



FAMENET

Report on EMFF and EMFAF marine litter

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List of acronyms/abbreviations

AIR	Annual Implementation Report (e.g., "AIR 2023").
ALDFG	Abandoned, Lost or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy.
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
EMFAF	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (The funding period covering 2021–2027).
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (The funding period covering 2014–2020).
EU	European Union
FLAG	Fisheries Local Action Groups (Used in the context of CLLD cooperation/strategies).
GE	Geographical expert
GES	Good Environmental Status (of marine waters).
IMP	Integrated Maritime Policy
Infosys	Database/System used for implementation data in both EMFF and EMFAF.
MA	Managing Authority (The governmental body responsible for managing the funds).
MS	Member State
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations (Implied term, used when referring to the industry and NGOs).
OperID	Operation ID (Used for listing specific project references).
PRF	Port Reception Facilities (Directive).
SFC	System for Fund Management in the European Union (Referred to as SFC2021 for the 2021–2027 period and SFC2014 for the 2014–2020 period).
SUP	Single-Use Plastics (Directive).
TOI	Type of Intervention (Used for tracking financial information and operations under EMFAF).
UP	Union Priority Used in reference to EMFF/EMFAF articles

Executive summary

Marine litter is a global and EU challenge, addressed through international agreements, EU policy frameworks, directives, and collaborative initiatives aimed at reducing waste and protecting marine environments, with increasing focus on plastics and pollution reduction targets. This task revisits and builds on previous analyses of EU fisheries funding for marine litter, providing an overview of actions under EMFF and EMFAF, assessing progress and lessons learned, and offering recommendations for future improvements, primarily for DG MARE's internal review. The report combines desk research and stakeholder interviews across 22 EU coastal Member States, analysing Infosys database records and additional funding sources to quantitatively and qualitatively assess marine litter initiatives.

EMFF quantitative results

EUR 43,8 million was spent on marine litter-related operations, amounting to just 1% of both the total number of EMFF-supported operations and the overall EMFF budget.

A total of 1 033 operations specifically addressing marine litter were carried out under the EMFF. These projects were identified through a detailed review of the EMFF **Infosys** database covering the period 2014 - 2023.

Article 40(1)(a), which funds the collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter, was the most utilized EMFF article for this purpose. It supported 654 operations and accounted for EUR 21,3 million in expenditure.

Articles 63 & 64, on Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), supported 199 operations for EUR 5,8 million in expenditure.

Spain was the most active Member State, with 691 marine litter-related operations—over half of all EMFF-funded projects. However, more than 500 of these were very small, averaging just EUR 200, which significantly skews the overall picture. Italy follows with 113 operations, while most other countries reported fewer than 20.

In terms of funding spent, Poland led all Member States, dedicating nearly EUR 13,9 million to marine litter operations. Spain and Italy followed with EUR 10,8 million and EUR 5 million, respectively, while most other countries spent less than EUR 1,5 million each.

When looking at the share of each country's EMFF budget dedicated to marine litter, Poland and Bulgaria were the most committed, allocating 3,62% and 3,33% of their budgets, respectively. Sweden followed with 2,59%, but overall the spending was less than 1% of the total EU budget.

Most marine litter operations focused on clean-up activities, with 756 initiatives receiving EUR 24 million—55% of the total marine litter budget. Other types of actions included recycle/recover/mitigate (98 operations, EUR 8,4 million), prevention (97 operations, EUR 4,2 million), reports/studies (40 operations, EUR 2,5 million), and monitoring (18 operations, EUR 3,1 million).

EMFAF quantitative results

EUR 6 million (0,48% of the committed EMFAF budget) has actually been allocated to marine litter-specific operations so far.

Out of over 16 400 total EMFAF-funded operations, 58 were specifically dedicated to marine litter.

TOI 1 (Impacts on environment and contribution to GES) accounts for 42 marine litter operations and almost EUR 5 million (83% of marine litter funding).

TOI 14 (CLLD implementation of strategy) covers 13 operations totalling about EUR 476 000 (8% of marine litter funding).

As for Number of Operations, Sweden leads with 23 operations, followed by Spain (14) and Denmark (9).

As for Funding, Sweden dedicated the most EMFAF funding for marine litter (EUR 2,69 million), followed by Denmark (EUR 1,02 million) and Spain (EUR 0,98 million).

Clean-up Projects continue to dominate: 34 clean-up operations received EUR 3,47 million; prevention and recycle/recover/mitigate each had 12 and 9 operations, with just over EUR 1 million each.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Marine litter is a problem both in the EU and globally, with efforts to address it are underway at international, regional, and national levels. These efforts involve policy frameworks, regulations, and collaboration among governments, NGOs, businesses, and communities to reduce waste and protect marine environments.

At the EU level, the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** provides the main framework for monitoring and addressing marine pollution, aiming for good environmental status of EU marine waters. In 2015 the Circular Economy Action Plan¹ announced the ambition to move towards a more circular economy, where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised. The **EU Plastics Strategy**², which followed in 2018, set out a vision for Europe's new plastics economy. Concrete measures concerning marine litter were adopted in 2019. The directive on **single-use plastics**³ (the 'SUP Directive) obliged the reporting on amount of fishing gear put on the market and deposited in ports at the end of its life. The **Port Reception Facilities Directive**⁴ (PRF Directive) forbid port fees that depend on the amount of litter deposited, including litter picked up in fishing nets during fishing operations, and obliged separate reporting of this "passively-fished litter". This removed financial incentives for dumping litter at sea. See Section 7.2 for more information on the SUP and PRF Directives.

The **EU's Zero Pollution Action Plan**, part of the European Green Deal, sets targets for reducing waste, marine litter, and microplastics by 2030. The EU also supports four Regional Sea Conventions (OSPAR, HELCOM, Bucharest, and Barcelona) to coordinate marine protection efforts with neighbouring countries. Awareness-raising initiatives, such as #EUBeachCleanup and the European Week for Waste Reduction, further support these goals.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the Ancillary Task

In 2017 FAME delivered a report⁵ analysing the actions undertaken by the fisheries sector, in the fight against marine litter and the financial contributions made by the EU through the European Fisheries Fund 2007 - 2013 (EFF) and the subsequent European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020 (EMFF).

¹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS *Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy* COM/2015/0614 final

² COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS *A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy* COM/2018/028 final

³ Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

⁴ Directive (EU) 2019/883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships

⁵ *How is the fisheries sector using EU Funds to fight Marine litter?* https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/contents/how-fisheries-sector-using-eu-funds-fight-marine-litter_en

This was seven years ago. The EMFF has now closed, replaced by the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 (EMFAF) , so it is valid to revisit the 2017 analysis, look at the lessons learnt during the full EMFF period, examine how the EMFAF is improving the situation and to identify good practice that can be applied over the remainder of the EMFAF programme.

The purposes of this report are to:

- Provide an overview of what has been implemented under EMFF related to marine litter.
- Provide an overview of what has been implemented and what is planned under EMFAF related to marine litter.
- Draw conclusions and formulate recommendations for the future.

The report targets DG MARE officers for internal use. DG MARE may consider publication at a later stage.

1.3 Acknowledgements

FAMENET wishes to express its gratitude to Mr. Rodrigo Ataide Dias for his review and supportive feedback, both of which played an important role in refining this report.

2 Methodology

This report draws upon the reports produced by 22 EU Coastal Member States. The research was conducted in two main stages, combining both desk research and stakeholder interviews, to comprehensively map initiatives and projects addressing marine litter within these Member States. For Malta, only the quantitative analysis—based on Infosys data and programmed figures—has been included, as no interview was conducted due to service-related reasons by the Managing Authority.

Geographic Experts (GEs) conducted **desk-based research** to collect general information on marine litter initiatives and projects in the MSs. The primary focus was on operations reported in the Infosys databases for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF, reporting 2014 - end 2023) and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF, reporting 2021 - end 2024). The experts also identified other significant marine litter initiatives financed by alternative sources, such as national funds or other EU programmes.

In the second stage, experts carried out **interviews with representatives from the EMFF/EMFAF Managing Authorities (MAs)** and, where relevant, other stakeholders actively involved in marine litter management. These interviews aimed to supplement and to validate the findings from the desk research with qualitative insights.

The survey was structured into six chapters, as outlined below (the full questionnaire is provided in the Annex):

1. Marine litter issues in the Member State
2. EMFF information related to marine litter
3. EMFAF information related to marine litter
4. Other sources of funding for marine litter initiatives in the Member State
5. Lessons learned, experiences, and suggestions for the future regarding marine litter
6. Information sources and references

Quantitative analysis focused on identifying the measures funded under EMFF and EMFAF that are relevant to marine litter, assessing the programmed amounts for these measures to estimate the potential budgets allocated to marine litter-related operations, and extracting and analysing relevant operations from the Infosys databases for both EMFF and EMFAF in order to estimate the number of operations and corresponding budgets. **Qualitative analysis** involved exploring the general awareness and interest in marine litter issues within each Member State, assessing the capacity of Member States to address marine litter, considering the influence of other EU directives and initiatives on national actions, and collecting insights on lessons learned, experiences, and future recommendations from Managing Authorities and other stakeholders. The analysis aimed to determine whether the role of EMFAF in addressing marine litter has changed compared to the EMFF, specifically whether its significance has increased or decreased in the Member States.

Finally, the Infosys operations were classified according to the framework established by the EU CleanSea⁶ project, which identifies three main types of action to address marine litter. These categories are: **Prevention**, which focuses on reducing the creation of marine litter at its source through improved waste management, sustainable production and consumption, and public awareness initiatives; **Recycle/Recover/Mitigate**, which covers activities aimed at recycling and recovering waste to prevent it from entering the marine environment, as well as measures to reduce the impact of litter, such as using biodegradable materials and developing resource recovery technologies; and **Clean-Up**, which involves removing existing marine litter through organized clean-up events, deploying collection technologies, and engaging communities in clean-up efforts. In addition, when preparing the survey and analysing the Infosys data, two further categories—**reports/studies** and **monitoring**—were included, as these were considered distinct from the original CleanSea categories.

3 Marine litter in the member states

At the beginning of each interview with the Managing Authorities, we explored the Member State's general interest and capacity to address marine litter, as well as their awareness of other relevant EU directives and the extent of institutional coordination on this issue.

3.1 Member States' interest in addressing marine litter

Awareness of marine litter has grown considerably, and although the level of engagement differs, the topic is clearly recognised across many Member States. A strong interest was observed in Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and remains high at Managing Authority level in Estonia even though community attention is still developing, while countries assessed with medium or emerging engagement show proactive integration into coastal, port, and environmental policy cycles (Belgium, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania)

Managing Authorities increasingly support clean-up and gear-recovery efforts through local and regional cooperation, contributing to programmes often co-led or implemented by ports, municipalities, environmental agencies, NGOs and research partners. Even where the topic received less focus in earlier periods, MAs have demonstrated valuable involvement or expressed plans to scale their role in future frameworks. Drawing on lessons learned, Member States stress that impact grows when awareness, funding, monitoring, recycling innovation and clean-up operations work together across authorities and stakeholders.

The growing momentum is evident across several examples: Bulgaria is strengthening cross-sector coordination through its national Priority Action Framework; Germany is aligning efforts across national and regional structures; France is advancing an action plan toward zero plastic waste at sea; Spain is deploying broad measures spanning prevention, education, treatment and management; and Ireland is engaging all whitefish trawlers while expanding the Fishing for Litter programme to 12 fishing ports.

⁶ https://mcc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/main/dev.py?N=simple&O=308&titre_page=CleanSea&titre_chap=FP7

Taken together, these developments indicate that marine litter has entered the policy agenda across the EU, laying an increasingly coordinated foundation for more ambitious, large-scale action in the years ahead.

3.2 Member States' capacity in addressing marine litter

Member States show differing but generally improving capacities to address marine litter, ranging from well-established cross-ministerial systems to more emerging arrangements. Capacities that are still developing often reflect remaining gaps in data (e.g. Romania), clarified responsibilities or the timely implementation of key directives (e.g. Cyprus), where ongoing progress can nevertheless be seen alongside information deficits or staffing constraints (e.g. Germany).

Countries with higher capacity typically combine solid legal and strategic frameworks with dedicated institutions and regular coordination, as illustrated by Bulgaria's comprehensive MSFD and waste-management framework, Latvia's effective deposit-return system and port-waste rules, and Denmark's marine-litter scheme implemented under a clear SUP and PRF framework. In medium-capacity Member States, marine litter is generally anchored in law, but implementation and enforcement can be uneven, with responsibilities spread across institutions and routine large-scale monitoring still limited, even where specific projects, port-waste plans or research initiatives exist.

These developments show that, despite little remaining gaps, Member States are steadily reinforcing their institutional set-up, which creates promising conditions for more coordinated and effective action against marine litter in the coming years.

3.3 Member States' awareness about other EU directives

Managing Authority (MA) awareness of other EU directives is overall balanced across Member States.

For Member States' awareness about the monitoring / reporting of the SUP indicators, in particular on the "Weight of fishing gear containing plastic placed on the markets" the majority of authorities reported that they are aware. The same balanced level of awareness applies to aquaculture gear placed on the market. Slightly over half of MAs report being aware of monitoring the quantity of fisheries gear abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded (ALDFG). Aquaculture-gear monitoring shows comparatively lower and less widespread institutional awareness.

Awareness among MAs of other marine-litter indicators monitored outside formal EU systems, including those linked to initiatives like Fishing for Litter, is also comparatively low. However, most of the MAs clearly indicate they have organized stakeholder awareness activities on marine litter from fisheries and aquaculture.

Despite differences in institutional setup and funding streams, Member States demonstrate a developing awareness of EU directive obligations on marine litter.

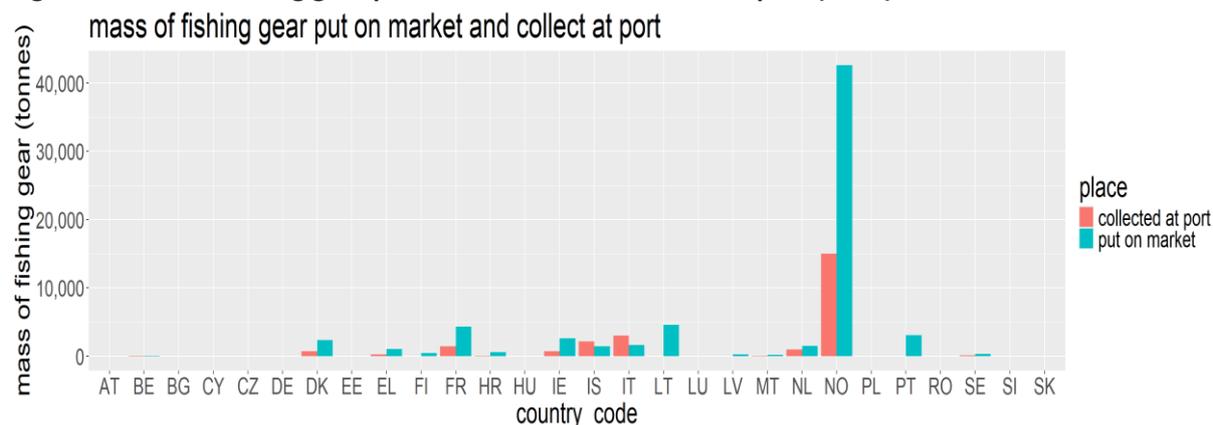
3.4 Fishing gear sold at market and collected at ports

Under the Single Use Plastics (SUP) Directive and its EPR requirements (see **Annex 2 SUP and PRF Directives**), the producers of fishing gear containing plastic must pay for its safe disposal at end of life

and Member States must report the amount put on the market and the amount collected. Not all Member States were able to comply with this reporting.

