

# Summary of previous activities in Germany to prevent and reduce marine litter on a municipal level

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## 1. Introduction

This document presents a brief summary of the previous activities in Germany to prevent and reduce marine litter with a focus on actions against plastic litter on a municipal level.

The Round Table Marine Litter was launched in 2016 by the then German Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks, the then Environment Minister of Lower Saxony Stefan Wenzel and the then President of the German Environment Agency Maria Krautzberger. Since then it has been supporting the implementation of measures against marine litter which are part of the national Programme of Measures of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

It also serves as an information platform for relevant stakeholders. Around 150 experts from areas such as fisheries, shipping, other industries (e.g. plastics producer, converter and recycler, cosmetics, tyres), retail, science, education, tourism, environmental associations, authorities, politics and the arts are taking part.

One of these measures for the Descriptor 10 (on marine litter) of the MFD addresses the reduction of amounts of plastic litter through local provisions. To support implementation of this measure, a sub-working group on *Municipal Requirements* was established in the framework of the Round Table Marine Litter and two workshops took place in 2017 – one with stakeholders related to the North Sea and one with stakeholders related to the Baltic Sea. Based on the ideas and practices developed in the workshops, a collection of best practice examples for municipalities with regard to prevention and reduction of marine plastic litter was published in September 2019. In addition, a guide with respect to local regulation options is currently under development.

## 2. Workshops

### a. Baltic Sea

#### i. Description

On September 8<sup>th</sup> 2017, a total of 33 participants from 25 institutions followed the invitation of the State Agency for Environment, Nature Conservation and Geology Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Coastal Union Germany (EUCC) to Rostock Warnemünde. Present stakeholders included representatives from politics and administration (national, county and municipal level), tourism, waste management, education and environmental protection. The aim of the workshop was to discuss new options for action and good practices at local level with respect to marine litter in a participatory process.

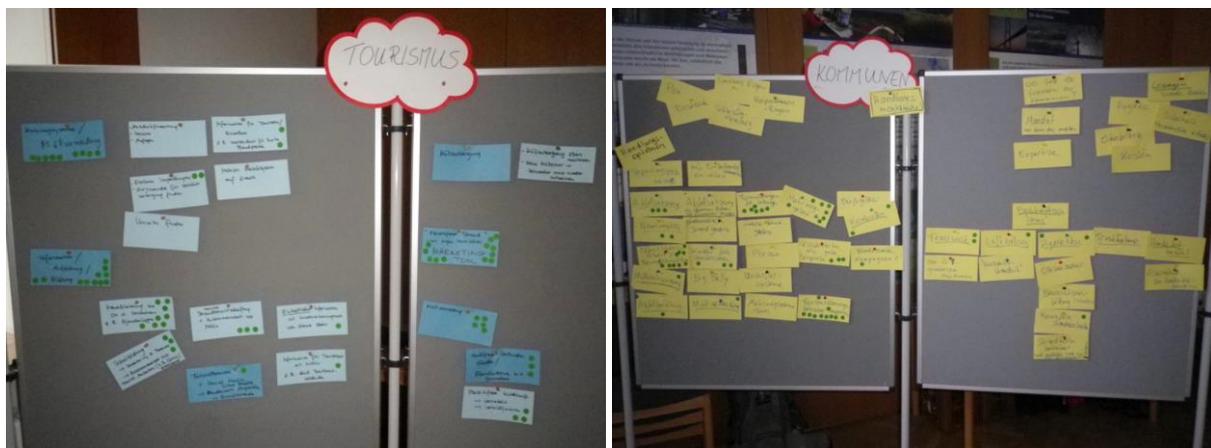


After the welcoming, introductory lectured followed: Stefanie Werner from the Federal Environmental Agency gave a speech on garbage in the sea, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. Dennis Gräwe from the State Agency for Environment, Nature Conservation and Geology Mecklenburg-Vorpommern presented current results of the beach litter monitoring on the Baltic Sea coast. In addition, Holger Matthäus, Senator for Building and Environment of the Hanseatic City of Rostock, and Harald Machur, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board, shared experiences from a local government and tourism sector perspective focusing on touch points, problems and solutions.

