

Action 14.1: Bring Science closer to Citizens - Scale-up of the Plastic Pirates – Go Europe! Initiative	
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1. Description	<p>The ERA <i>Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!</i> citizen science initiative engages and empowers young people across Europe to monitor and tackle plastic pollution in rivers, coasts and sea. The initiative was first launched by the Trio Presidency of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia who mobilised more than 7,500 young people from around 320 schools and organisations in 2020-21 to sample and analyse plastic pollution of Europe's rivers and coastal areas. In a next step, the initiative will be rolled out on a European scale in 2022 with support from Horizon Europe for a pan-European sampling campaign to assess the origins and pathways of plastic pollution, improve the scientific understanding of the problem and raise environmental awareness.</p> <p>The <b>ERA Policy Agenda</b> has identified Plastic Pirates as part of the <b>ERA action "Bring Science closer to Citizens"</b> for the period 2022-2024. As such, Plastic Pirates will contribute to the key priority area: Taking up together the challenges posed by the twin green and digital transition, and increasing society's participation in the ERA. Already in December 2020, the <b>Council called, in its Conclusions on the New European Research Area</b>, <i>"on the Commission and Member States to further develop and implement the "plastic pirates" citizen science campaign as the ERA pilot action to foster "interaction" within the ERA in order to raise awareness among citizens, in particular young citizens, on the impact and benefits of R&amp;I in their daily lives [as well as] encouraging cooperation with the proposed Mission on Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Water"</i>.</p> <p>The Plastic Pirates will help to achieve the objectives of the <b>Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters</b>, in particular its ambition to prevent and eliminate pollution in European seas and waters, and is included as specific action in its implementation plan<sup>1</sup>. The initiative also contributes to key European <b>environmental policy objectives</b>, notably the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Water Framework Directive and the Zero Pollution Action Plan for Air, Water and Soil. Finally, the campaign will also serve as a showcase example for the <b>European Year of Youth 2022</b>.</p> <p>To support the exchange of best practices and draw lessons for the launch of future citizen science approaches, a <b>Mutual Learning Exercise (MLE) on "Citizen Science initiatives – Policy and Practice"</b> under the ERA Policy Support Facility will be launched. The MLE will help to ensure good practices and impacts, maximise the relevance and excellence of citizen science, enable environments and sustaining citizen science, and</p>

<sup>1</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research\\_and\\_innovation/funding/documents/ocean\\_and\\_waters\\_implementation\\_plan\\_for\\_publication.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/funding/documents/ocean_and_waters_implementation_plan_for_publication.pdf)

	draw lessons on how to scaling up citizen science across the European Union.
<b>2. Actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The initiative targets <b>Member States and Associated Countries</b> to implement citizen science activities in their countries. Participating Member States and Associated Countries will benefit from financial support through an Other Action under the Horizon Europe Mission Ocean and Waters Work Programme 2021 to fund the collection of samples and their analysis, distribution of educational material and communication actions.</li> <li>• <b>Young people and students</b> will carry out the actual sampling of plastic pollution in rivers, coasts and seas.</li> <li>• <b>Scientists</b> will verify and analyse the samples.</li> <li>• <b>Educators</b> will be empowered to teach young people about plastic pollution through dedicated didactic material.</li> <li>• <b>Public authorities and researchers</b> will benefit from increased data on plastic pollution and citizen engagement for a clean aquatic environment</li> </ul>
<b>3. Timing and milestones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dec 2021: Publication of Other Action 'Europeanisation of Plastic Pirates' in HE Missions WP 2021 amendment</li> <li>• Jan 2022: Kick-off Mutual Learning Exercise</li> <li>• Jan/Feb 2022: Expected submission of proposal for Other Action (Final DL in April 2022)</li> <li>• May/June: Start of Action (tbc)</li> <li>• September: Launch of plastic sampling campaign across the EU</li> </ul>
<b>4. Funding</b>	2m EUR new EU contribution in 2022 through the Horizon Europe Missions Work Programme 2021, as a Grant to Identified Beneficiary. This comes in addition to 2.5m EUR already invested by the three MS of the Trio Presidency.
<b>5. Expected impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contribute to the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters</b> and support the implementation and monitoring of EU policy objectives such as the Zero Pollution Action Plan for Water, Air and Soil, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among citizens on the impact and benefits of R&amp;I in their daily lives, promote ocean literacy and active engagement through formal education, thus <b>combining citizen science, citizen engagement and excellence in research</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Engage schoolchildren and young people in research activities</b>, trigger their interest in scientific work relevant for societal challenges and <b>empower them to take action</b> for the protection and restoration of Europe's rivers and seas.</li> <li>• Allow sampling in rivers and on coastlines across Europe in a harmonised and standardised manner, which will <b>significantly extend existing data, improve scientific understanding and</b></li> </ul>

	<p><b>knowledge</b> and thus help to develop <b>systemic solutions for the prevention and elimination of plastic pollution</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support excellent science</b> and <b>allow researchers across Europe to draw on open and accessible data</b> integrated in existing European data portals.</li> <li>• <b>Develop and test best practices for implementing pan-European citizen science campaigns</b> linking both marine and fresh waters, which will prepare the ground for future EU-wide citizen science campaigns in support of the European Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030.</li> <li>• <b>Increase transnational cooperation in citizen science</b> and at European level to empower citizens to act to eliminate pollution and restore our ocean and waters.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Monitoring</b>	<p>Quantitative indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Member States and Associated Countries participating in the initiative.</li> <li>• Data sets collected and uploaded into a common portal</li> <li>• Number of students and young people engaged in the initiative</li> <li>• Peer-reviewed publications</li> </ul> <p>Qualitative indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of plastic pollution and its environmental and human health risks</li> <li>• Changes in attitudes and behaviour on plastic pollution</li> </ul>
<b>7. Communication</b>	<p>Communication activities to be carried out by the European Commission, the Member States and participation organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media campaigns</li> <li>• Advertising campaign through radio, TV, specific social media tools</li> <li>• Daily magazines, newspapers</li> <li>• Scientific journal articles and presentations at conferences</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> </ul>
<b>8. Additional information</b>	