In 2023 Member States reported via the SUP Directive reporting obligations putting 228 843 tonnes on the market and collecting 5 197 tonnes at ports, a proportion of 32%. This was much less than Norway alone which reported putting 42 598 tonnes on the market and collecting 15 01 tonnes, a proportion of 35% (see figure overleaf) over both 2022 and 2023.

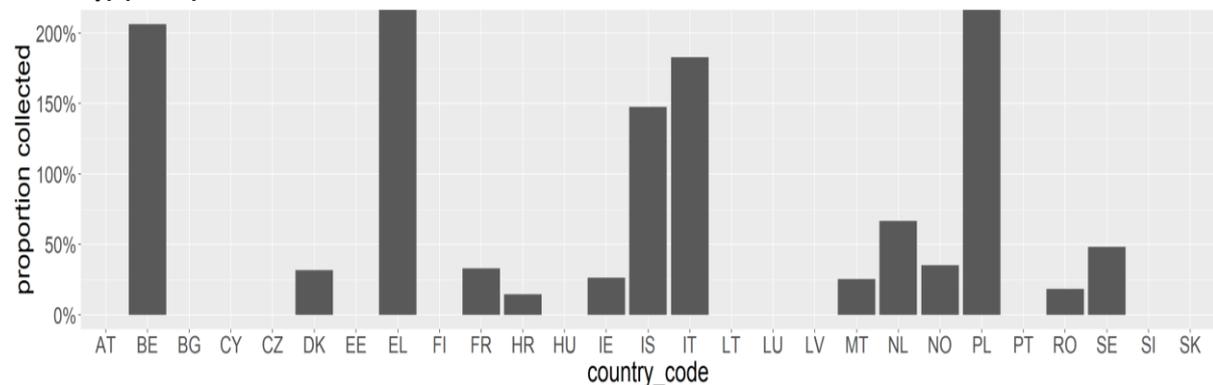
Figure 1: Mass of fishing gear put on market and collected at port (2022)



Source: Member States’ reports for “passively fished litter” under Port Reception Facilities Directive

However, the proportion varied wildly between different Member States. Some collected more than was put on the market (see figure below). This needs to be further investigated.

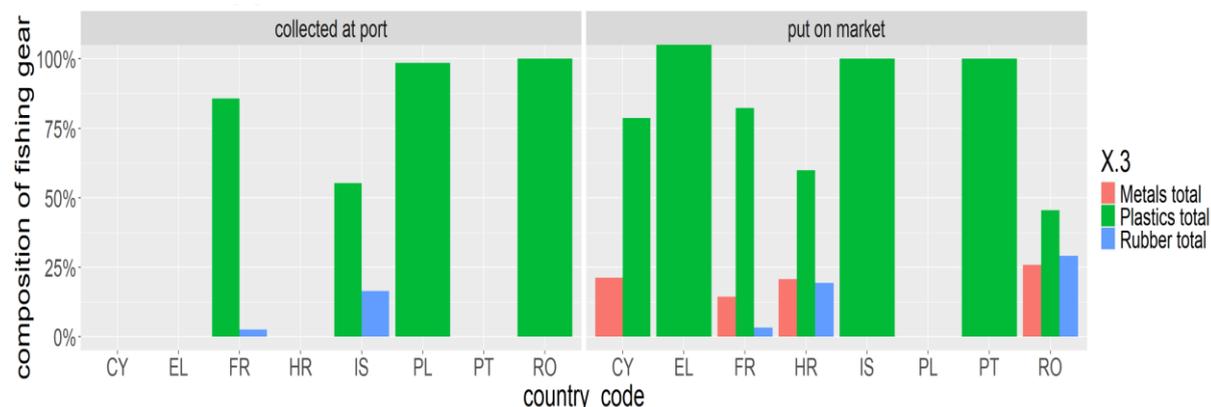
Figure 2: Fishing gear collected as a proportion of that put on the market (including Iceland and Norway) (2022)



Source: Member States’ reports for “passively fished litter” under Port Reception Facilities Directive

Plastic made up most of the mass of the fishing gear although metal and rubber were also included (Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: Composition of fishing gear put on market and collected at port (2022)

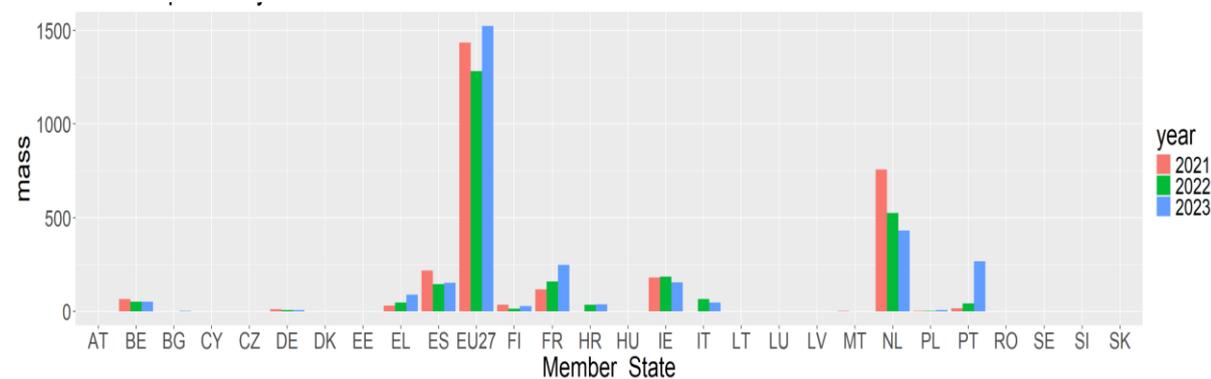


Source: Member States’ reports for “passively fished litter” under Port Reception Facilities Directive

3.5 Quantities of litter as reported under the Port Reception Facilities Directive

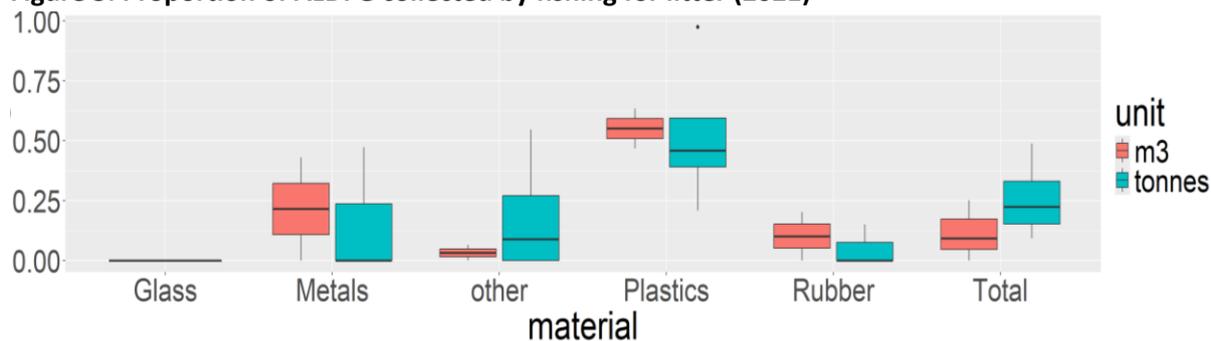
No figures are available for the fished-up litter are available during the EMFF period 2014-2020, but the first reports from the Port Reception Facilities Directive became available shortly after the coming into force of EMFAF. Again, not all Member States were able to comply with the reporting. Figure 4 shows that a total mass of about 1500 tonnes a year was reported

Figure 4: Litter collected by Member States through passive fishing as reported under the Port Reception Facilities Directive (2021-23).



Source: Member States’ reports for “passively fished litter” under Port Reception Facilities Directive

This shows significant differences in the amount collected by Member States. The litter was classified according to the material and that derived from abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). About half the plastic was from ALDFG (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportion of ALDFG collected by fishing for litter (2021)

Source: Member States' reports for "passively fished litter" under Port Reception Facilities Directive

4 EMFF achievements for marine litter

4.1 Legal basis under the EMFF for marine litter actions

Within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), several articles cover activities tackling marine litter:

- **Article 40.1(a):** Collection of waste by fishermen from the sea, including the removal of lost fishing gear and marine litter.
- **Article 43(1):** Investments that improve the infrastructure of fishing ports, such as facilities for waste and marine litter collection.
- **EMFF Article 80 (IMP under UP6):** Support for operations that protect the marine environment—particularly biodiversity and marine protected areas (e.g., Natura 2000 sites)—in line with Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC.
- **Articles 63 & 64:** Implementation and cooperation within CLLD strategies.

Additionally, analysis of operations in Infosys shows that 95% of marine litter-related activities fall under the articles listed above and also under **Article 40.1(b–g, i):** Protection and restoration of marine biodiversity, including activities such as better management or conservation, construction, installation or modernisation of static or movable facilities, and preparation of protection and management plans.

4.2 Infosys analysis of marine litter operations funded under the EMFF

This chapter presents both the **programmed financial data** and the EMFF/Infosys **implementation data** with a focus on EMFF operations related to marine litter, which are typically found under the articles mentioned above. The chapter reports the results aggregated at article, member state and typology

4.2.1 Analysis at the level of EMFF articles

Table 1 overleaf shows the allocated budgets for these articles in the Member State, providing an estimate of the maximum potential funding available for marine litter-related operations. It is important to note that this represents an upper limit; the actual amount dedicated to marine litter is likely to be lower, as EMFF articles often serve broader objectives beyond environmental concerns (especially in the case of CLLD). The potential budget for marine litter under the EMFF is calculated as

the sum of the programmed amounts for the articles mentioned above; see also the grey-shaded articles in the table below.

Table 1: EMFF programmed budget, with articles potentially relating to marine litter in grey

22 coastal MS	Planned total amount [EUR]	Planned EMFF support [EUR]	% of planned EMFF support
UP1_Art.40(1)(a)	30 290 049	21 971 827	2%
UP1_Art.40(1)(b) to (g) and (i)	309 410 898	213 118 534	18%
UP1_Art.43(1) and (3)	509 777 864	354 175 025	30%
UP4_Art.63 FLAG	729 439 045	552 102 183	47%
UP4_Art.64	16 243 013	12 410 722	1%
UP6_Art.80(1)(c)	63 786 445	32 586 816	3%
total other EMFF Articles	5 707 121 146	4 103 088 856	
EMFF Total for 22 coastal MS	7 366 068 460	5 289 453 964	
budget potentially available for marine litter related operations	1 658 947 314	1 186 365 108	100%
% of budget potentially available for marine litter	22,50%	22,40%	

Source: indicative allocations to Articles, AIR 2023

The allocation of programmed budgets under EMFF articles with the potential to support marine litter actions is spread across several measures. In total, approximately **EUR 1 186 million** in EMFF funding was potentially available for operations related to marine litter, representing **22,4%** of the overall EMFF budget. The largest share is attributed to Article 63, which supports the implementation of local development strategies, including running costs and animation, accounting for 47% (EUR 552 million) of the total. However, this certainly overstates the actual funding available for marine litter, as only a minority of activities financed under Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) are directly related to this issue. Investments in the improvement of fishing port infrastructure could include handling litter but Article 43 (EUR 354 million) covers many other actions in landing sites, auction halls, and shelters, Article 40.1(b-g, i), funds broader biodiversity management and conservation initiatives, representing 18% (EUR 213 million) of the total. **Article 40.1(a)** is the only article devoted specifically to marine litter through activities such as the collection of waste by fishermen and the removal of lost fishing gear from the sea. Allocated funding for this article amounts to **EUR 22 million**, representing **2%** of the potential budget for marine litter.

Table 3 overleaf details the actual budget spent on all EMFF operations, highlighting the share allocated to marine litter-related activities. These operations were identified by the GEs through a review of the complete list of EMFF projects, focusing on those associated with the relevant articles. Although the project descriptions in Infosys offer limited information and are written in local languages, a broad search for operations related to marine litter was carried out using a set of key words. These 20 key words, listed in Table 2, were translated into all EU languages to facilitate the search. Overall, a cautious approach was taken to avoid overestimating the EMFF's contribution to addressing marine litter. For instance, in the case of large-scale data collection operations worth several million euros, if marine litter was mentioned only alongside other topics, these operations were not counted as contributing specifically to marine litter (only few operations were identified as

such). After a preliminary assessment, these findings were cross-checked with the Managing Authority during interviews.

Table 2 List of 20 key-words related to marine litter used for automated search in operation descriptions in Infosys

Marine litter	End of life
Waste	Recycling
Fishing gear	Single use
Fish gear	Abandoned
Litter collection	Lost / Loss
Waste collection	Discarded
Plastic	Biodegradable
Circular	Port reception facility
Fishing for litter	ALDFG
Disposal	Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG)

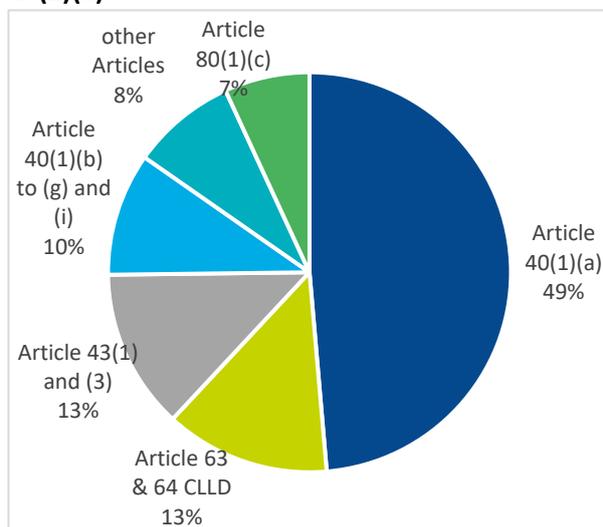
Table 3: EMFF spent budget on marine litter related operations

EMFF articles	No operations	EMFF support Spent [EUR]	Average operation size [EUR]	MS reporting under the EMFF Article
Article 40(1)(a)	654	21 309 706	32 584	BE, BG, ES, FI, IE, PL, SE
Article 40(1)(b) to (g) and (i)	72	4 356 497	60 507	BG, DE, ES, IT
Article 43(1) and (3)	46	5 660 014	141 500	BG, DE, ES, HR, IT
Article 63 CLLD	194	5 640 189	32 047	BG, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IT, LV, SI
Article 64	5	163 868	32 774	EL, ES, LV
Article 80(1)(c)	18	2 998 012	187 376	BE, BG, DE, DK, EE, LT, NL, PT
<i>other Articles with marine litter related operations</i>	44	3 685 819		<i>BG, DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, PL, SE</i>
other Articles not marine litter related operations	89 357	4 176 308 006		
EMFF total for 22 coastal MS	90 390	4 220 122 111		
Total for marine litter related operations	1 033	43 814 105		
% of EMFF dedicated to marine litter	1%	1%		

Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

Table 3 provides an overview of EMFF articles under which marine litter-related operations were reported, including the number of operations, total EMFF support spent, and the Member States (MS) involved. In total, 1,033 operations were carried out, with cumulative EMFF support amounting to approximately EUR 43,8 million, corresponding with 1% of both the total number of operations and EMFF budget.