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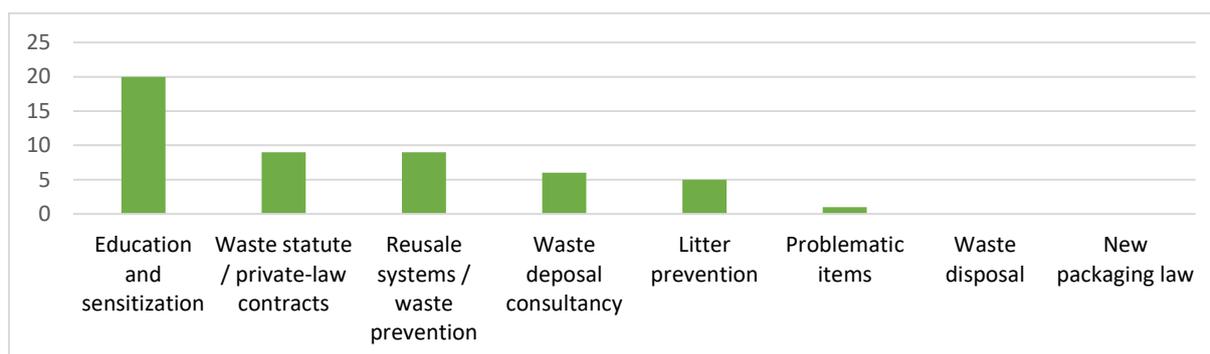
#### ii. Options for Action

In an interactive session the participants discussed possible ways to reduce marine litter in two separate workshops – one focusing on tourism and one focusing on municipalities. The participants used post-its to collect and sort their ideas. Following, they prioritized their ideas according to the feasibility of the practices. The translated and consolidated results are shown in Figure 1.



Option for action	Implementation			
Education/ information/ sensitization/ public relations/ marketing  20	Marketing tool „plastic free beach“ 12	Early sensitization of children 3	Information for tourism players 1	Picture contests (social media, etc.) 1
	Visualization of litter at beaches 8	Coastal towns as good examples 3	Consistent information 1	Press 0
	School education 3	Touristic beach management 3	National-wide campaigns 1	
Waste statute / private-law contracts 9	Requirement for reusables 7	Master verbalizations 3	Controls and fines 2	Beach gastronomy 0
Reusale systems / waste prevention 9	Alternative materials, suppliers 2	Information for tourists/ residents 2	Starting finance 0	Mobile washing systems (events) 0
Waste deposal consultancy 6	Contact to holiday apartment owners 10	Waste prevention 1	Deposit-systems 0	
Litter prevention 5	Smoking-free beaches or zones 3	Plastic-free accommodation 3		
Problematic items 1	Zigarette ends (portable ash trays) 3	Fireworks (collective cleaning action) 2	Balloons (wedding locations) 1	Straws, dog waste bags 0
Waste disposal 0	“Bigbelly“ 0	Underfloor systems 0	Increase number of public bins 0	No bins → polluter has to pick up 0
New packaging law 0	Influence retail /production industry 0			

**Figure 1** Summary of options for action - According to the prioritization made by the group, the options of action were sorted further up and the implementation approaches further up and left.



**Figure 2** Analyzed results of the question about options of action.

## b. North Sea

### i. Description

On November 24<sup>th</sup> in 2017, at the invitation of BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany), around 30 representatives from politics and administration, municipalities, tourism, waste management, and nature and environmental protection came together in Bremen to discuss and exchange ideas on municipal waste prevention options on the German North Sea coast.

