

10. How can we prevent the spread of marine litter?



An old fishing net at the coast of Jutland, Denmark (Photo: Ilka Peeken)

Significantly reducing the amount of marine litter will require fundamental changes. One way would be to use more plastics that are completely biodegradable. Though we already have compostable plastic, when it breaks down it often leaves behind microparticles or fibres. Another solution would involve making a radical change in our consumer behaviour.

Global plastic production is currently growing by approximately 4 per cent every year, a trend that can only be reversed if, for example, industry reduces the amount of packaging materials it uses, and consumers consciously reduce their demand for plastics. Further, researchers at the AWI consider environmental education to be particularly important - it's essential to make children and young people aware of the risks posed by plastic litter, and of alternatives to plastic, so as to achieve a long-term change in purchasing behaviour. In this regard, international litter collection campaigns are promising: though collecting litter on coasts and along rivers removes comparatively little waste from the environment, the educational value of these campaigns is very high.

Another good example is the "Fishing for Litter" campaign, in which fishers from several European countries have committed to dispose of the plastic litter they catch in their nets on land, instead of simply throwing it back into the sea.

Question 1:

[Which types of plastic litter are there in the ocean? >](#)

Question 2:

[Where does the plastic waste come from? >](#)

Question 3:

[How much plastic litter is there in the ocean? >](#)

Question 4:

[Where does plastic litter end up? >](#)

Question 5:

[What are garbage patches? >](#)

Question 6:

[How large are the garbage patches? >](#)

Question 7:

[Where do microplastics come from? >](#)

Question 8:

[What are the risks of marine plastic? >](#)

Question 9:

[What are the economic impacts of marine litter? >](#)