Figure 6: Almost half of the EMFF expenditure for marine related operations is funded under Article 40(1)(a)



Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

Among the various articles, **Article 40(1)(a)** was the most utilized, with 654 operations and a total expenditure of EUR 21,3 million. This article, which supports the collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter, was implemented across seven Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Poland, and Sweden. Its high number of operations and substantial budget underscore its central role in addressing marine litter through direct removal activities.

However, in most cases, it is not known whether the support covered passive fishing for litter (i.e. bringing litter caught during fishing operations to port) or active trips targeting marine litter.

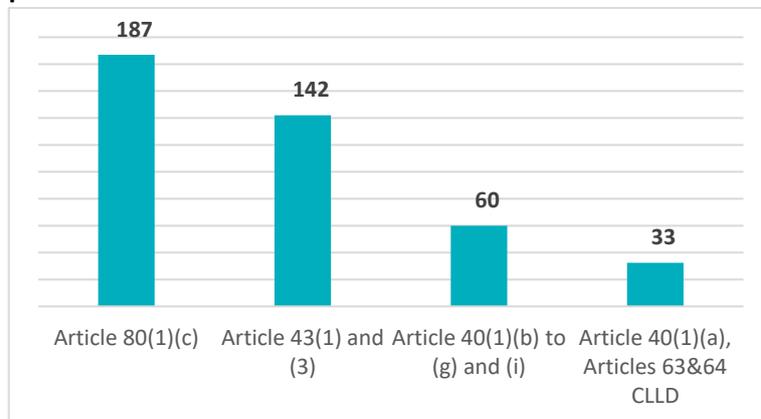
The second most significant articles are **Articles 63&64 (CLLD)**, and **Article 43(1) and (3) (investments in port infrastructure)** which each financed about 5,6 million.

Other articles, such as Article 40(1)(b) to (g) and (i) (biodiversity management and conservation), and Article 80(1)(c) (improving knowledge on the marine environment), also contributed to marine litter-related operations, but with lower numbers of operations and overall expenditure.

The average size of EMFF-supported operations related to marine litter (see Figure 7) varies considerably across the different articles. Operations funded under Article 40(1)(a), Articles 63 and 64 (CLLD), show similar average operation size of EUR 33 000.

In contrast, operations under Article 40(1)(b) to (g) and (i), which relate to broader biodiversity management and conservation, are larger on average, at EUR 60 500 each.

Figure 7: Average size of EMFF-supported operations [kEUR] per article



Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

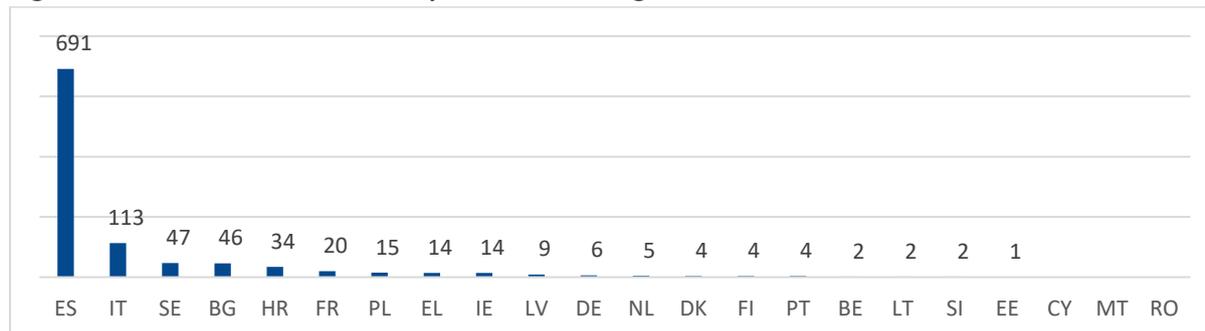
The average operation size increases further under Article 43(1) and (3), which supports investments in port infrastructure, reaching EUR 141 500. The highest average operation size is observed in Article 80(1)(c), which focuses on improving knowledge of the marine environment, at EUR 187 000 per operation.

This variation in average operation size reflects the differing nature and scope of activities funded under each article, with infrastructure and research-related actions typically requiring larger financial investments compared to direct collection or community-led initiatives.

4.2.2 Analysis at the level of Member states

Figure 8 below shows the number of operations relating to marine litter there were implemented under EMFF. Spain accounts for 691 operations—over half of the total 1 033 operations recorded. Italy follows with 113 operations, while Sweden, Bulgaria, and Croatia report 47, 46, and 34 operations respectively. Most other countries have fewer than 20 operations, with Estonia recording just one. Notably, Cyprus, Malta, and Romania have no data or zero operations listed. Overall, the distribution is highly uneven, with Spain dominating the number of marine related EMFF-funded projects and several countries participating at a much lower level.

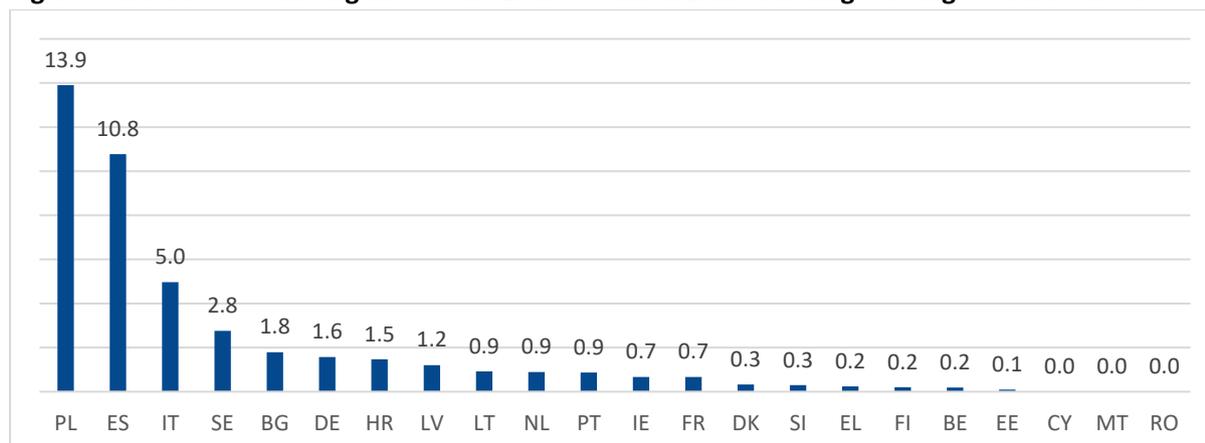
Figure 8 Distribution of the 1033 operations relating to marine litter over MS



Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

A closer examination of Spain’s data reveals that most operations are classified under Article 40.1.a (collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter) and over 500 of these operations are very small in scale, with EMFF funding amounts ranging from EUR 100 to EUR 250, as reported by the Intermediate Body of Murcia. This significantly skews the overall figures and, if these small operations were excluded, the difference in the number of projects between Spain and Italy (113) would be much less pronounced. Presumably these were incentives for fishers to bring fished-up litter ashore, before this became a legal obligation under the Port Reception Facilities Directive.

Figure 9: Distribution among MS for the EUR 44 million EMFF funding relating to marine litter



Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

Figure 9 shows the amount of EMFF support spent by each EU Member State, with Poland leading at nearly EUR 13,9 million, followed by Spain at EUR 10,8 million and Italy at just EUR 5 million. Sweden, Bulgaria, and Germany also received significant funding, ranging from EUR 1,6 to EUR 2,8 million. Most other countries spent less than EUR 1,5 million, with Estonia at the lower end with EUR 97 500. Cyprus, Malta, and Romania have no data reported. Overall, the distribution of EMFF support spent varies considerably across Member States, with Poland and Spain accounting for the largest shares of funding.

Almost all Polish marine litter related operations are reported under Article 40.1.a (collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter) and have the highest average operation size of EUR 980 000, significantly exceeding all other countries. These included operations to collect ghost nets. Ireland follows with an average of EUR 101 000, while Finland, Sweden, Bulgaria, and Belgium report average

operation sizes ranging from about EUR 42 000 to EUR 65 000. Spain, in contrast, has a much lower average operation size of just EUR 7 400, which is well below the overall average of EUR 33 000. This confirms that Spain’s funded operations under this article are much smaller in scale compared to other Member States.

We have no information as to the type of operation – active e or passive fishing for litter - but one might assume that the larger operations were for operations where fishers targeted litter rather than those collecting litter in their nets during fishing. We have no information as to how much litter was collected so cannot judge their effectiveness.

Table 4: Average size of an operation relating to marine litter for Article 40(1)(a) in 7 MS

MS	Number of operations	Average EMFF operation size [EUR]
PL	14	979 376
IE	6	101 213
FI	1	65 466
SE	45	53 806
BG	3	47 693
BE	1	41 943
ES	584	7 396
Total	654	32 584

Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

The table below shows the percentage of each Member State’s EMFF budget allocated specifically for marine litter initiatives. **Poland and Bulgaria dedicate the highest proportion of their budgets** for this purpose, at 3,62% and 3,33% respectively, followed by Sweden with 2,59%. Most other countries allocate less than 2% of their budgets, with Spain at 1,2% and several countries, including Cyprus, Malta, and Romania, reporting no budget for marine litter at all. **The overall average across all Member States is 0,97%**, highlighting that, in general, a relatively small share of EMFF funding is directed towards marine litter projects.

Table 5 Proportion of EMFF expenditure dedicated to marine litter operations per MS

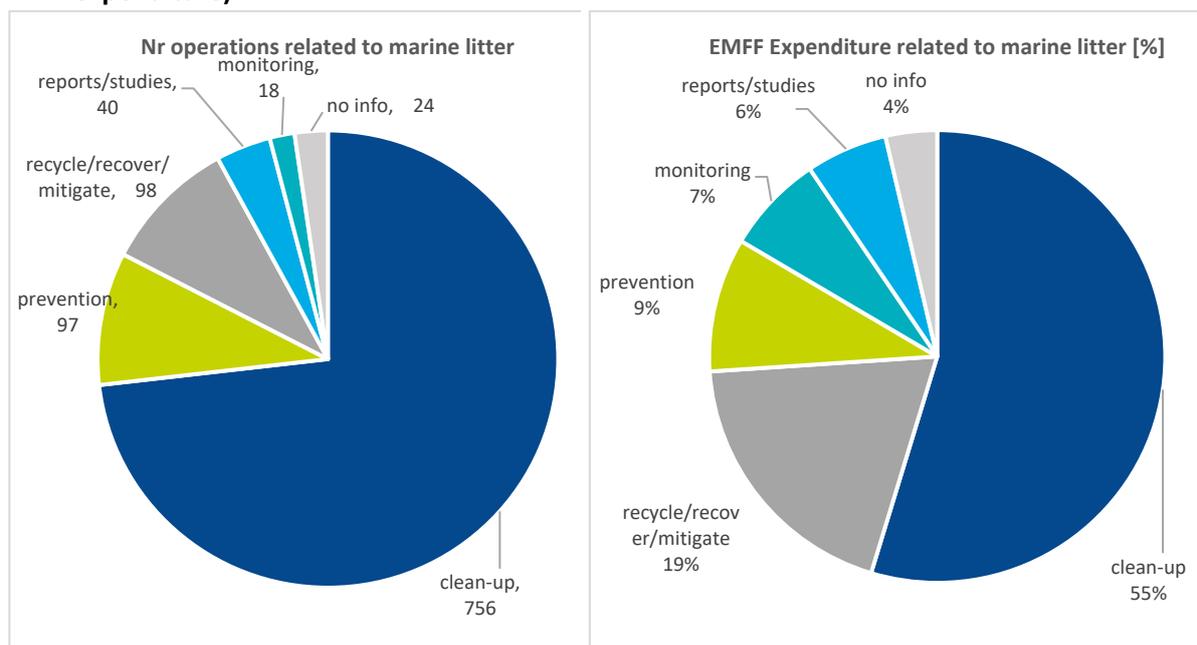
MS	Number all operations	EMFF support Spent [EUR]	Number marine related operations	EMFF support Spent [EUR]	% of budget for marine litter
PL	11 199	383 487 811	15	13 899 239	3,62%
BG	733	53 742 414	46	1 791 693	3,33%
SE	1 001	106 426 270	47	2 760 874	2,59%
LT	897	51 985 337	2	920 568	1,77%
SI	262	21 064 912	2	294 915	1,40%
IT	10 387	367 631 628	113	4 969 803	1,35%
NL	264	70 285 996	5	890 357	1,27%
ES	17 105	914 004 349	691	10 774 850	1,18%
LV	1 076	114 380 504	9	1 204 122	1,05%
DE	3 042	182 353 801	6	1 570 152	0,86%
BE	351	37 423 202	2	189 672	0,51%
IE	3 624	143 999 393	14	669 191	0,46%
HR	3 853	169 314 689	32	613 501	0,36%
FI	3 307	73 652 185	4	203 636	0,28%
PT	9 584	358 042 831	4	872 118	0,24%
DK	2 106	179 196 932	4	326 383	0,18%
FR	5 127	469 825 396	20	668 043	0,14%
EL	12 177	242 397 892	14	243 253	0,10%
EE	2 309	97 405 401	1	97 500	0,10%
CY	1 039	32 695 921			0,00%
MT	35	21 909 067			0,00%
RO	912	128 896 179			0,00%
Total	90 390	4 220 122 111	1 033	43 814 105	1,04%
<i>average</i>	<i>4 109</i>	<i>191 823 732</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>1 952 721</i>	<i>0,97%</i>

Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

4.2.3 Analysis by typology of actions

The following charts illustrate the distribution of marine litter operations by number, EMFF expenditure, and average operation size. Operations are classified according to the CleanSea framework—*Prevention*, *Recycle/Recover/Mitigate*, and *Clean-Up*—with two additional categories: *reports/studies* and *monitoring*. This typology provides an insight on which kind of operations were funded under the EMFF to tackle marine litter. The charts highlight both the scale and focus of investments across these key action areas.