After a welcome and a short thematic introduction by Dorothea Seeger from BUND, State Councilor Ronny Meyer welcomed the participants, emphasized the importance of the issue of marine litter and made the connection to the municipal level. Introductory lectures followed: Stefanie Werner (Federal Environment Agency) gave an overview of the current situation worldwide and on the North and Baltic Seas, as well as international and national agreements against marine litter. Helmut Schmitz (Green Dot) emphasized that the plastic problem needs a political solution. He underlined that there must be courageous actors in the economy to break new ground in the design of plastic products and the use of recyclates. After this overview of the legal foundations at EU and federal level, Aleke Stöfen-O'Brien (Federal Environment Agency) focused on the municipal and regulatory scope for municipalities. She pointed out the hierarchy of norms of law, according to which local law must be subordinated to the legal regulations at European, federal and state level, but also underlined that local authorities still have a clear scope within the framework of local self-government. For example, municipal approval can be used to deal with marine litter through appropriate approval concepts, or through fees and statutes for waste prevention and disposal.

In a second part, practical examples from Föhr and Borkum – German islands in the North Sea - were presented. The project on Föhr, "Plastic-free becomes a trend", focuses on information and education, the presentation of plastic-free / poor alternatives and network and public relations work on marine litter. As a result of the project, beach rubbish bins were set up on Föhr, for example, where the municipalities take over the disposal of the garbage collected here. The central part of the lecture was the presentation of the certificate "Plastic conscious holiday home". The certificate awards holiday apartments that offer guests ways to avoid plastic and provide information about marine litter. Within a few months, over 200 accommodations were certified. Furthermore, plastic-free tourism products were developed together with Föhr-Tourismus GmbH.

Jens Albrecht (environmental officer of the city of Borkum) then presented the past and present of waste prevention on the island of Borkum. A very successful waste prevention project had taken place there in the late 1980s and early 1990s, reducing waste by more than a third. For example, there were (almost) no more beverage cans and milk was only sold in reusable bottles. In the hotels involved in the project at that time, for example, there was no longer any portion packaging; Borkum was a pioneer. Almost 30 years later, there is nothing left of the project today. Jens Albrecht emphasized that, especially in such a sensitive and particularly worth protecting natural area as the Wadden Sea, the focus should be on effective waste prevention.

