

# **Good Environmental Status and Environmental Targets:**

## **Descriptor 10**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This report outlines the Good Environmental Status (hereinafter referred to as 'GES') and environmental targets established to achieve GES in terms of MSFD Descriptor 10 reproduced hereunder:

***Properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment***

### **1.2 Selection of relevant criteria and indicators**

The Commission Decision on criteria and methodological standards on good environmental status of marine waters (2010/477/EU) stipulates the following criteria and indicators for the assessment of the extent to which good environmental status is being achieved in terms of Descriptor 10:

- 10.1: Characteristics of litter in the marine and coastal environment
  - Trends in the amount of litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines, including analysis of its composition, spatial distribution and, where possible, source (10.1.1)
  - Trends in the amount of litter in the water column (including floating at the surface) and deposited on the sea-floor, including analysis of its composition, spatial distribution and, where possible, source (10.1.2)
  - Trends in the amount, distribution and, where possible, composition of micro-particles (in particular micro-plastics) (10.1.3)
- 10.2: Impacts of litter on marine life
  - Trends in the amount and composition of litter ingested by marine animals (e.g. stomach analysis) (10.2.1)

The current data limitations in relation to marine litter do not allow the application of any of the MSFD criteria and indicators for Descriptor 10 at this stage. While the MSFD Initial Assessment indicates the availability of baseline data with respect to litter deposited on the seafloor (10.1.2), such data is lacking for marine litter associated with other media. Furthermore, long-term monitoring data is lacking across all types of litter addressed by the MSFD indicators.

Further work is thus required in order to generate the necessary data for assessment of trends in the amount and composition of litter in the different media addressed by the indicators.

### 1.3 Good Environmental Status

As a result of the current data limitations, definition of Good Environmental Status for Descriptor 10 is based on a desired status in relation to the amount of marine litter in general:

***The amount of marine litter entering the marine environment shows a declining trend over time***

Assessment of achievement (or progress towards achievement) of this GES however would not be possible in the short-term since baseline data with respect to marine litter still needs to be defined. Further development of this GES would also be required to reflect the various media addressed by the MSFD criteria and indicators.

### 1.4 Environmental Targets and Associated Indicators

Establishment of quantitative or trend targets in relation to marine litter was not possible on the basis of the current data scenario. Within this context, an interim target is being put forward, geared towards the improvement of knowledge on marine litter, its sources and impacts (Table 1).

**Table 1: Proposed Interim Targets for Marine Litter.**

Good Environmental Status	Environmental Target	Features	Indicators
The amount of marine litter entering the marine environment shows a declining trend over time	<b>Efforts are undertaken to improve current level of knowledge on marine litter in Malta.</b>	Litter washed ashore and/or deposited on coastlines; litter in the water column; litter deposited on the seafloor; microparticles; ingested litter.	Level of knowledge on marine litter