Figure 10: Distribution of EMFF operations among the typologies (left: number of operations, right: EMFF expenditure)

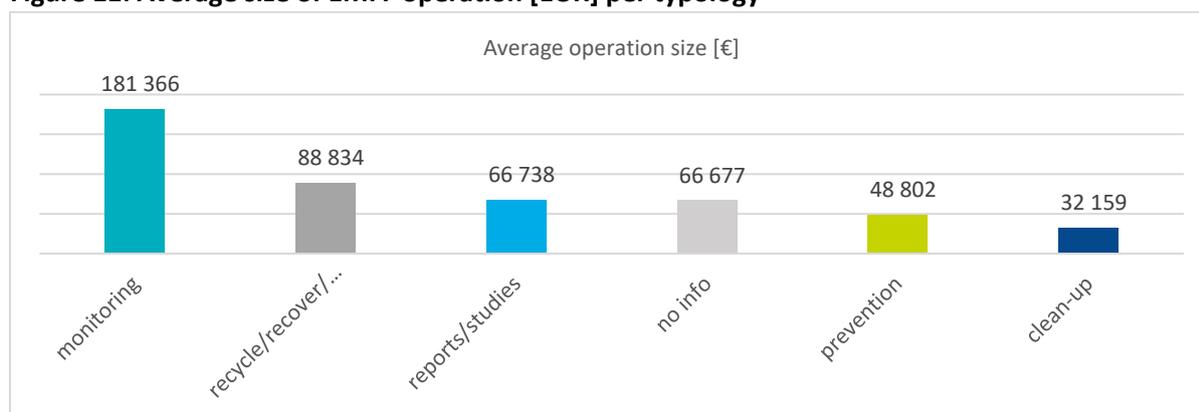


Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

Most operations related to marine litter fall under the **clean-up** category, with **756 initiatives** carried out. **Prevention** and **recycle/recover/mitigate** activities account for 97 and 98 operations respectively, while **reports/studies** and **monitoring** have 40 and 18 operations each.

In terms of EMFF expenditure, **clean-up** activities received the largest share of funding, totalling nearly **EUR 24 million (55%)**. Recycle/recover/mitigate initiatives follow with EUR 8,4 million (19%), while prevention measures were supported with EUR 4,2 million (9%). Reports and studies, as well as monitoring, were allocated EUR 2,5 million (6%) and EUR 3,1 million (7%) respectively.

Figure 11: Average size of EMFF operation [EUR] per typology



Source: EMFF Infosys, 31 December 2023

The average size of operations varies significantly across typologies, see Figure 11 above. **Monitoring** projects have the highest average operation size at EUR 181 366, while **recycle/recover/mitigate** and

reports/studies average EUR 88 834 and EUR 66 738 respectively. **Clean-up** activities, being the most numerous, have a lower average size of EUR 32 159 per operation. **Prevention** operations average EUR 48 802.

In addition to the financial information available in Infosys, we explored other fields that might be relevant for analysing Article 40(1)(a) such as beneficiary information and result indicators. Unfortunately, for this article, detailed beneficiary information (type, gender, enterprise size) is either unavailable or incomplete. Also, the number of fishermen benefiting reported was considered not reliable, so not used for analysis. Regarding the reported result indicators in Infosys for this Article—such as changes in unwanted catches and improvements in fuel efficiency of fish capture—these also do not relate to marine litter and were therefore not included in the analysis for this report either.

4.2.4 Sufficiency of funding for marine litter under the EMFF period

Across EU Member States, the perceived sufficiency of funding for addressing marine litter under the EMFF period (2014–2020) varied. Several countries (Germany, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Sweden) reported that available funding was fully sufficient. Sweden additionally emphasised that financial support for marine litter was not limited to the EMFF, noting complementary sources from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management. The Swedish Managing Authority works in close cooperation with this Agency and other partners, enabling coordinated and efficient national action to tackle the issue. Funding was seen as partially sufficient in another set of countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Finland, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia). In Bulgaria, whilst ‘Fishing for Litter’ campaigns were implemented, the main approach to reducing marine litter was to improve waste-collection infrastructure in ports with support from FLAGs, while universities delivered detailed local research on marine litter. Spain noted that the budget for Article 40.1.a was almost fully implemented and complemented by other marine litter actions. Latvia reported that funding was available but used in a fragmented and limited manner, as national EMFF programme priorities centred mainly on fisheries competitiveness, aquaculture, and port modernisation rather than pollution reduction – marine pollution was more addressed as an additional or horizontal activity. Slovenia had no measure dedicated specifically to marine litter, but relevant projects were supported, for example through community-led local development (CLLD).

Belgium and Denmark considered marine litter funding under the EMFF period as not sufficient. In Belgium, stakeholders noted that only one notable action (‘Fishing for Litter’) took place and that further litter-focused measures were needed, but not prioritised within national EMFF programme priorities, as the main responsible for marine litter is another department of the Marine Environment. Denmark indicated that marine litter was registered as a new need only later under the national EMFF programme, meaning it was not sufficiently recognised or funded during 2014–2020. Denmark also referenced an information-focused project on marine litter, confirming that support was minimal and not adequate at the time.

For Estonia, France, Cyprus and the Netherlands no information was available on EMFF funding sufficiency for marine litter due to the difficulty to estimate. While the EMFF funded several supportive marine litter projects, these did not directly affect the national volume of marine litter, as responsibility lies mainly with other authorities; therefore, funding sufficiency could not be determined and remains unanswered.

Overall available funding for marine litter was rated as fully or at least partially sufficient by the majority of EU Member States, showing that the issue increasingly gained institutional interest and momentum over time. Despite local gaps and shifting priorities, the generally sufficient funding landscape helped build awareness, cooperation, and engagement, strengthening the basis for future action and continued commitment.

4.2.5 Management of marine litter in EMFF programmes

The management of marine litter was well described in the EMFF programmes of Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden. Other countries, including Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Finland, France, Lithuania, Latvia and Romania, indicated room for improvement. For Cyprus and Slovenia, the topic was marked as not applicable.

The main reasons why marine litter management was not, or only briefly, described in EMFF programmes are: (i) it was not a specific objective and therefore not a formal mandate for the Managing Authority, (ii) it appeared only as a transversal concern or general need, (iii) there were no dedicated activities or funding lines, and (iv) no concrete litter indicators or targets were included. In some cases, national marine litter strategies did not exist when the programmes were drafted, and marine litter projects were embedded in broader environmental or knowledge measures instead of a stand-alone priority

The countries that considered marine litter as well described in the programme referenced marine litter in various sections, but with different thematic priorities and focus areas. Bulgaria stressed that in 2014 EU rules were not yet in force and therefore only opportunities—such as fishing-for-litter, port-waste infrastructure updates, and local FLAG roles—were listed. Germany clearly focused on recovering lost fishing gear and mentioned sustainable gear only regarding selectivity, bycatch, and seabed ecosystem impacts, without linking it to marine litter management or wider litter aspects. Italy highlighted litter drivers in the SWOT analysis, including restoring degraded marine areas, prioritizing municipal waste services in fishing zones, and promoting actions against ghost nets and ghost fishing impacts. The Netherlands also mentioned marine litter, microplastics, and riverine waste mainly in SWOT and in reference to the OSPAR 2014 Marine Litter Action Plan, with related actions located under Union Priority 6, focusing on river waste collection, environmental measures, research, and closing knowledge gaps, but without describing a real management system or assigning responsibility to the Managing Authority or the Ministry of Agriculture.

Overall, although several countries referenced marine litter in strategic or environmental sections such as SWOT analyses or the recovery of lost gear, the EMFF programme generally treated marine litter more as an emerging concern than as a clearly defined management responsibility at programme level. Nonetheless, the frequent acknowledgment of the topic demonstrates growing awareness and provides a valuable foundation for more targeted, structured, and measurable marine litter actions in future funding periods.

4.2.6 Effectiveness of EMFF marine litter action funding promotion to relevant stakeholders

Funding for marine litter actions from EMFF was considered well-advertised to relevant stakeholders in several countries, including Belgium, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, as well as Sweden. In contrast, stakeholders in Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, France, Croatia and Latvia

reported that advertising of funding opportunities could be strengthened. Respondents in Finland, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovenia indicated that they were unsure, selecting “I don’t know,” while for Cyprus the topic was marked as not applicable, as no EMFF operations for marine litter were funded.

The Bulgarian Managing Authority communication channels are viewed as strong. However, support for project submission, especially for small-scale coastal fishers, could be further strengthened, mainly due to limited on-site advisory services. To increase the number of fisher-led projects, establishing a dedicated support structure and expanding on-the-spot guidance would help improve accessibility and overall participation.

The Latvian Ministry of Agriculture and the Rural Support Service promoted EMFF mainly as economic support for fisheries, aquaculture, ports, and CLLD strategies. EMFF is therefore primarily viewed as a sector-development funding tool, not as a programme addressing marine pollution or marine litter management.

Several Member States demonstrated good practice in advertising EMFF funding for marine litter actions, helping stakeholders understand and access available support:

- Germany: Marine litter actions, especially “Fishing for Litter,” were widely advertised, including by The Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), and supported stakeholder awareness.
- Spain: Funding opportunities were communicated through consultations with sector representatives, and the programme was later presented to the wider sector.
- Ireland: Awareness was raised via a national scheme implemented by the Sea Fisheries Board (BIM), which promoted “Fishing for Litter” to stakeholders.
- Netherlands: “Fishing for Litter” received notable publicity, including coverage in fisheries media such as “*Visserijnieuws*” and sector news outlets.

In its current form, marine litter funding in EMFF is mainly communicated indirectly and without a dedicated mandate, which signals that the topic is recognised but not positioned as a core funding or management priority. This is a sign of increasing awareness, but also an indicator that clearer ownership, stronger practical support, and more explicit communication are still needed for stakeholders to fully see it as an accessible environmental funding opportunity.

4.2.7 Overall quality assessment of EMFF operations addressing marine litter

Overall, the quality of marine litter operations supported under the EMFF can be described as mostly medium. This signals that marine litter was recognised and increasingly addressed, but often without a strong quality-driven emphasis. There were no performance indicators. However, a few Member States described the quality of EMFF marine litter operations as high for actions focusing on clean-ups, environmental monitoring, and the development of reports or studies.

Several Member States showcased strong clean-up-focused actions. Ireland placed primary emphasis on Fishing for Litter, complemented by pier and beach cleans within the aquaculture sector. Poland highlighted initiatives such as Projekt Czysty Bałtyk (the Clean Baltic Project). Sweden noted that several marine litter clean-up projects funded under EMFAF were long-term in nature and regarded as important for delivering on MSFD objectives as well as broader environmental targets.

For monitoring actions, the Netherlands emphasised that riverine litter is a relevant component of marine litter assessments. Poland highlighted that active ghost-net collection followed a defined schedule, which was set, monitored, and tracked according to programme rules.

Reports and studies were rated as high quality by Ireland, the Netherlands, and Poland. For example, Ireland noted that EMFF funded several studies analysing the types of marine litter collected, including research on fishing-gear recovery and collection patterns.

The quality of the overall EMFF contribution to marine litter actions was still rated as high by some Member States, including Spain, Ireland, and Poland. Spain highlighted that marine litter operations mobilised broad stakeholder groups—such as the fishing sector, scientists, schools, volunteers and NGOs—creating wider awareness of EMFF support within marine environmental conservation, sometimes even more visibly than other EMFF articles. Ireland referenced a strong example, noting that EMFF funded the flagship Clean Oceans Initiative, including Ireland’s national Clean Oceans Initiative.

4.2.8 Poland as a model for Marine Litter reduction in the Baltic Sea Region

Poland stands out among coastal Member States for its significant commitment to tackling marine litter, having allocated nearly EUR 14 million from the EMFF to related operations, corresponding to 4% of their EMFF budget (EUR 383,5 million). This represents over 30% of the total EMFF funding for marine litter across the EU, as illustrated in Figure 9. The country’s success can be attributed to a combination of strategic initiatives and strong institutional connections, particularly between these initiatives and the Managing Authority (MA). Notably, the Polish MA’s representative is an active member of [HELCOM](#), the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, which coordinates joint actions, monitors the Baltic Sea, develops environmental strategies, and facilitates cooperation on marine litter, including "Fishing for Litter" activities. This institutional expertise has positively influenced Poland’s approach to marine litter within the EMFF and EMFAF frameworks.

The MARE Foundation, established in 2016, has played a key role in marine conservation efforts in Poland, focusing on the Baltic Sea. Through projects such as Clean Baltic I (2020–2021), which aimed to locate and remove ghost nets, and Clean Baltic II (2022–2023), which expanded retrieval operations and emphasized education and prevention, the Foundation has contributed to both practical and awareness-raising activities. Poland also participated in the MARELITT initiative (2016–2019, WWF Poland, EUR 3.75 million), further enhancing the identification and removal of ghost nets and building capacity for marine litter management.

Interviews with the MA revealed a good level of knowledge and a proactive attitude toward marine litter issues. Funding for marine litter was adequately provided under both EMFF and EMFAF, and management strategies were clearly outlined in operational programmes. Producer Organizations in Poland were well-informed and effectively engaged with relevant stakeholders. Although no EMFAF operations specifically targeting marine litter have been identified yet, the programme includes intervention types with significant potential, such as TOI 1 (environmental impacts and GES, EUR 91 million) and TOI 14 (CLLD, EUR 40 million), offering a potential budget of around EUR 130 million for marine litter-related activities. It is important to note that this represents an upper limit; the actual amount dedicated to marine litter will likely be lower, as EMFAF TOIs serve broader objectives beyond environmental concerns (especially in the case of CLLD). A crucial outcome of previous initiatives was

the recognition of the need for improved port infrastructure, as Polish ports had to upgrade facilities to handle specialized waste like lead-weighted nets. The EMFAF programme explicitly addresses this need, allowing Maritime Offices and Port Management Organizations to apply for funding to enhance waste collection and utilization infrastructure in ports.

