

**Strengthening plastic pollution governance in the Mediterranean: The
Barcelona Convention's role**

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Abstract

Plastic pollution constitutes a critical threat to the Mediterranean marine ecosystem, with immense volumes of plastic waste flowing into the shared sea from over 20 bordering states. This research analyzes plastic pollution governance in the Mediterranean region through the lens of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. It scrutinizes the policy gaps between the Barcelona Convention's protocols and decisions concerning plastic waste, against on-the-ground implementation shortcomings enabling the continuity of plastic pollution. Absent monitoring capacities, limited enforcement of regulations, inadequate waste management infrastructure, and unchecked plastic production and use are examined as foremost implementation weaknesses. To bridge the governance gap, the paper delineates prospective policy, technological, financial and capacity-building interventions to curb plastic pollution based on the Barcelona Convention's architecture. Proposed priority actions include consolidating monitoring programs, implementing Extended Producer Responsibility, integrating informal waste sectors, establishing a regional plastic waste fund, standardizing labeling, and banning select single-use plastics. This study aims to uncover governance solutions to advance regional anti-plastic pollution efforts. The research employs textual analysis of Barcelona Convention protocols and decisions, complemented by third-party data on plastic waste flows, management capacities, and policy evaluations for Mediterranean nations.

Strategically bridging the governance gap is critical for Barcelona Convention members to progress on commitments to mitigate plastic pollution and safeguard the Mediterranean Sea.

Keywords: Plastic pollution, ecosystem, plastic pollution governance, the Barcelona Convention



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