Assessing Progress In Depollution Of The Mediterranean Sea

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Since 1950s, the Mediterranean region has experienced a drastic increase in population, in particular in the Southern and Eastern rim where further growth is still expected. Rapid urbanization of the coastal zone, where two thirds of the Mediterranean population (~129 million) resides, forces people in an increasingly overcrowded coastal strip, exacerbating the pressures on water resources and of improper solid waste management. In an effort to rectify environmental deterioration in the region, during the 10th Anniversary Summit of the Barcelona Process in 2005, the Euro-Mediterranean Partners committed themselves to substantially reduce land-based pollution to the Mediterranean by 2020 - the "Horizon 2020 Initiative" (H2020). The overarching objective of H2020 is to depollute the Mediterranean focusing on three priority areas: a) municipal waste, b) water (fresh and waste water, inland and marine waters) and c) industrial emissions, which collectively account for up to 80% of the pollution to the Mediterranean Sea. In this initiative, the progress in depollution is evaluated based on a number of priority indicators endorsed by the Southern Mediterranean countries. The activities supporting the indicator-based assessment (expected to be published towards mid 2013) involve the establishment of a process for regular reporting. This is based on the coherent collection and sharing of common indicators and infrastructure (dataflows), in line with the principles of a Shared Environment Information System (SEIS). The coastal, national and regional assessments highlight the levels and trends in the identified pollution sources, responses from the countries as part of their National Action Plans adopted in the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan/Barcelona Convention and investments in depollution projects. The assessment on waste shows that in many coastal areas and countries, open dumps are the main method of waste disposal. In some countries, more than 80 % of the generated municipal solid waste is disposed of through dumping, one of the sources of marine litter. Waste collection coverage is variable (55-100%) but recycling and compositing remain generally low (<10 %) in all countries. As for waste water, for which the coastal hydrological basin is considered as the reference unit, the

collection rate varies between 50-90 % of the waste water generated whereas treatment rate varies between 20-90 %. An interesting relation between waste water collection and treatment rate is observed, with some countries reporting high collection rates and low treatment rates, or vice versa. This raises questions on the treatment capacities and the fate of the collected but untreated waste water. The link to the eutrophication status of coastal hotspots subject to untreated waste water is also addressed. With respect to industrial emissions, the assessment provides insight in the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) pilots set up in specific countries to assess emissions to air and water. This assessment identifies priorities for action and sets the stage for planning the activities in the next phase of H2020 (2014-2020).