4.3 Conclusions for EMFF

Based on an analysis of the Infosys database of EMFF-funded operations, complemented by qualitative insights gathered from interviews with Managing Authorities, the following key conclusions on marine litter actions under the EMFF have been identified:

1. **EMFF funding for marine litter was relatively modest and unevenly distributed:** Only 1% of the total EMFF budget and operations were dedicated to marine litter, with significant disparities between Member States. For example, Spain implemented over half of all marine litter operations, while countries like Cyprus, Malta, and Romania reported no operations.
2. **Higher share** of EMFF to marine litter was found in Poland (3,62%), Bulgaria (3,33%), and Sweden (2,59%)
3. **Article 40(1)(a) was the primary funding mechanism for direct marine litter actions:** seven countries, including Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Poland, and Sweden, made extensive use of this article, with Poland standing out for the largest average operation size (EUR 980 000). Also, the allocated EMFF budget of EUR 22 million was entirely spent.
4. **Clean-up actions dominated funded activities:** 55% of EMFF budget focused on clean-up, with fewer projects on prevention, recycling, or monitoring. The “Fishing for Litter” initiative was reported in EMFF operations in most Member states
5. **Significant variation in operation size and approach for “clean-ups”:** the scale of operations varied widely from small grants in Spain (average EUR 7 400, with over 500 small-scale, locally implemented clean-ups with very small budgets of less than EUR 200) to large-scale projects in Poland (average nearly EUR 1 million).
6. **Management and strategic integration varied across member states:** the management of marine litter actions was well described in the EMFF programmes of Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden.
7. **There is no information on the amount of litter collected or processed or the efficiency of the operations.**

5 EMFAF plans for marine litter

5.1 Legal basis under the EMFAF for marine litter actions

This chapter examines both the planned financial allocations and the current committed data from EMFAF/Infosys for the Member State, with a particular emphasis on marine litter-related activities. Relevant EMFAF support is primarily provided under:

- **Article 25.2(a):** Compensation to fishers for the passive collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter from the sea.
- **Article 25.2(b):** Investments in ports or other infrastructure to ensure adequate reception facilities for lost fishing gear and marine litter.

- **Article 30 (also Priority III):** Community-Led local development (CLLD, Implementation of FLAG strategies).

EMFAF was different to EMFF in that, under the Port Reception Facilities Directive, fishers could no longer be penalised for bringing fished-up litter ashore. Port fees became independent of the amount of litter deposited. Furthermore, under the Single Use Plastics Directive, the producers of fishing gear became responsible for its safe disposal. These partly shifted the action from a voluntary effort to a support to legislation.

For EMFAF, there is no direct link to EMFAF articles in either the programmed data (source: SFC⁷) or the reported implementation data (source: Infosys). In this report, financial information is retrieved based on ‘Type of Interventions’ (TOI) for both **programmed data** and Infosys **implementation data**. Therefore, the tables below focus on the following TOIs, which are considered potentially relevant to marine litter. This is based on an analysis of operations in Infosys, where 95% of operations were identified in these two TOIs:

- **TOI 1** Impacts on environment and contribution to GES
- **TOI 14** CLLD implementation of strategy

5.2 Infosys analysis of marine litter operations funded under the EMFAF

As with the chapter on the EMFF, this chapter presents both the **programmed financial data** and the **EMFAF/Infosys implementation data**, focusing specifically on EMFAF operations related to marine litter, which are generally included under the TOI mentioned above. The results are reported in aggregate by TOI, Member State, and typology.

5.2.1 Analysis at the level of EMFAF Type of intervention

Table 6 shows the allocated budgets for these articles in the Member State, providing an estimate of the maximum potential funding available for marine litter-related operations. As previously noted regarding EMFF, it is important to recognise that this figure represents an upper limit; the actual funding allocated to marine litter is likely to be lower, particularly in the case of CLLD. For EMFAF, the potential budget for marine litter is estimated by adding together the programmed amounts for the two relevant “Types of Interventions” indicated—refer to the grey-shaded articles in the table below for details.

⁷ SFC is the System for Fund Management in the European Union, also called SFC2021 (for the 2021–2027 programming period) or SFC2014 (for the 2014–2020 period), depending on the funding cycle.

Table 6: EMFAF programmed budget, with ‘Type of Interventions’ (TOI) potentially relating to marine litter in grey

22 MS	Planned total amount [EUR]	Planned EMFAF amount [EUR]
TOI 1 Impacts on environment and contribution to GES	907 915 349	606 850 700
TOI 2 Promoting conditions for a viable and competitive sector	3 061 806 969	2 007 660 308
TOI 3 Contributing to climate neutrality	163 231 907	108 108 831
TOI 4 Temporary cessation of fishing activities	254 780 707	154 306 841
TOI 5 Permanent cessation of fishing activities	222 157 802	134 810 961
TOI 6 Implementing and monitoring MPAs including Natura 2000	180 102 081	121 855 536
TOI 7 Compensation for unexpected events	60 479 095	37 735 366
TOI 8 Compensation for additional costs in ORs	179 390 191	179 390 191
TOI 9 Animal health and welfare	32 993 517	20 218 970
TOI 10 Control and enforcement	724 854 909	494 427 729
TOI 11 Data collection and analysis, and marine knowledge	915 414 350	622 533 941
TOI 12 Maritime surveillance and security	33 152 012	19 994 095
TOI 13 CLLD preparation actions	8 958 301	5 376 727
TOI 14 CLLD implementation of strategy	643 451 596	420 933 800
TOI 15 CLLD running costs and animation	136 460 829	88 412 287
TOI 16 Technical Assistance	196 309 983	124 979 783
997 Flat rate technical assistance, MARE	245 864 183	166 154 057
Grand Total	7 967 323 780	5 313 750 123
budget potentially available for marine litter related operations	1 551 366 945	1 027 784 500
% of budget potentially available for marine litter	19%	19%

Source: Source: SFC, 31 December 2024

The overall budget across all Types of Intervention (TOIs) amounts to approximately EUR 7,6 billion, with about EUR 5,3 billion provided by EMFAF. The potential budget available for marine litter-related operations is estimated by combining the amounts allocated under **TOI 01 (60%)** and **TOI 14 (40%)**, resulting in a total of around **EUR 1 billion** from the EMFAF. This represents roughly 20% of the overall EMFAF budget that could potentially be dedicated to marine litter-related activities.

Table 7 presents the actual budget expenditure for all EMFAF operations, with a focus on the portion allocated to marine litter-related activities. As was done for the EMFF, these operations were identified by the GEs through a review of the full list of EMFAF projects, and the findings were cross-validated with the Managing Authority during interviews.

Table 7: EMFAP budget allocated to marine litter related operations

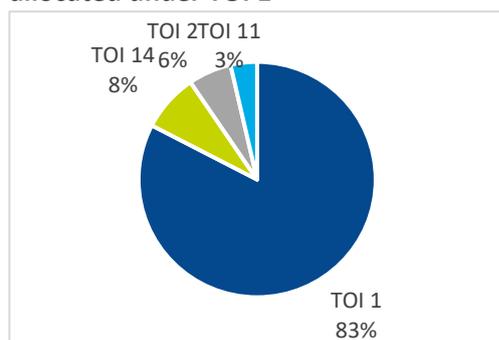
EMFAP Type of Intervention	No operations	EMFAP support [EUR]	Average operation size [EUR]	MS reporting under the EMFAP TOI
TOI 1 Impacts on environment and contribution to GES	42	4 980 080	118 573	BE, DE, DK, ES, FR, NL, PT, SE
TOI 2 Promoting conditions for a viable and competitive sector	2	355 712	177 856	ES, SE
TOI 11 Data collection and analysis, and marine knowledge	1	217 000	217 000	CY
TOI 14 CLLD implementation of strategy	13	476 149	36 627	EE, ES, LV
total of other EMFAP TOI	16 349	1 242 823 373		
EMFAP Total commitments	16 407	1 248 852 314	76 117	
Total for marine litter related operations	58	6 028 941		
% of EMFAP dedicated to marine litter	0,35%	0,48%		

Source: EMFAP Infosys, 31 December 2024

The table above shows that under TOI 1 (Impacts on environment and contribution to GES), there were 42 operations dealing with marine litter receiving a total of almost EUR 5 million in EMFAP support reported by eight member states, followed by TOI 14 (CLLD implementation of strategy) with 13 operations totalling EUR 476 000, reported by Estonia, Spain, and Latvia. In total, EMFAP funded over 16 000 operations amounting to EUR 1,25 billion. This means that only **0,35% of all EMFAP operations and 0,48% of the total EMFAP budget were allocated to marine litter-related activities.**

When considering the average operation size, TOI 14 (CLLD), as expected, has the lowest average at approximately EUR 37 000. By contrast, TOI 1 supports operations that are, on average, three times larger than those under CLLD.

Figure 12: Over 80% of EMFAP support for marine related operations is allocated under TOI 1



The pie chart illustrates the distribution of EMFAP support among selected Types of Intervention. TOI 1 accounts for the largest share, with almost EUR 5 million (83%) in funding, while TOI 14 receives almost EUR 500 000 (8%). TOI 2 and TOI 11 receive smaller amounts, at EUR 356 000 and EUR 217 000 respectively. This demonstrates that the majority of EMFAP funding for marine litter is concentrated in TOI 1.

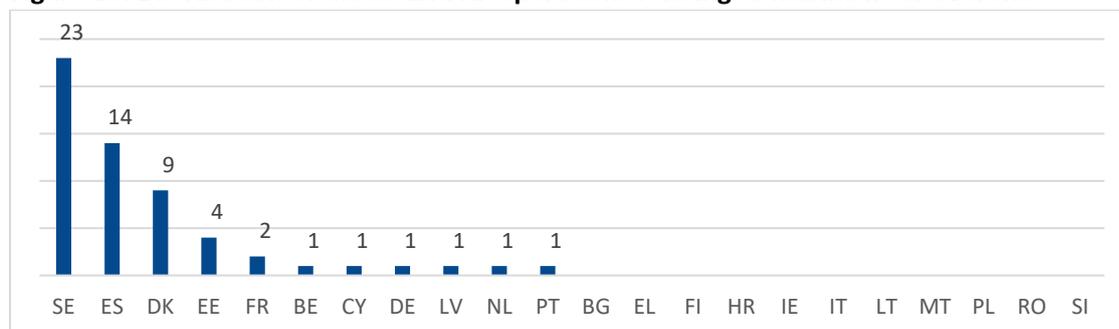
Source: EMFAP Infosys, 31 December 2024

5.2.2 Analysis at the level of Member states

Figure 13 shows the number of operations relating to marine litter supported in each Member State. Sweden leads with 23 operations, followed by Spain with 14 and Denmark with 9. Estonia has 4 operations, while France counts 2. Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, and Portugal each report a single operation. The remaining Member States—Bulgaria, Greece, Finland, Croatia,

Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia—do not have any operations recorded in this dataset. At this early stage of EMFAF implementation, the distribution shows considerable variation in participation among countries, with a small number of Member States accounting for most of the supported operations. However, this represents only the initial picture, and the situation is expected to evolve over the coming years. Not all Member States complied with the requirement to report their passively fished litter, whether or not they were supported by EMFAF. Figure 4 shows that, for those that did report, a total of 1,500 tonnes was collected

Figure 13: Distribution of the 58 EMFAF operations relating to marine litter over MS

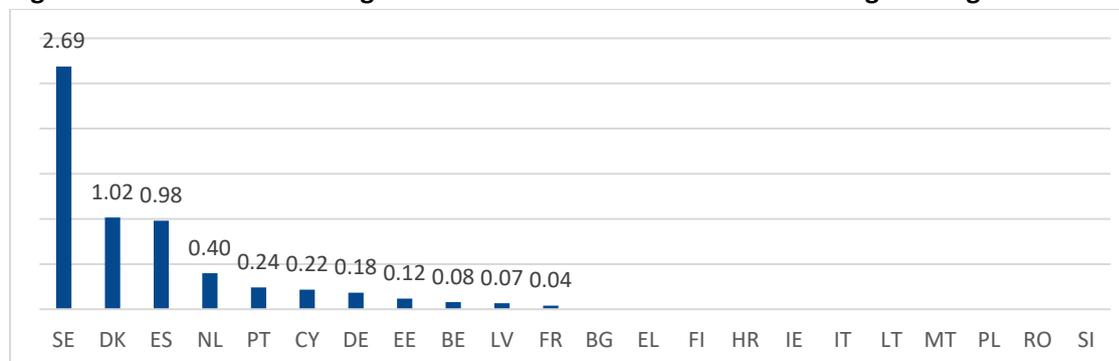


Source: EMFAF Infosys, 31 December 2024

The distribution of financial support among Member States closely mirrors the number of operations. Sweden, Spain, and Denmark stand out as the top three countries, both in terms of the number of supported operations and the total amount of EMFAF funding allocated. Sweden leads with EUR 2.69 million, followed by Denmark with EUR 1.02 million and Spain with EUR 0.98 million. Other Member States, such as the Netherlands, Portugal, and Cyprus, allocated smaller amounts, while several countries have not yet reported any EMFAF-supported operations or funding. This alignment between the number of operations and the level of financial support highlights the early concentration of EMFAF activities in a few countries, though the situation is expected to evolve as implementation progresses.

Despite reporting financial support for actions against marine litter, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia and Estonia did not report the mass of litter of passively fished litter collected under the Port Reception Facilities Directive (Figure 4)

Figure 14: Distribution among MS for the EUR 6 million EMFAF funding relating to marine litter



Source: EMFAF Infosys, 31 December 2024

The table below shows the percentage of each Member State's EMFAF budget allocated specifically to marine litter activities. **Sweden** dedicates the highest proportion, with 5,45% of its budget going to marine litter, followed by the Netherlands at 4,06% and Cyprus at 1,52%. Other countries, such as Denmark (0,98%), Spain (0,57%), and Belgium (0,54%), allocate smaller but still notable shares. Several Member States, including France, Portugal, Latvia, and Germany, dedicate less than 0,25% of their budgets to this issue, while many others have not reported any allocation for marine litter at this stage. **On average, 0,44% of the EMFAF committed budget across reporting countries is dedicated to marine litter**, highlighting significant variation between countries.