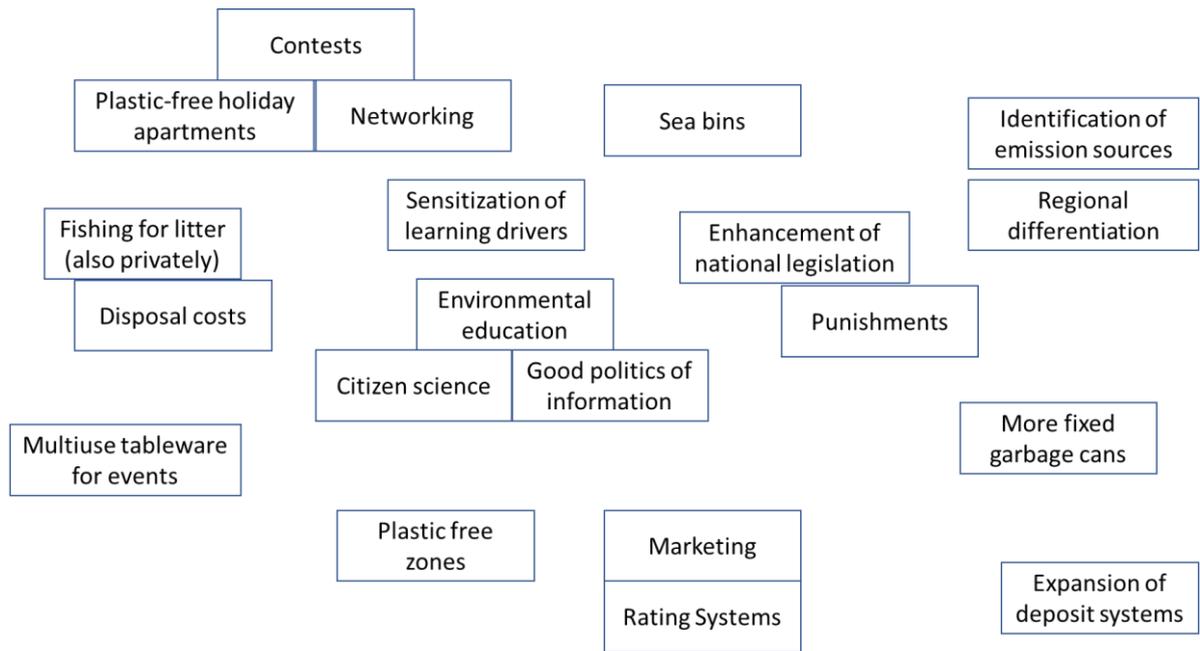
### ii. Good Practices and Challenges

After the lunch break, three small groups were formed on three different topics:

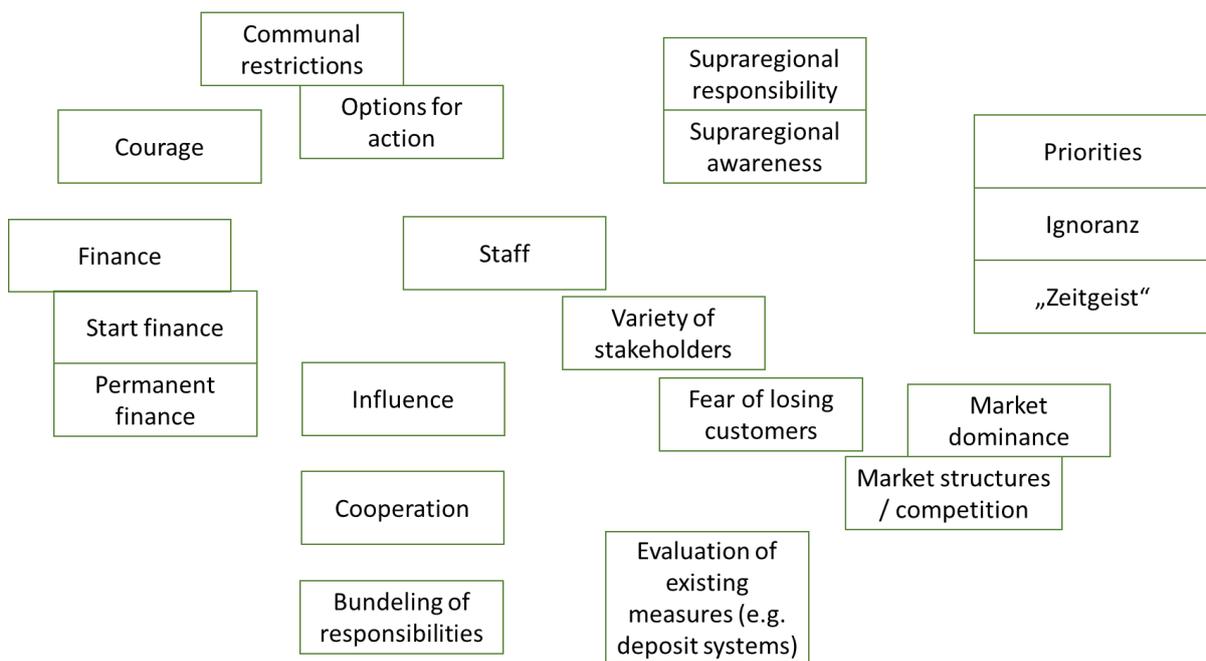
- Good practices
- Challenges and obstacles
- Next steps

The groups used a large board and different coloured post-its. People could either stay in one of the groups or switch groups after a certain time.

