fishing boat more sustainable and environmentally-friendly.

His boat is the first in Belgium to be equipped with Seewings a suspension system for the nets weighing in total a thousand kilograms lighter, saving 30% on fuel and decreasing the disturbance of the seabed by 60%. The author of *Plastian the Little Fish*, Ms. Nicole Intemann, will be presenting her book – how it came about and its reception in Austria. **WFO** Project Stephanie Maes will also talk about **WFO's** latest project developments throughout the world.

The event is now in less than a month, therefore if you would like to participate, please email [Marguerite](#) before September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Collecting Ghost Nets in the Baltic Sea

This summer, **WFO** participated in the seminar "Collecting Ghost Nets in the Baltic Sea" which brought together politicians, fishermen and environmentalists in the European Parliament. The event was hosted by Polish [MEP Jarosław Wałęsa](#) in cooperation with [WWF Poland](#).

Piotr Prędko and Marta Kalinowska of WWF Poland presented their project whose main goal is to remove abandoned fishing gear from the Polish territorial waters of the Baltic Sea. The project began in March 2011, funded by the [BalticSea2020](#), a foundation contributing to turning around the negative environmental trend of the Baltic Sea.

The debate took place with the participation of representatives of all parties to the project: fishermen, Kołobrzeg Fish Producers Organization, WWF Poland, the Polish National Water Management Authority and the Polish Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Agriculture.

**WFO** is pleased with the fishermen testimonials, demonstrating that a growing number of fishermen around Europe are dedicated to the fight against marine litter. Therefore **WFO** will strengthen the cooperation with WWF Poland and the Polish fishing communities.



MEP Jarosław Wałęsa, WWF Poland and fishermen in the European Parliament



## Marine Litter Impact on Oceanic Ecosystems – Problems & Solutions

Early July, policy makers, academic researches and representatives from the civil society got together to discuss “Marine Litter Impact on Oceanic Ecosystems – Problems and Solutions”, a conference organized by the European Parliament’s Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development. The event was held in the European Parliament and hosted by the MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos, who is Chair of the “Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services” Working Group of the European Parliament Intergroup.

**WFO’s** Bernard Merckx argued that litter is considered to be a problem but it can be seen as a challenge and an opportunity instead. Indeed, by adding the right value to waste, the presence of litter in the environment will considerably decrease. Therefore, the need to introduce Extended Producers Responsibility schemes, including restoration costs for causing ecological damages, is urgent in numerous EU legislations.

Other speakers included Dr. Christopher Pham from Marine and Environmental Sciences Centre of the University of Azores, who gave an overview of the issue of marine litter, and the Director of “Quality of Life, Water & Air” of the European Commission’s DG Environment, Ms. Marianne Wenning, who presented the European policies and actions to fight marine

litter’s impact on oceanic ecosystems. Dr. Arlete Sogorb of the Lisbon Zoo and President of the European Association for Aquatic Mammals (EEAM) which closely cooperates with the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA). Dr. Sogorb presented their collective public education and engagement campaign regarding marine debris.

MEP Ricardo Santos who rightly concluded that tackling the marine litter issue requires a cross-sectoral collaboration. In the words of **WFO’s** Bernard Merckx, “doing nothing is not an option”.



WFO Bernard Merckx speaking at “Marine Litter Impact on Oceanic Ecosystems – Problems and Solutions” in the European Parliament



MEP Ricardo Serrão Santos addresses the audience on the issue of marine litter

## Plastics Recycling Show Europe 2015



On the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of November at Tour & Taxis in Brussels, the **Plastics Recycling Show (PRS)** will feature a pan-European exhibition and conference stream related to plastics recycling. The event will bring together key players from the plastics recycling sectors in order to learn, network and capitalize on the

business opportunities that plastic recycling offers. **WFO** has worked with plastics recyclers for many years now, in order to recycle plastic fished out of the ocean into new, useful objects.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, **WFO’s** Stephanie Maes will be presenting “Blue sky thinking: marine litter – a look at the technology of trying to recover it”. **WFO** thus encourages all those who are interested to stop by the show, free of entrance, to see how the plastics recycling industry can help be a part of the solution to the marine litter problem. Come over to **WFO’s** exhibition booth C37 to see examples of recycled ocean plastic.

For more information, contact **Emilia Tarloswka** of Plastics Recyclers Europe.

## European Maritime Days

Every year, the European Commission organizes an event around [European Maritime Day](#), celebrated annually on 20 May. This year, the conference was held in Athens, Greece and attracted over 1 300 participants to discuss the theme of ports and coasts as engines of Blue Growth.

As part of the high-level sessions and stakeholder workshops of the two-day conference, **WFO** and Seas At Risk were chosen to co-host a workshop that looked into the role of port authorities in waste management and debated the topic of waste landing fees. This workshop thus investigated how port reception facilities could be optimised to tackle the problem of ship-sourced marine litter, and provide for the disposal of marine litter removed from the sea. By harmonising the fees charged for waste delivery and simplifying delivery and notification, disincentives for port reception facilities use could be removed.