Table 8: Proportion of EMFAF support dedicated to marine litter operations per MS

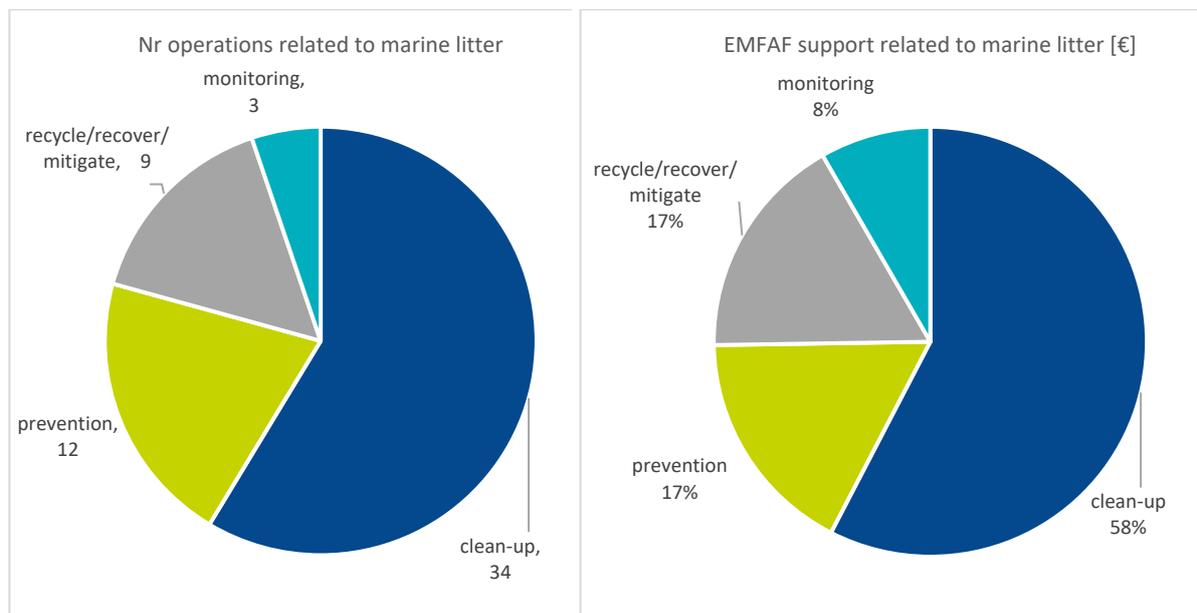
MS	Number all operations reported	EMFAF support [EUR]	Number marine related operations	EMFAF support [EUR]	% of budget for marine litter
SE	335	49 321 466	23	2 688 123	5,45%
NL	186	9 833 332	1	399 000	4,06%
CY	404	14 302 629	1	217 000	1,52%
DK	432	103 938 109	9	1 015 515	0,98%
ES	4 370	171 461 826	14	981 121	0,57%
BE	55	14 479 577	1	78 292	0,54%
EE	187	23 446 206	4	117 267	0,50%
DE	959	84 704 419	1	184 100	0,22%
PT	1 872	148 911 100	1	241 299	0,16%
LV	556	46 907 625	1	67 506	0,14%
FR	927	128 402 944	2	39 716	0,03%
BG	37	6 052 778			
EL	48	79 201 238			
FI	992	26 564 337			
HR	958	33 986 153			
IT	2 588	139 091 813			
LT	100	12 055 271			
MT	6	8 089 970			
PL	1 355	145 571 018			
SI	40	2 530 501			
IE					
RO					
Total	16 409	1 248 852 314	58	6 028 939	0,48%
<i>average</i>	<i>820</i>	<i>62 442 616</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>548 085</i>	<i>0,44%</i>

Source: EMFAF Infosys, 31 December 2024

5.2.3 Analysis by typology of actions

The charts overleaf provide an overview of EMFAF support for marine litter operations, broken down by typology. **Clean-up activities represent the majority, with 34 operations** receiving a total of EUR 3,47 million in funding. Prevention and recycle/recover/mitigate initiatives account for 12 and 9 operations respectively, each supported with just over EUR 1 million. Monitoring projects are the least numerous, with only 3 operations and EUR 499 374 in funding despite the clear need for better monitoring.

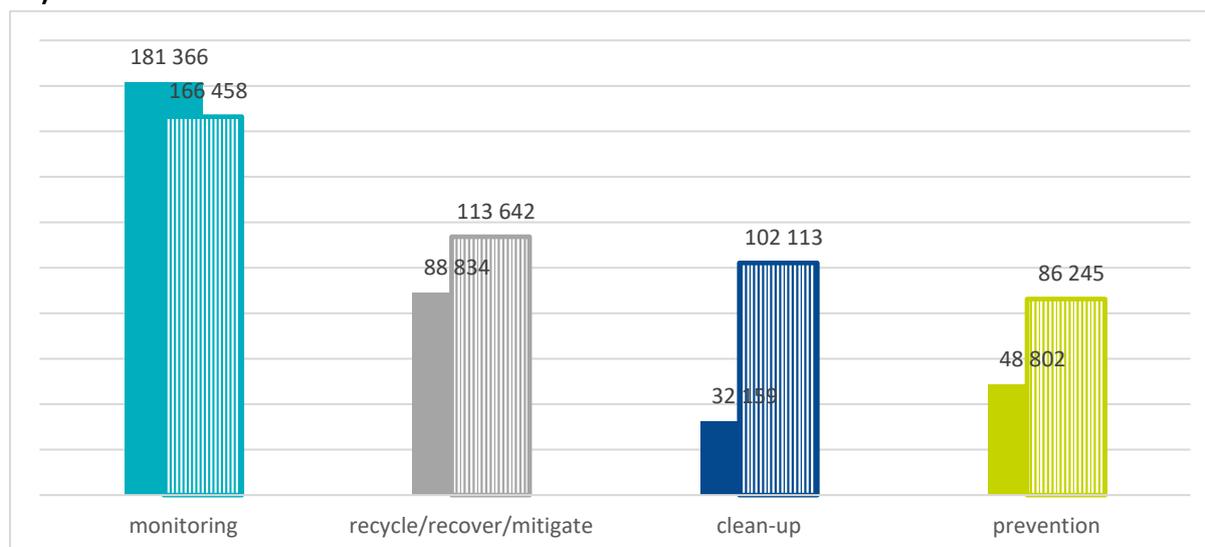
Figure 15 Distribution of EMFAF operations among the typologies (left: number of operations, right: EMFAF commitments)



Source: EMFAF Infosys, 31 December 2024

The Figure below compares the average size of operations funded under the EMFF and EMFAF programmes across four typologies related to marine litter. For both funding periods, **monitoring** projects have the highest average operation size, with EUR 181 000 under EMFF and EUR 166 000 under EMFAF. **Recycle/recover/mitigate** and **prevention** operations also show an increase in average size from EMFF to EMFAF, rising from EUR 89 000 to EUR 113 000 and from EUR 48 000 to EUR 86 000, respectively. Notably, **clean-up operations** see the most significant growth, with the average operation size more than tripling from EUR 32 159 under EMFF to EUR 102 113 under EMFAF. **Overall, these figures suggest a trend towards larger-scale operations in the EMFAF period compared to EMFF, particularly for clean-up and prevention activities.**

Figure 16 Average size of EMFAF operation [EUR] per typology (pattern fill) compared to EMFF (solid fill)



Source: EMFAF Infosys, 31 December 2024

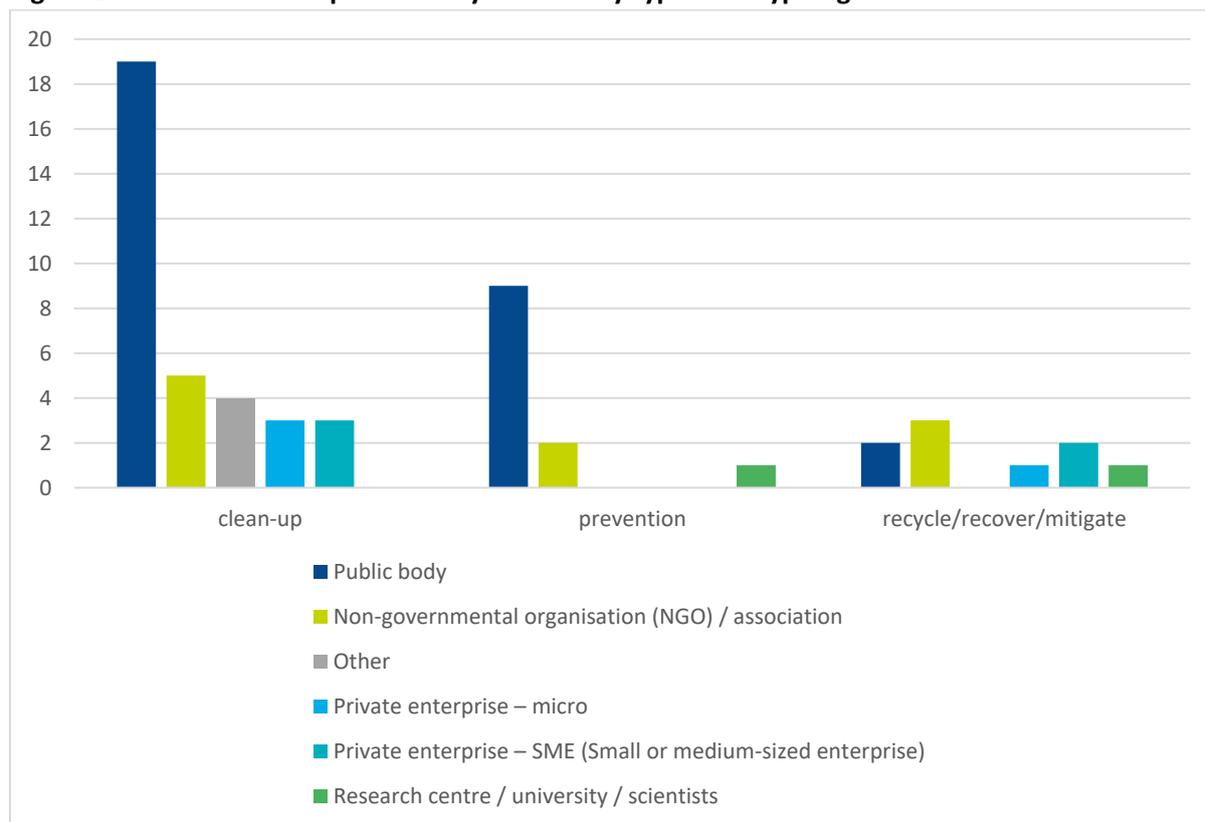
Examining other available EMFAF fields, such as operation type and beneficiary type, reveals some indicative key patterns:

- Type of Operation:** Of the 58 operations identified, 37 (64%) are classified as “Retrieval and/or disposal of marine litter,” which aligns with expectations. Around 10 operations fall under “Studies and research” or “Other (environmental).” The remaining operations span a variety of categories, for instance, a Spanish CLLD-funded initiative supporting school awareness activities, including beach plastic collection, is listed as “Other (Social).” Additional categories—such as “Awareness raising, communication to the wider public,” “Knowledge sharing,” and “Specific investments for improving aquatic habitats and biodiversity”—were each used for one operation.
- Type of Beneficiaries:** Regarding beneficiary types, public bodies are most commonly involved in clean-up and prevention activities, see Figure 17. In contrast, “recycle/recover/mitigate” operations feature a more diverse mix of beneficiaries. Additionally, two Swedish operations classified as “monitoring”—not shown in the figure below—are carried out by Producer Organisations. These projects focus on identifying and mapping lost fishing gear in two areas.

It should be noted that these figures are preliminary and may change significantly in the coming years, as EMFAF implementation is still in its early stages.

Reviewing the common result indicators (CRs), CR10 “Actions contributing to a good environmental status, including nature restoration, conservation, protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, animal health and welfare” has been reported 44 times, with a total indicative expected result of 2 006 and an ex-post result of 1 022 as of June 2025. Other reported CRs include jobs created and maintained, persons benefiting, cooperation activities between stakeholders, innovations enabled, entities benefiting from promotion and information activities, and areas addressed by operations that contribute to good environmental status and the protection, conservation, and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems. However, reporting on these other CRs is too limited to allow for meaningful analysis.

Figure 17 Distribution of operations by beneficiary type for 3 typologies of actions



5.3 Summary of MS reports on marine litter for EMFAF

5.3.1 Sufficiency of funding for marine litter under the EMFAF period

For the EMFAF period 2021–2027, 12 Member States assessed their available funding for marine litter as *fully sufficient* (Sweden, Bulgaria, Germany, Croatia, Poland, Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia). A *partially sufficient* rating was reported by Cyprus, Denmark, Netherlands, Spain, Latvia, Greece). Only Finland considered funding as *less sufficient*, noting that the national EMFAF programme was small and prioritised fisheries and aquaculture development, while marine litter projects were typically large and better financed through programmes such as LIFE or Interreg. For Belgium and France no information on funding sufficiency was available.

Sweden reported that all funds for the collection of discarded fishing gear were fully committed early, by spring 2025, followed by a summer 2025 programme amendment to increase the available budget. Bulgaria considered funding fully sufficient, stating that a planned envelope of EUR 900 000 provided adequate financial capacity for marine litter actions across sector operators. Poland confirmed fully sufficient funding, supported by an open catalogue if it is needed. Croatia highlighted likely full sufficiency, though effectiveness still depended on pending or not-yet implemented marine litter measures.

Spain noted a strong increase in support, reporting that funding for marine litter–related actions was more than twice as high in this period compared to the earlier EMFF, reflecting growing institutional attention to the issue.

Latvia explained that although the Ministry of Agriculture considered the available support sufficient based on current demand, feedback from other stakeholders pointed to remaining gaps and challenges that could not be fully addressed with the existing budget.

In Denmark, a national marine litter funding scheme ran in 2023–2024, supporting information / communication and collection in 2023 (EUR 871 000 for 4 projects) and collection only in 2024 (EUR 689 000 for 5 projects). The Managing Authority received enough applications, with active collection actions being most popular, offering fishers a way to contribute when unable to fish. Based on application demand, the funding was considered partially sufficient. Germany assessed the available funding for marine litter under EMFAF as fully sufficient but clarified that EMFAF was not specifically designed to address the issue itself. They noted that responsibility for tackling overall marine litter largely lies outside the fishing sector—a limitation explicitly stated in the EMFAF programme.

Although national priorities differed, most Member States considered EMFAF funding for marine litter largely sufficient, and interest in the topic grew over time. Support from complementary EU instruments like the LIFE Programme further expanded action capacity. Overall, awareness and engagement increased steadily, forming a positive foundation for future marine litter efforts.

5.3.2 Management of marine litter in EMFAF programmes

Most Member States indicated that the management of marine litter was described in their EMFAF programmes. Only Belgium, Romania, and Latvia indicated that the description of marine litter management in their EMFAF programmes was less developed or insufficiently detailed. For example, Belgium explained that the general issue and management of marine litter were not discussed so much in the national EMFAF programme, as another department and separate funding are dedicated to this.

Latvia noted that marine pollution was included in the national Strategic Plan 2021–2027 and identified as a challenge in the programme’s SWOT analysis (marine pollution is identified as one of the challenges to the ecological state of the Baltic Sea), supporting the integration of environmental requirements into sector measures. However, as the topic was not defined as a separate programme priority with specific objectives or indicators, its management was not considered to be well or independently described. Estonia stated that marine litter management was not directly described in the EMFAF programme, although the programme outlined possible funding uses for marine litter related activities.

Member States also indicated some examples where they presented marine litter as a clearly framed and operational part of their EMFAF programmes:

- Bulgaria confirmed that marine litter management was very well described in its EMFAF programme, where it was explicitly integrated across Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3, all aligned with fisheries participation and regional coordination under the Bucharest Convention.
- Italy indicated that marine litter management was clearly embedded in the programme strategy, including explicit funding under Specific Objective 1.6 (Protection and restoration of biodiversity) for operations on port waste storage, recovery at sea, and awareness and

prevention campaigns, emphasising the active role of fishers and alignment with the EU Circular Economy Action Plan.