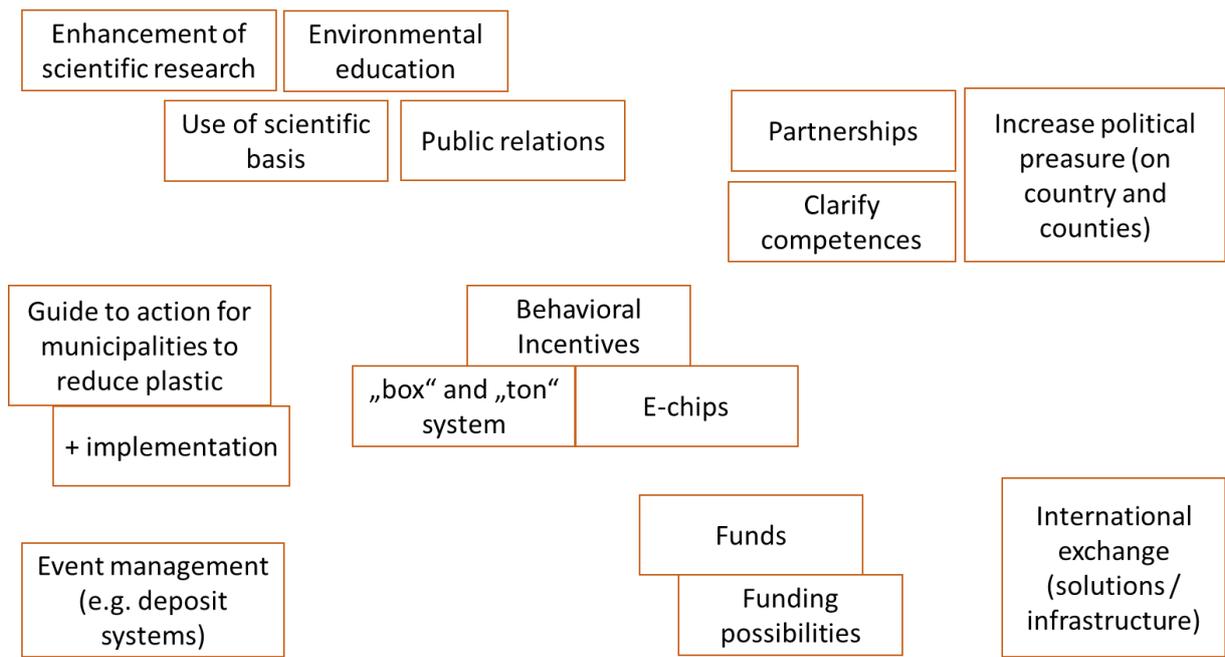
The results of the three groups were presented in the plenary. A panel discussion formed the end of the workshop. An English summary of the three small groups is presented in Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5.



**Figure 3** Collection of ideas



**Figure 4** Collection of challenges and obstacles



**Figure 5** Collection of possible next steps

### 3. Concretization

Within the work of the Round Table on Marine Litter and the sub-working group *Municipal Requirements*, the options of action or good practice examples collected in the two workshops were evaluated and concretized. **Table 1** presents an overview of the most severe problem cases, their according best practice examples and concrete implementation suggestions.

