

To the attention of:

Mr. Paulino Rivero Baute, Presidente del Gobierno de las Islas Canarias

Mr. José Miguel Pérez García, Consejero de Medio Ambiente de las Islas Canarias

Subject: Support to the implementation of the Deposit System in Canary Islands, Spain

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Leiden, 16th April 2013

Dear Mr. Paulino Rivero Baute and Mr. José Miguel Pérez García,

The Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) (www.eucc.net) is an association with 2700 members in 40 countries, both particulars and organizations/institutions. Founded in 1989 with the aim of promoting a European approach to coastal conservation by bridging the gap between scientists, environmentalists, site managers, planners and policy makers, it has grown since then into the largest network of coastal and marine practitioners and experts in Europe and neighbouring area, with 14 National Branches and offices in seven countries. EUCC's mission is to promote coastal and marine management that integrates biodiversity conservation with those forms of development that sustain the integrity of landscapes, the cultural heritage and the social fabric of our coast.

At a European Union level EUCC is member of the ICZM Expert Group and integrates both the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Underwater Noise and Marine Litter Technical Subgroups, which have been set-up to provide guidance and recommendations to the MSFD-Good Environmental Status (GES) Working Group in respect to these two descriptors. At the Regional Seas level, EUCC has been following and contributing to the work as observer of the OSPAR and HELCOM Conventions, and UNEP MAP partner as well as following closely the Black Sea developments. EUCC is furthermore involved in a number of key EU projects related to marine litter¹. We are therefore working on different strategic fronts and able to bridge and facilitate synergies between various initiatives.

It is from this position that we would like to call your attention to the issue of marine litter and its relation to production, consumption and waste management practices, in particular, beverage containers.

Marine litter is a subject of increasing concern which originates from various land- and sea-based sources. It is a complex and challenging problem, which stems from the prevailing production and consumption patterns, and from how we deal with waste.

Marine litter is a problem in all EU marine waters. Absolute quantities and the types of debris vary considerably within and most probably between regions. However, there is clear evidence that plastics are by far the most abundant type of debris in terms of number of items (European Commission 2010). As a material type, plastics debris consists of a wide range of items with diverse sources from which an important section are food and beverage packaging as well as cap lids.

UNEP estimates that 25% of the marine litter present at the Mediterranean Sea are beverage containers and that 52 % of littering in the Mediterranean Sea comes from beaches and coasts as well as from recreational activities. A

¹ FP7 Science in Society project MARLUSCO (2012-2015), the Pilot Project Plastic Recycling Cycle and Marine Environmental Impact (2012), the EU Marine Litter Recovery Project: Fishing for Litter (MARLITT) and the FP7 CLEANSEA. In the Netherlands, EUCC is currently implementing a programme of removal of ghost nets associated to wrecks in the North Sea

recent study by the European Union² on the four European Regional Seas focused on Barcelona (Spain) as pilot project in the Mediterranean and based on surveys calculated that 90% of marine litter items found on beaches are single-use/short-life items; 46% is packaging, and 51% "use" items. In the North East Atlantic OSPAR estimates plastics as the material representing 75% of marine litter and an average of 28% of items being packaging. *These numbers give an indication on how urgent it is to prevent beverage containers of release to the environment.*

Marine Litter poses serious *negative impacts on the ecosystem and their inhabitants*: Every year about 100.000 mammals (e.g. sea turtles) appear dead because of plastics. Worldwide about 1 million sea birds die because of plastics. Plastics are extremely durable materials and are likely to persist in the marine environment for a considerable period, even for thousands of years. However, plastics deteriorate and fragment in the environment as a consequence of exposure to sunlight (photo-degradation) in addition to physical and chemical deterioration, which is likely to result in numerous tiny plastic fragments called micro-plastics. The impact of micro-plastics on marine ecosystems and its entry into the food chain are nowadays of concern and subject of a good number of scientific studies.

There are not only ecological negative consequences, but also *negative impacts for humans and economic damages for the fishery sector and for coastal municipalities*. United Kingdom spends each year ~18 million € on beach cleaning with an increasing trend of 37% in the last 10 years. The Netherlands and Belgium spent about 10,4 mill €/year to this end. Marine litter also impacts navigation. KIMO and UNEP estimate that in 1998 there were 200 rescues due to damage of propellers by marine litter with a cost ranking from 500.00 to 1,5 million Euros a year. Regarding fisheries, as an example, the Scottish fisheries fleet allocates 11,7 to 13 million € to repair damages by marine litter, representing 5% of their income.

In Spain, every day about 51 million beverage containers are putted in the market. Only 35 % are recycled by the current system (Container Amarillo). 28 million of containers finish in the waste dumps or incineration plants or in cities, landscapes or beaches and finally the sea. For four million beverage containers, the final destination is just not known. Deposit Systems all over the world have proof return rates from 85 up to 98 %. That means recycling of the material, enormous reduction of CO² emissions and of the negative impact for our coasts and oceans.

Canary Island has almost 1600 km of outstanding coastline including sensitive ecosystems requiring conservation. Canary Islands is an internationally recognized hotspot of biodiversity. That means, Canarian politicians have a big responsibility to protect these unique ecosystems.

Canary Island is currently in the excellent position to include the SDDR system into the new Waste Legislation and be the pioneer region in Spain by implementing the system. Hopefully, the implementation in Canary Islands will be followed by a national wide implementation of the SDDR in Spain.

The Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) would very much welcome the implementation of a Return and Deposit Systems on Canary Islands and hopes the Government of the Canary Islands follows the petition of the Canary Island Parliament and gets the process started.

With kind regards,


Mike Manriaart

² Pilot Project: Plastic recycling cycle and marine environmental impact – Case studies on the plastic cycle and its loopholes in the four European regional seas (2012)