- France indicated that marine litter was included in the EMFAF plan, which contains a dedicated section setting an objective of 40 operations for port collection and sorting, awareness campaigns, eco-friendly gear design, and the valorisation of used fishing and aquaculture gear.

Taken together, these examples show a clear and encouraging trend toward stronger recognition and more structured integration of marine litter management within national EMFAF programmes.

5.3.3 Effectiveness of EMFAF marine litter action funding promotion to relevant stakeholders

Most Member States indicated that EMFAF funding for marine litter actions was adequately communicated and visible to relevant stakeholders (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, Germany). Other countries, however, noted remaining challenges, indicating that the funding was not sufficiently advertised (Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Portugal, Romania, Italy, Croatia, Cyprus). Bulgaria, France, Finland, and Ireland indicated they could not assess EMFAF marine litter funding outreach.

Bulgaria raised a particularly noteworthy observation: while funding opportunities are typically communicated through social media and official channels, experience shows that the most effective approach is *direct outreach* to fishermen via phone calls, personal visits, or meetings organised by FLAGs or fisheries associations. This hands-on approach has repeatedly proven far more successful in engaging small-scale operators who may not regularly follow online announcements.

Overall, the experiences across Member States demonstrate that the visibility and uptake of EMFAF funding depend not only on formal communication but also on sustained and direct engagement with the fisheries community.

5.3.4 Planned initiatives on marine litter

Several countries report that specific EMFAF marine-litter actions have not yet started or are still being designed (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia).

Some Member States highlight concrete or planned initiatives. Cyprus has launched an “Adopt a beach” operation to tackle marine litter through public engagement and awareness raising. Germany integrates marine litter into several specific objectives and measures (e.g. Fishing for Litter initiatives, port-infrastructure adaptation, research on impacts, support for gear-loss prevention and ghost-net recovery), while also noting that other EU funds will be needed for broader water-quality objectives. Greece acknowledges that marine litter was not prioritised in 2014–2020 but plans to address it under OP 2021–2027 and to encourage local initiatives via FLAGs.

Ireland also provides a strong example, with its Seafood Development Programme planning multiple actions under SO 1.6 (retrieval and proper disposal of litter, port infrastructure, awareness-raising, research and the Clean Oceans Initiative). Lithuania is in the process of agreeing detailed selection criteria and financing conditions, focusing on removal and prevention of marine litter and improving port and landing-site infrastructure, mainly via scientific institutions as beneficiaries. Poland plans

port-infrastructure investments for waste collection and utilisation, and Portugal states that all types of marine litter interventions are well covered in its programme and across several specific objectives and can potentially be implemented; however, it is not specifically promoted to relevant stakeholders.

Overall, the evidence from Member States indicates that, despite differences in maturity and approach, EMFAF support for marine litter has become more visible, better described and increasingly structured than under EMFF, providing a basis on which countries can further scale up, target and coordinate their efforts to reduce marine litter in the coming years.

5.4 Conclusions for EMFAF

Drawing on a review of EMFAF-funded operations from the Infosys database, together with perspectives from interviews with Managing Authorities, the following main findings regarding marine litter activities supported by the EMFAF have emerged:

1. **Significant potential funding but limited actual allocation:** up to EUR 1 billion (about 20% of the EMFAF budget) could potentially be dedicated to marine litter activities, and at the end of 2024 EUR 6 million (0,48% of the committed budget) has actually been allocated to specific marine litter operations so far.
2. **Small number of targeted operations:** Out of over 16 000 EMFAF-funded operations, only 58 were specifically dedicated to marine litter, indicating that most marine litter actions remain a small fraction of overall EMFAF activity.
3. **Concentration in a few Member States:** Sweden, Spain, and Denmark are leading in marine litter actions, with Sweden reporting the highest number (23 operations) and the largest funding (EUR 2,7 million), followed by Denmark and Spain. Many Member States have not yet reported any marine litter operations.
4. **Most support under environmental interventions:** Over 80% of EMFAF marine litter funding is under TOI 1, with smaller shares for CLLD and other interventions. The share for CLLD (TOI 14) is expected to grow as FLAG strategies accelerate from 2026.
5. **Clean-up remains the focus:** they account for the majority of marine litter projects (34 operations, EUR 3,47 million), while prevention, recycle/recover/mitigate, and monitoring initiatives are less common but growing.
6. **Programme descriptions and integration improving:** Most Member States now describe marine litter management in their EMFAF programmes, with some (e.g. Bulgaria, Italy, France) integrating it into strategic objectives and operational plans.
7. Thanks to the Port Reception Facilities Directive, we now have some information on the amount of litter collected through passive fishing for litter. But for the rest, information on the type of operation is insufficiently detailed to form a view as to what is being done and its impact.
8. Now that producers are responsible for the safe disposal of end-of-life fishing gear, there should be less need for public money.

6 Overall conclusions and recommendations about marine litter actions funded by EMFF and EMFAF

In general, Member States report an overall positive outlook on marine litter action, emphasizing that different measures—ranging from *prevention* and *monitoring* to *recycling* and *clean-up*—are increasingly integrated, where various actions work together to generate meaningful impact in terms of reducing the levels and effects of marine litter. **Prevention** is most effective, especially when awareness starts early and communities are empowered, whilst **recycling** actions prove successful when costs are fully covered, administrative complexity is reduced, and end of life gear is fed into the wider circular economy. **Monitoring** still needs better long-term data, standardisation, and cross-ministry coordination, but digital tools and local cooperation offer a strong future path. Not all Member States complied with the monitoring requirements of the Port Reception Facilities Directive and the Single Use Plastics Directive. No timetables for better compliance were provided.

Across Member States, **marine litter initiatives linked to the fisheries sector** are mainly local/regional and focus on clean-ups. Countries with strong multi-actor cooperation report better results, especially where fishers, ports, municipalities, public utilities and NGOs cooperate and share operational responsibility. Many countries highlight that marine litter clean-ups succeed when Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) work in close cooperation with local authorities and public utilities, as well as tourism and other coastal stakeholders.

Timing also matters, as **seasonal fishing closures create valuable enforcement and retrieval windows for removing illegal or lost nets**. Bulgaria suggests that the annual retrieval of lost fishing gear should be scheduled during spawning periods, when fishing bans are officially in place, because this allows authorities and fishers to also detect and remove poacher nets and other illegal gear at sea. No information is available on the number or effectiveness of such measures.

Portugal suggests that **future EMFAF funding calls should explicitly reference the National Action Plan for Marine Litter 2024–2028**, clearly specifying which actions of the national plan are eligible for support. They also recommend closer coordination with environmental authorities, especially those implementing and reporting under the SUP Directive, in order to improve alignment and strengthen coastal impact.

In Germany and Spain, the majority of **beach clean-up and litter collection projects** are financed through other national or EU environmental sources, not EMFAF. In Spain, national authorities developed criteria for retrieving lost fishing gear and tested pilot clean-up actions between 2021–2023, but these actions were not funded by EMFAF. Rather, they were carried out through national budgets or environmental EU programmes.

Ireland suggests continuing to **support national clean-up actions**, while ensuring fishers, aquaculture operators, and ports remain financially backed to handle and land marine litter effectively. According to the Netherlands, ‘Fishing for Litter’ initiatives should remain an eligible and supported measure under EMFAF’s successor programme.

From the lessons learned in the Member States, the following overall conclusions can be made:

- Promote integrated and collaborative approaches, encouraging multi-actor cooperation at local and regional levels—engaging fishers, ports, municipalities, public utilities, NGOs, and tourism stakeholders—to maximize the effectiveness of marine litter prevention, monitoring, recycling, and clean-up actions.
- Enhance monitoring frameworks, by investing in long-term data collection, standardization, digital tools, and cross-ministry coordination, as well as improving the exchange of information on collected data. Not all Member States report to those established under the Port Reception Facilities Directive and the Single Use Plastics Directive.
- Align funding and policy with National Strategies, ensuring that EMFAF and other funding calls are closely aligned with national marine litter action plans and relevant environmental directives.
- EMFAF support for marine litter has become more visible, better described and increasingly structured than under EMFF, providing a basis on which countries can further scale up, target and coordinate their efforts to reduce marine litter in the coming years.
- More information on the effectiveness of measures is needed so that best practice can be adopted.
- Better engagement with the legislative requirements is needed. For instance, in principle, public funds should not be used for safe disposal of fishing gear because the producers of fishing gear are legally responsible for it.

Our analysis of EMFF operations related to marine litter revealed that the information readily available, particularly from the brief descriptions in the Infosys database, is limited. Currently, there is insufficient detail regarding the types of actions undertaken through EMFF and EMFAF-funded initiatives. Collecting such data retrospectively is challenging and often incomplete. Therefore, we strongly recommend that Managing Authorities (MAs) systematically gather more comprehensive and detailed information on marine litter operations funded under EMFAF in the coming years. To enhance future data collection, we propose that MAs classify marine litter actions, and refer to them in the standardised operation description⁸ according to the following categories:

- ✓ dedicated (active) "Fishing for Litter" projects;
- ✓ support for the (passive) landing of litter during regular fishing activities;
- ✓ initiatives for the disposal of end-of-life fishing gear;
- ✓ activities for marine litter collection and disposal in fishing ports and landing centres;
- ✓ awareness-raising efforts within the fishing industry;
- ✓ improved reporting of lost fishing gear; and
- ✓ support for fishing businesses to implement new Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements under the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive.

⁸ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/79, Table 1, field 03

7 Annexes

7.1 Annex 1 Questionnaire for coastal EU Member states

FAMENET Support Unit

Marine litter from the fishing and aquaculture sectors and other actions relating to marine litter

[Country]

Background

Marine litter is an increasing problem not only in the European Union (EU), but also globally. Efforts to tackle the problem exist at international, regional, and national level. These efforts include policy frameworks, regulatory measures, and collaborations among governments, NGOs, businesses, and local communities to reduce waste, improve waste management, and protect marine environments.

The EU employs a large array of instruments to tackle marine litter, focusing on prevention, reduction, and management. The **Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** is central to these efforts, aiming to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) of marine waters by reducing litter. Complementing this, the **EU Plastics Strategy**, launched in 2018, seeks to transform plastic design, production, use, and recycling to minimize waste. The **Circular Economy Action Plan**, part of the **European Green Deal**, promotes sustainable product design and waste reduction, contributing to litter prevention. Additionally, the **Single-Use Plastics Directive** targets the reduction of single-use plastic items, which are significant contributors to marine litter, through bans, consumption reduction targets, and extended producer responsibility schemes. The **Port Reception Facilities Directive** ensures ports provide adequate waste reception facilities, preventing ship-generated waste from entering the sea. These initiatives are supported by the **EU's Zero Pollution Action Plan**, another key deliverable under the European Green Deal, which aims to reduce air, water, and soil pollution to zero. Together, these instruments reflect the EU's holistic approach to addressing marine litter, integrating environmental protection, sustainable practices, and pollution reduction.

With this interview, FAMENET seeks to understand the actions conducted under EMFF and planned in EMFAF for tackling marine litter issues. These may cover prevention actions, recycle/recover actions and clean-up actions.

The following EMFF and EMFAF articles explicitly address marine litter, for example:

- Under **EMFF in Article 40.1(a)** - collection of waste by fishermen from the sea such as the removal of lost fishing gear and marine litter and **Article 43(1)** - investments improving the infrastructure of fishing ports, (...) including investments in facilities for waste and marine litter collection. The following INFOSYS 'types of operations' are relevant to the subject (others may also be relevant, but not directly linked):
 - #26 Retrieval and/or disposal of marine litter
 - #41 Reduction and prevention of pollution/contamination

- Under **EMFAF in Article 25.2(a)** - compensation to fishers for the passive collection of lost fishing gear and marine litter from the sea; and **Article 25.2(b)** - investments in ports or other infrastructure to provide adequate reception facilities for lost fishing gear and marine litter collected from the sea. The following INFOSYS ‘types of operations’ are relevant to the subject (others may also be relevant, but not directly linked):
 - #41 Reduction and prevention of pollution/contamination

Other related operations about marine litter, may be identified in:

- CLLD and FLAG cooperation (**Articles 63 & 64**, EMFF and **P3** in EMFAF)
- **EMFF Art. 80 (IMP under UP6)** – 1. The EMFF may support operations in accordance with the objectives set out in Article 79, such as operations that: (...) **(b) protect the marine environment**, in particular its biodiversity and marine protected areas such as Natura 2000 sites, in accordance with the obligations established in Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC.

GEs are expected to conduct desk research to gather general information on initiatives and projects related to marine litter in their Member States (MS), focusing primarily on those funded through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and planned under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF). Additionally, they should identify other significant initiatives financed from various sources. In the second stage, the experts will conduct interviews with the Managing Authority or other relevant stakeholders as necessary.

The following questionnaire should serve as a guideline for this interview.

Nr.	Type of question	Level of detail
1	Overview of the marine litter issues relevant to the MS	Expert assessment MA interview
2	EMFF achievements for marine litter	EMFF Infosys MA interview
3	EMFAF plans for marine litter	EMFAF Infosys MA interview
4	Other funding for marine litter in MS	Expert assessment MA interview
5	Lessons learned/experience/suggestions for the future of the MA on the topic of marine litter	MA interview
6	References for secondary / published information	Expert assessment MA interview

Respondents

Name/email	Unit	Organisation

1 Marine litter issues in the Member State

To set the scene, we have some general questions regarding the issue of marine litter in your Member State. We are interested in understanding whether initiatives addressing marine litter are coordinated and if information is exchanged effectively between different public administrations.

For context, the first annual reporting under the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive took place in July 2022 (covering data from 2021), and the first reporting under the Port Reception Facilities (PRF) Directive occurred in June 2024 (covering the period from June 2021 to December 2023). Both are relatively recent developments.

We are focusing on the period from 2014 (EMFF) to the present (EMFAF). We would like to know whether marine litter has become a higher political priority in your country during this time. We also want to understand how well the monitoring and reporting processes for these directives are functioning, as some Member States may be more advanced than others in terms of capacity and implementation, and if these support the capacity of the MS in addressing marine litter.

In case your expert assessment differs with the MA’s perspective, please describe in the ‘Comments’ section below.

Question	Score (low/medium/high)	Comments
How would you rate the interest in addressing marine litter in your MS?		
How would you rate the capacity of the MS in addressing marine litter e.g. through the SUP and PRF Directives, and other mechanisms)?		