Problem case	Best Practices	Implementation approaches
plastic packaging in the beach catering industry, single use plastic bottles and beverage cans	-use reusable packaging (House Bethanien Langeoog) -reusable drinking bottles (Norderney)	-award system for "environmentally friendly operation" -self-catering by the companies -buffet offer instead of portion packs -promote/dictate of reusable systems -ban on beverage cans
Plastic dishes/cups/drinking straws to take away	-"coffee to go cup" initiatives in Hamburg and Niedersachsen -Breminale concept	-deposit system or use of reusable dishes; "zero waste" events concept
waste disposal on banks and beaches	-BRA "Gewässer" -"Big Bellys" -closed tanks -Nordsee GmbH (Weser/Dedesdorf)	-collection campaigns -sponsorships -optimized disposal structures and frequencies
holiday accommodation, local recreation in and on waters	-Borkum: plastic-free island -plastic-conscious holiday homes Föhr -"Blue Flag" for boats and fishing ports	-municipal initiatives -if necessary renew + expand concept on North Sea islands support demonstration project -restrictions for water sports enthusiasts (including anglers) and private residents (camping sites, ...)
cigarette butts	-EUCC "Baltic Sea Asher"	-smoking bans, -collection tank, -environmental education on the ground"
packaging materials in ports, construction sites, in agricultural, for dune and tree protection	-if applicable ERDE: Harvesting plastics recycling Germany	-mandatory introduction of closed containers
fireworks	-organised clean-up operations on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> of January like in Zingst	-ban during the year -New Year's collection -alternative materials (e.g. laser)
consumer behaviour at local level (e.g. coffee capsules)	-sustainable public procurement (e.g. guide on green procurement Hamburg) -alternative materials (e.g. paper capsules)	-purchasement of more sustainable, long-lasting products -plastic-free packaging -reusable systems -waste separation
garbage bags for plastic ("Gelbe Säcke")	-Norderney	-replacement by tear-proof bags or bins
plastic bags	-BUND campaign with the aim of reusable bags	-chargeable delivery or replacement by reusable system

**Table 1** Concretization of the options of action and best practice examples (as of 2018)

## 4. Guides

### a. Guide to action for municipalities to reduce plastic waste: Collection of best practice examples (2019)

The brochure on best practice examples ([https://www.muell-im-meer.de/sites/default/files/2019-10/UAG-KV\\_Leitfaden-Best-Practice-090919.pdf](https://www.muell-im-meer.de/sites/default/files/2019-10/UAG-KV_Leitfaden-Best-Practice-090919.pdf)) was developed in the sub-working group *Municipal Requirements* of the Round Table on Marine Litter in cooperation with local authorities to support municipalities in implementing solution strategies. In 28 pages, it presents solutions from municipal practice that have already proven their worth for the main areas of action and problems distinguishing between successful solutions for problematic waste components, comprehensive solution approaches for exemplary action and the biodegradability and composting of plastics. The guide comprises 13 main chapters along the concretization of options (see Table 1). All together the guide lists 37 implementation approaches with 90 Best-Practices.

Examples are the adaptation of municipal statutes, such as a requirement for reusable packaging contained in the licensing and usage conditions or conditions for waste disposal. In addition, municipal waste disposal systems can be adapted or littering can be curbed through fines. Municipalities can also promote public awareness and create incentives by awarding prizes to plastic-conscious companies. For example, reusable and deposit systems should be mandatory for festivals and events on the coast.

The guide may well serve as a tool to inspire municipal stakeholders to reduce plastic in their regions. It can be downloaded from the website of the Round Table free of charge. In addition, it is promoted in newsletters from involved stakeholders and will be distributed by several mailing lists. Currently, the document is being translated into English to enable all partners of CAPonLITTER to benefit from it. It is a living document and will be further developed once additional Best-Practice examples have been identified and evaluated through CAPonLITTER with the involvement of additional representatives of local authorities and other stakeholder on the municipal level.

### b. Guide to action for municipalities to reduce plastic waste: Local regulation options

Within the federal system of Germany, municipalities face several options to adopt local regulations in order to reduce plastic waste. The guide to action on local regulation options, which is currently developed, delivers a broad collection of ideas for municipalities on how to legally manifest plastic waste reduction in their region. The ongoing work on the guide may serve as a profound basis for the action plans to be developed within the CAPonLITTER project, especially with regard to the Interregional Learning Event on regulatory options hosted by Germany in spring 2021.

Due to the federal structure, this legislative framework, however, differs across counties (“Bundesländer”). As a consequence, the adaption of regulation options to single regions is required. Especially in small municipalities, local politicians and administrators do not have the capacity to do so. The guide to action reveals the way forward for single coastal municipalities by taking into account the legal framework of the coastal counties. However, the various options will be assessed and aggregated in order to come up with legal strategies to influence law on a national basis.