

# Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Joint statement on Preventing Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter

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Good.  
Better.  
Regional.

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# Background

10 November 2020, Sofia, the WB region reached important milestone by **endorsing the Leaders' Declaration on the Green Agenda that aligns with EU Green Deal;**

The Sofia Declaration encourages a shift in development paradigm and bolster the region to undertake a major transformation to properly and timely address the growing environmental and climate challenges;

Consequently, the Regional Cooperation Council coordinated the preparation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan endorsed by WB leaders at the Brdo pri Kranju Summit in October 2021;

The Action Plan is structured to reflect seven components of the Sofia Declaration (Climate Action, Energy, Transport, Circular Economy, Pollution, Sustainable Agriculture and Nature and Biodiversity Protection) grouped into five pillars;

It includes measures to reach 58 commitments (objectives) from the Sofia Declaration;

Plastic Pollution one of objectives;

- Plastic pollution in the WB is increasingly challenging in the region, with many economies tackling SUP bags ranging from bans to introducing prices;
- **Circular Economy Operational Plan-** RCC coordinated development and adoption in April 2023;  
CE still a new concept in the WB region
- Outlines a series of regional activities in the circular economy by 2024 as agreed among WB economies, thus targeting economies, citizens, Academia, and private sector as well
- **Regional Joint Statement on Prevention of Plastic Pollution and Marine Litter** endorsed by WB Leaders in October 2023 Berlin Process Summit in Tirana;
- Important RCC-led deliverable as the contamination of water bodies and the Adriatic Sea presents a significant challenge for both the Western Balkans and EU Member States, affecting environment, tourism and fishing.

# RCC role

To coordinate the GAWB processes at the regional level and oversee/ monitor the implementation of the GAWB AP, including the Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Joint statement on Preventing Plastic Pollution, including Marine Litter through the:

- Regional Working Group on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (technical WG level)
- Prime Ministers` Sherpas (political level) and Annual Ministerial Meeting on GAWB;
- Launched WB Green and Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform;
- Supporting SEE BDTF (Biodiversity and Nature Protection Pillar)
- Established LSG and NGO Forum
- Balkan Barometer Public and Business Opinion Surveys

# Regional Action Plan

## Aims:

- Coordinate a WB regional approach to implement the Joint Statement in a tangible and visible way for citizens
- Identify relevant stakeholders (public and private)
- Identify transboundary hotspots of pollution, e.g rivers, coastal areas with marine pollution, agricultural, biodiversity, mixed movement hotspots such as border crossing points
- Improve data on and monitoring of plastic pollution in line with EU obligations, standards and best practices
- Identify and address needs at the regional level, including financial and technical
- Address urgent need to introduce and extend separate collection system and improve recycling infrastructure, and to prevent waste from being disposed in (illegal) landfills Regional coordination key to support economically viable recycling sector and demand for recyclables;
- Align with the New Growth Strategy for the Western Balkans

# Regional Action Plan

## Key Actions (outlined in Annex):

- Management of land- and sea-based sources of pollution
- Harmonize/align with Barcelona Convention Regional Plan and relevant EU legislation, strategies, programmes, such as EPR schemes, implementation of CE-principles, phase out of single-use consumer plastic items, introduction of economic instruments (e.g deposit scheme) etc.
- Public Awareness Raising, Education and Outreach  
e.g. promotion of BATs, CE Stakeholder Platform, innovation
- Capacity strengthening for WB public authorities, academia, research institutions, among other



# Conclusions/Way Forward

Steps to be taken within the framework of the Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the Joint Statement on Preventing Plastic Pollution, Including Marine Litter:

1. Draft Regional Action Plan shared with the regional partners on GAWB, IO`s, civil society, businesses and LSG`s - inputs received, comments reflected- by end of April
2. Draft Regional Action Plan shared with the RWG GAWB- inputs/comments consolidated by end of May
3. Discussions at PM Sherpas level
4. Endorsement at the Berlin Process Summit by WB leaders in October



Thank you!

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