In case you have information from your MS on the **interest** and **capacity** by the f&a **industry & NGOs**, you may provide further information here below:

Context for GEs: the SUP (Directive (EU) 2019/904) is reporting specifically on fishing and aquaculture gear containing plastic, but **not** general marine litter. Indicators reported are:

- *Weight of fishing and aquaculture gear containing plastic **placed on the market** [Tonnes (t); breakdown by Fishing gear / Aquaculture gear]*
- *Weight of **waste** fishing and aquaculture gear containing plastic collected separately [Tonnes (t); breakdown by Fishing gear / Aquaculture gear]*

Other initiatives, such as “Fishing for Litter,” aim to remove existing marine litter from the sea, raise awareness among fishers and the public about the issue, and improve port waste management by ensuring appropriate facilities are available for landed litter. Whilst no specific indicators have been established, a variety of data is collected, including the amount of marine litter removed, the number

of participating vessels and ports, the number of events held, and the types of litter collected. We expect that these initiatives became operational and achieved results since 2014. We would like to know whether this information has been shared with the Managing Authority for EMFF/EMFAF, and if so, whether it has been used—for example, in the programming of national EMFF and EMFAF programmes⁹ or the development of specific operations in EMFF/EMFAF.

Question:	Yes / No / I don't know	Comments (Further detail, especially if the information used in the context of EMFF/EMFAF)
Is the MA aware about the monitoring / reporting of the SUP indicators, in particular on the “Weight of <u>fishing gear</u> containing plastic placed on the market ”?		
Same question for <u>aquaculture gear</u> placed on the market.		
Is your MS aware of the monitoring of the quantity of <u>fisheries gear</u> abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded (ALDFG) (linked to the MSFD and OSPAR Convention)?		
Same question for <u>aquaculture gear</u> abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded .		
Is the MA aware of other indicators related to marine litter that are monitored under other initiatives (such as “Fishing for Litter”)		
Does your MS organize awareness activities about marine litter from fisheries and aquaculture to its stakeholders?		

Other general information on marine litter relevant for the MS, e.g. the general perception on marine litter, the coordination of the different initiatives for marine litter, ...

⁹ Including the Multi-annual National Strategic Plans for aquaculture

2 EMFF information related to marine litter

2.1 Financial overview table for EMFF in MS

For GEs, please browse through the list of Infosys operations in the **excel file (tab “EMFF_Infosys”)**:

- *Green coloured operations: operations of articles 40.1(a), 43(1), 63, 64, 80*
 - *Blue coloured operations: operations found with key-words (if any were found)*
- 1) *GE to confirm in the left column in case the operation is related to marine litter (indicating “Y”)*
 - 2) *In case the operation description is very vague, you may cross-check with the MA*
 - 3) *If possible, GE to add information on the typology in the Excel table (4 typologies: Prevention; Recycle/recover/mitigate; Clean-up; Reports/studies, Monitoring)*
 - 4) *For Article 63 & 64 (CLLD), please check with the MA if they have knowledge about activities related to marine litter carried out by the FLAGS*

Aggregated data will be added in the MS report from the Excel table (NO NEED for GE to copy & paste)

2.2 Qualitative assessment by MA for EMFF actions contributing to marine litter

For GEs, we would like to better understand the role that the EMFF has played in addressing marine litter in the Member States. There are several possible scenarios, for example:

- *The EMFF’s contribution was limited because other initiatives or funding sources were available, reducing the need to use EMFF resources for funding marine litter activities.*
- *The issue of marine litter may not yet be sufficiently recognised or prioritized at the national level, resulting in limited inclusion in the EMFF OP.*
- *In some cases, EMFF funding may have been directed towards the monitoring of marine litter (e.g. in the OP), thereby supporting the monitoring and reporting requirements of other EU directives and initiatives.*

If you have additional insights or comments, feel free to provide further details in the answers below.

- a) *How would you rate the available funding for marine litter in your MS over the EMFF period (2014-2020) (not sufficient/ partially sufficient/ fully sufficient): _____*
- b) *Was the management of marine litter well described in the EMFF programme? (yes/no/I don’t know): _____*
- c) *Was funding for marine litter actions from EMFF well-advertised to relevant stakeholders? (yes/no/I don’t know): _____*
- d) *For all marine litter funding schemes and initiatives available in your MS, please estimate what percentage of the funding came from the EMFF over 2014 – 2020 compared to other sources? _____%*
- e) *How would you rate the overall quality of the EMFF operations relating to marine litter? See table (divided by type of action)*

Type of action ¹⁰	Low /Medium / High	Contextual information [free text] <i>(it does not matter how many operations or how much funding for each action type were reported, the idea is to obtain an overall assessment of how the EMFF contributed to these types of actions)</i>
Prevention		
Recycle / recover / mitigate		
Clean-up		
Monitoring		
Reports/studies		
Overall EMFF contribution		

2.3 Examples of projects for developing FAMENET success stories

Please collect the Infosys ID number of the operations that the MA is indicating and a short description:

OperID in Infosys/EMFF	Short Description of project

3 EMFAF information related to marine litter

3.1 Financial overview table for EMFAF in MS

For GEs, please browse through the list of Infosys operations in the [excel file \(tab "EMFAF_Infosys"\)](#):

- Green coloured operations: operations for TOI 06, 11, 14
- Green coloured operations where 'operation type' is #26 Retrieval and/or disposal of marine litter, and #41 Reduction and prevention of pollution / contamination

¹⁰ See Table 2 in the Scoping report. Note that 'Monitoring' has been added and refers to activities that try to quantify and characterise the issue of marine litter in the member State. Also 'Reports/studies' has been added as a separate category.

- orange coloured operations: found with key-words (if any were found)

- 1) GE to confirm in the left column in case the operation is related to marine litter (indicating “Y”)
- 2) In case the operation description is very vague, you may cross-check with the MA
- 3) If possible, GE to add information on the typology in the Excel table (typologies: Prevention, Recycle/recover/mitigate, Clean-up, Reports/studies, Monitoring)
- 4) Specific Objective 3.1 (CLLD) please check with the MA if they have knowledge about activities related to marine litter carried out by the FLAGS

Aggregated data will be added in the MS report from the Excel table (NO NEED for GE to copy & paste)

3.2 Qualitative assessment by MA for EMFAF actions contributing to marine litter

For GEs, we would like to understand if the role of EMFAF has changed (increased/decreased) respect to EMFF for addressing marine litter in the Member States. If you have additional insights or comments, feel free to provide further details in the answers below.

- a) How would you rate the available funding for marine litter in your MS over the EMFAF period (2021-2027) (not sufficient/ partially sufficient/ fully sufficient): _____
- b) Is the management of marine litter well described in the EMFAF programme? (yes/no/I don't know): _____
- c) Is funding for marine litter actions from EMFAF well advertised to relevant stakeholders? (yes/no/I don't know): _____
- d) What are the selection criteria for selecting projects on marine litter? And do they relate well to the CFP? [free text]

Any other information you would like to report on addressing marine litter in EMFAF:

3.3 Planned projects or activities in EMFAF related to marine litter

For GEs, please collect planned actions from the MA on marine litter (copy& paste the bullet list below in case these are more operations)

Operation 1:

- 1) Project title: _____
- 2) short contents: _____
- 3) EMFAF Specific Objective (*): _____
- 4) Type of Intervention (*): _____
- 5) Potential beneficiary (name): _____

- 6) 'type of beneficiary' (*): _____
- 7) Approximate total eligible cost [EUR]: _____
- 8) Envisaged start of the project (quarter + year): _____
- 9) Category (prevention, recycle/recover/mitigate, clean-up, monitoring): _____

(*) SO, TOI and beneficiary type are available in Excel table, tab "lists"

4 Other sources of funding for marine litter initiatives in the MS

For GEs, please collect other actions from the MA on marine litter (not from EMFF and EMFAF); they can be completed, ongoing and planned). Here a list of EU initiatives to refer to, of course also look for regional and national initiatives, and initiatives from NGOs and the f&a industry:

- *Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)*
- *European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy (2018)*
- *Single-Use Plastics Directive (2019)*
- *Port Reception Facilities Directive (2019)*
- *EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy*
- *Other EU initiatives, Horizon 2020, Horizon Europe, ClearSea, Life, FP7, ...*
- *Other non-EU initiatives (national, regional, ...)*

Category (prevention, recycle/recover, clean-up/monitoring)	Funding initiative	Project title + content	beneficiary	Approximate total eligible cost [EUR]	Implementation period (from YYYY-quarter to YYYY-quarter), <i>they can be completed, ongoing and planned</i>

5 Lessons learned/experience/suggestions for the future of the MA on the topic of marine litter

We recognise that this is a challenging question, given that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028–2034 is still under discussion and the future organization of EU Structural Funds after 2027 remains uncertain. However, we are keen to understand the MA’s view on the effectiveness of the EMFF in the past, as well as the current EMFAF, in relation to initiatives addressing marine litter. In their experience, what has worked well, what challenges have they encountered, and what lessons have been learned?

Additionally, we want their suggestions for both the EU and Member States on how to improve efforts to tackle marine litter in the future.

The table below is organized according to the types of actions. If your Member State has specific expertise or suggestions related to any particular type of action, please provide your input in the relevant sections.

Type of action	Contextual information [free text]
Prevention	
Recycle/recover/mitigate	
Clean-up	
Monitoring	
Reports/studies	
Post 2027 overall	

6 Information sources and references

For GEs, please report, publications and other relevant materials published in the MS on marine litter. Please collect both the reports (PDF) as web-links (for downloading), provide English translation of titles. Example:

Borrelle, S., J. Ringma, K. Lavender Law, C. Monnahan, L. Lebreton, A. McGivern, E. Murphy, J. Jambeck, G. Leonard, M. Hilleary, M. Eriksen, H. Possingham, H. De Frond, L. Gerber, B. Polidoro, A. Tahir, M. Bernard, N. Mallos, M. Barnes & C. Rochman. (2020). Predicted growth in plastic waste exceeds efforts to mitigate plastic pollution. Science 18 Sep 2020 : 1515-1518. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6510/1515>

7.2 Annex 2 SUP and PRF Directives

7.2.1 SUP Directive

The SUP Directive - *Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council (EP/EC, 2019a) of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment* - promotes circular approaches that give priority to sustainable and non-toxic re-usable products and re-use systems rather than to SUPs, aiming to reduce the quantity of waste generated. The SUP Directive targets the ten single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, including those from fishing¹¹ and aquaculture¹²

Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/958 laid down the format for reporting data and information on fishing gear placed on the market and waste fishing gear collected in Member States and the format for the quality check report (EP/EC, 2021). In accordance with Article 3 of the SUP Directive, both fishing and aquaculture gear are defined under 'fishing gear', and therefore, both fishing and aquaculture gear types shall be reported on by Member States under the Implementing Decision¹³. Under the terms of the Directive, Member States shall ensure that the producers of fishing (and aquaculture) gear containing plastic cover the costs of the separate collection of waste gear containing plastic that has been delivered to adequate port reception facilities in accordance with Directive (EU) 2019/883 or to other equivalent collection systems that fall outside the scope of that Directive and the costs of its subsequent transport and treatment.

At a national level, the SUP Directive is being transposed into national law:

- Portugal - Decree law 78/2021¹⁴.
- Sweden - Ordinance 2021:1001 on fishing gear (*Förordning (2021:1001) om producentansvar för fiskeredskap*¹⁵). To date, one producer responsibility organisation has been formed, with municipalities and producer responsibility organisations starting to collect and process end-of-life fishing gear in 2025.
- Spain - Law 7/2022¹⁶, on waste and contaminated soils for a circular economy (CE) establishes an EPR scheme for producers. Article 60.5 of the law introduces the development of an EPR scheme for fisheries methods. The development of the scheme is currently ongoing.
- The Netherlands - *Regeling van de Staatssecretaris van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat*, 5 November 2024, nr. IENW/BSK-2024/297838, laying down further rules implementing the EU Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/958 (see above).

¹¹ See https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/plastics/single-use-plastics_en for more information.

¹² Note that the definition of 'fishing gear' in the SUP Directive specifically includes "any item or piece of equipment that is used in fishing or aquaculture" without distinction in terms of commercial or recreational fishing gear.

¹³ *Implementing Decision 2021/958, Article 1* - "Member States shall report the data on fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market and on waste fishing gear collected referred to in Article 13(1)(d) of Directive (EU) 2019/904 in the format for reporting data laid out in Annex 1 to this Decision".

¹⁴ <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/78-2021-171871496>

¹⁵ *Förordning (2021:1001) om producentansvar för fiskeredskap*.

¹⁶ <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-5809>

7.2.2 PRF Directive

The PRF Directive – *Directive (EU) 2019/883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships - amending Directive 2010/65/EU and repealing Directive 2000/59/EC (EP/EC, 2019b)*. The PRF encourages Member States to monitor and report the volume and quantity of waste fishing gear and collected passively fished waste¹⁷. The PRF, under Article 3 of the Directive, applies to all ships calling in at or operating within a port of an EU Member State¹⁸ - however, it is key to note that although waste delivery should occur irrespective of the vessel's size, reporting of waste to the SafeSeaNet system¹⁹ is not required by vessels <45m long, equating to >99.5% of the EU fleet (EC, 2020). Under Article 1 of this Directive, the PRF aims to improve port reception facilities for waste from ships using EU ports by encouraging Member States to ensure the availability of expeditious waste reception facilities, thereby protecting the marine environment from ship waste discharge.

The SUP and PRF Directives complement each other, in particular the application of EPR schemes for the financing of waste from fishing and aquaculture. Under the EPR schemes, manufacturers and producers of aquaculture equipment and their assembling elements (e.g. ropes and twines) are responsible for the organisation and costs of the separate collection of waste gear from ports and for their subsequent transport and appropriate treatment. These measures are coupled with the obligation to conduct awareness-raising measures on the high-risk components. In accordance with Articles 8 and 8a of the *Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC)*, Member States shall ensure that EPR schemes are established for all SUP products listed in Part E of the Annex of Directive (EU) 2019/904. To comply with Article 17 of the SUP Directive, Member States are required to apply measures to comply with EPR by 31st December 2024²⁰.

At a national level, the PRF Directive is being transposed into national law:

- In Portugal, there is a government decree, Portaria n.º 276/2017, which requires a deposit from the producer to guarantee the final removal of equipment and structures installed in the public marine domain.
- In Spain, Royal Decree 128/2022 on port reception facilities for ship waste applies to all vessels which use national ports, including the auxiliary vessels that are used in aquaculture facilities.

¹⁷ Note that the definition of 'passively fished waste' in the PRF Directive is "waste collected in nets during fishing operations" and may well include ALDFG from other vessels (i.e. not the vessel which will deliver the waste to port).

¹⁸ With exception of ships undertaking port services (Article 1(2) of Regulation (EU) 2017/352) and any warships, naval auxiliary ships or ships owned / operated by a State and is used only on governmental, non-commercial basis.

¹⁹ <https://emsa.europa.eu/ssn-main.html>

²⁰ However, EPR schemes established before 4th July 2018 and SUP products listed in Section III of Part E of the Annex, Member States shall apply measures by 5th January 2023.



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