**WFO** reiterated that at least the Fishing for Litter waste collected by fishermen should be landed free of charge in all EU ports. This is certainly not the case at the moment nor is it considered a priority action by the regional seas authorities. **WFO** also calls upon legislators to organise mandatory offloading of all waste as a direct preventive action in any EU ports. Today, a majority of ships leaving EU ports – some headed overseas – keep their waste on board which is in line with the current legislation. Reports on illegal dumping of wastes are available at, for example, the European Commission's [Eco-Management and Audit Scheme](#) (EMAS). During the upcoming [European Sustainable Fishing Forum](#) (ESSF), **WFO** will be addressing these specific topics.

The conference was an overall success and attracted delegates and experts from across Europe and beyond. Speakers, including Ministers, Commissioners, CEOs and experts, discussed the spectrum of opportunities and great challenges that our coasts and seas present, shared best practices, and developed new synergies.

European Maritime Day 2016 will take place in Turku, Finland, on 18 and 19 May 2016 and will focus on boosting Blue Growth.

**WFO** is keen to hold another exhibition booth and workshop again in 2016 and to tackle the next challenge with the help of all invested stakeholders.



Workshop 'Port Reception Facilities to Tackle Marine Litter' at European Maritime Day 2015



EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu Vella in Athens, Greece

## WFO The Americas - The Ozama River

In collaboration with local ([ICMA](#)) and international stakeholders ([DEME](#)) and partners, **WFO** is working on a project to help clean the Ozama River in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic.

The objective of the project is to engage the local communities and authorities in removing the debris in and around the river in order to restore a clean and healthy river.

**WFO** will provide assistance to the communities in order to increase both the technical and operational capacities in collecting, sorting, recycling and converting the collected litter into useful products.

Such activities are currently carried out in rather basic conditions by the communities. **WFO's** support will therefore not only lead to the creation of green jobs but will also include an educational awareness raising campaign for the Dominican youth.

In October, **WFO** will begin by holding two workshops with the local foundations who are already involved in waste management.



## Fishing for Litter at DG MARE



Ivan Victor (SDVO), Lowri Evans (DG MARE), MEP Alain Cadec and Bernard Merkx (WFO)

Last May, **WFO** teamed up with the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) to hold an exhibition on Fishing for Litter in the European Commission.

At the event, short speeches were made by Ms. Lowri Evans, Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries at the European Commission, **WFO** Champion and MEP Alain Cadec, Chairman of the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, Mr. Ivan Victor, President of Belgium's foundation for Sustainable Fishery Development (Stichting voor Duurzame Visserontwikkeling, SDVO) and **WFO**'s Co-Founder Mr. Bernard Merkx.

The event brought together many members of the European Institutions, pleased with the amount of interesting information they learned on recycling and reusing ocean litter. Indeed, numerous participants did not

know ocean litter could be recycled into benches, skateboards, clothes, backpacks, etc. A short fashion show was put on to display the work of Ecoalf, a company that makes fabric out of recycled plastic bottles and fishing gear.

**WFO** also be gifted DG MARE with benches made from recycled marine litter, which have been placed in DG MARE's green courtyard, which the faculty was able to enjoy during Brussels' exceptionally warm summer.



Fashion show of **Ecoalf** items made from recycled plastic bottles and fishing gear



Riding the **Bureo** skateboard made from recycled fishnets



**WFO** Bernard Merkx speaks to the audience in the European Commission

## WFO Golfinhos Alegres Project

The media continues to ring the alarm over the poor water and environmental conditions in and around Rio de Janeiro's Guanabara Bay. During recent pre-Olympic sporting events, a growing number of international athletes made part of their serious concerns about the problematic situation. Although the need for immediate action has been recognised throughout, the lack of sufficient funding to launch effective long term projects is difficult to understand.

**WFO** and its partners continue to reach out for funding in order to begin their project of cleaning up areas of the Bay with the help of hundreds of local fishermen, then turning the collected waste into

useful products with the support of the local recycling industry. Such a project would of course need to go hand in hand with an overall improvement of waste collection and recycling in order to benefit from a circular economy.

Presently, more than 90% of the original dolphin population has disappeared as a direct consequence of the pollution. The ultimate long term goal of **WFO**'s Golfinhos Alegres Project is to attain such high quality water and healthy environment that the dolphins will return to the Bay.

Together, let's win a gold medal for the environment.

View more pictures [here](#), or read recent articles on the topic in [The Guardian](#) and [The New Yorker](#).



(Credit: Getty Images / Mario Tama)

Brazil's Guanabara Bay

## Happy Seal

During a recent event in The Netherlands, the 'Wad about Plastics', Happy Seal partners placed a container to begin organising the preventive collection of obsolete fishing gear. Additional containers will be placed in all participating ports of the project. Meanwhile, an international roll out of the project is being discussed with interested stakeholders in the neighbouring countries. During the summer, the Pieterburen European Happy Seal Centre underwent a makeover of its visitors centre. The unveiling was celebrated in the presence of a big group including a large number of regional fishermen and the local Shrimp Queen who represents the shrimp fishermen in the region.

Outdoor, on the grass where only a few months ago a mountain of obsolete fishing gear had been stocked, Dutch artist Mrs Ans Coppes placed inspiring colourful art made out of litter collected at the Ameland beaches (Dutch Wadden Sea). The Groningen Diving Divas, a group of enthusiastic female swimmers, who had successfully participated in a recent Groningen Swim Marathon organised to raise funds to fight cancer were also present. As Happy Seal Ambassadors, they were the first to publically wear new Happy Seal branded clothing during this event.



The Shrimp Queen and Dutch artist Ans Coppes in front of her colourful art made of litter



Releasing seals back into the ocean after their recovery at the Pieterburen European Happy Seal Centre

## WFO Turkey in Action

In April, **WFO** Turkey participated in an event organized by the [Commission on the Protection of Black Sea Against Pollution](#). **WFO** presented its activities to the delegations from Commission Member States (Russia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania, Georgia, Turkey). The Black Sea Commission aims to combat pollution and ecosystem degradations, to prevent the loss of biodiversity, and to implement joint projects and events regarding the Black Sea through partnerships developed by countries located on the Black Sea coast.

**WFO** Turkey has been working on drawing a map of marine litter hotspots in the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara with the leading research institution [TÜBİTAK \(The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey\)](#). A first survey mission took place last April, when **WFO**'s special net was installed on the TÜBİTAK MAM Survey Vessel off the coast of Kınalıada in Istanbul. Another survey is planned to take place in the Gulf of İzmit, while fishermen cooperatives in Istanbul will assist in determining hotspots. TÜBİTAK will also provide technical support to **WFO** on improving the net.



The Sea and Environment Festival in Istanbul

PAGÇEV, the Recycling Enterprise of PAGEV, is an Authorized Institution of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning for segregation of packaging wastes at source to improve recycling performance. PAGÇEV and **WFO** Turkey held the "Sea and Environment Festival" on the Bosphorus in Istanbul to commemorate World Environment Day on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Sea and environment-themed painting, photography and short story contests received submissions from 250 children, and winners received their prizes. A play titled "Water Nymph" on the importance of the sea was performed for the children. A team of 20 divers including the Mayor of

Beşiktaş and a PAGEV Board Member removed waste from the Bosphorus. A video was projected on screens on the shore in real time, and a special headset allowed children to ask questions to divers, who responded while under the water. A video of the event is available [here](#).



## Diplomatic Council - The Global Think Tank



During the most recent **Diplomatic Council** (DC) gathering in Villa Rothschild near Frankfurt, where several hundreds of leading DC members attended, members of the DC Steering Committee and **WFO**'s Bernard Merckx agreed to further strengthen their partnership.

The DC is a United Nations registered Global Think Tank, whose main aim is to contribute the power of diplomacy for peace and sustainability everywhere on earth. The DC welcomes not solely members of the diplomatic or consular corps but also personalities from media, business, politics, science, society, culture and sports.

A Memorandum of Understanding outlining the intensified cooperation between both globally active organisations will be signed in the weeks to come.

## Europêche Seafood Showcase



In case you missed it last year, **Europêche** will be hosting its Seafood Showcase on September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015 in the European Parliament. The cocktail reception is hosted by MEP Alain Cadec, **WFO** Champion and Chairman of the Fisheries Committee, and will be treating its guests with seafood appetizers including Bluefin tuna sushi and sashimi, langoustines, clams and matjes herring.

The reception, however, is not only to indulge in delicious seafood, but also serves to highlight the efforts made by the fishing industry to fish sustainably. Last year, Javier Garat, President of Europêche, emphasized the importance of the event for the European fishing sector, stating: "It is important for people to know where their fish comes from and how it was caught."

Europêche enables fluent communication between the European institutions and the fishing sector. The European platform is the representative body for fishermen in the European Union representing around 45 000 vessels, 80 000 fishermen and counting 16 member organizations from 10 European countries. Which is why, last March, **WFO** and Europêche joined forces in a strategic alliance to help improve the environmental status of Europe's waterways, rivers, coastal areas and regional seas by reducing their amounts of marine litter.

## Meet WFO's New Project Manager



**WFO** has welcomed a new colleague to its team, Ms. Stephanie Maes, who will support **WFO** as Project Manager as **WFO** continues to raise awareness on a global level and set up international projects that close the loops.

In 1999, Stephanie obtained her Master's Degree in Socio-Economic Geography from the University of Leuven. She then began her professional career by supporting policy makers, providing them with analyses of data derived from the Geographic Information Systems (GIS). In 2006 she enriched her experiences in Ecuador, publishing a health atlas (Barometer de salud) of the District of Quito, commissioned by the Belgian Development Agency.

Then, in 2011, she became Program Manager at the European Fisheries Fund to tackle the major challenges the fisheries sector's has had to recently face with the aim of increasing economic, social and ecological welfare through a bottom-up approach (Community Led Local Development CLLD). Her expertise lies in bringing a variety of stakeholders together as well as in designing and implementing new innovative projects.

Stephanie is thus a valuable addition to the **WFO** team and can be contacted by email at [stephanie.maes@wastefreeoceans.eu](mailto:stephanie.maes@wastefreeoceans.eu) or by telephone at +32 2 739 63 79.

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