



Project number : 11.0661/2016/748064/SUB/ENV.C2

INDICIT project first results: a very massive litter impact on sea turtles

Press release - December 4th 2018

World seas and oceans are polluted by marine debris, which have negative impacts on marine organisms. The European project INDICIT (INDICator Impact Turtle) aims to support international marine debris reduction policies by proposing indicators of evaluation of the state of the oceans, focusing on the marine debris ingestion by sea turtles.

On December 4th, INDICIT organizes an international dissemination meeting in Athens, to share its first results and discuss perspectives with experts and policy makers.

Developing a common approach to monitor marine debris impact

INDICIT is a collaborative 2-year project supported by the European Commission, started in February 2017. It gathers scientific institutes from 5 European countries (France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece) and 2 non-European Mediterranean countries (Turkey, Tunisia). The project falls within the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive aiming to achieve or maintain a marine “Good Environmental Status” by 2020.

INDICIT main objective is to develop a common approach across Mediterranean and Atlantic countries for monitoring the marine debris ingestion by sea turtles. In this objective, INDICIT partners are building and collaborating with a large network of organizations collecting data from stranded or bycaught sea turtles. The use of a common protocol allows the production of standardized data that can be compared among regions and from one year to another (for example: proportion of turtles that ingested litter, evolution of the type and quantity of debris collected). This harmonized approach is fundamental to improve the monitoring of the state of our oceans.

INDICIT first results: a very high rate of litter ingestion in sea turtles

On December 4th, INDICIT partners are organizing an international dissemination meeting in Athens. In the morning, INDICIT partners will present the standardized tools developed (standardized protocol and video tutorial), and share the first results of the project. The afternoon will be dedicated to panel discussions gathering representatives of the European Union, Regional Sea Conventions, national authorities, NGOs and other projects. The event is freely accessible via livestreaming.

Since the beginning of the project, more than 1,000 turtles dead and alive were analyzed in both Mediterranean and Atlantic regions, bringing to light a very massive litter impact on sea turtles:

- **About 60% of the turtles analyzed had ingested litter**
Average per country is between 25 and 85%; can reach 100% locally.

- **The debris ingested by turtles are representative of litter in the environment**
Plastic bags, plastic fragments, pieces of net and fishing lines, everyday use plastics (corks, cups, candy and cake packaging, fragments of balloon...)
- **Debris ingestion is rarely the direct cause of death, but weakens individuals:**
preventing them to feed, move, reproduce and escape dangers normally

Additional resources

- INDICIT website : <http://indicit-europa.eu>
- [Athens Dissemination meeting details and Agenda](#)
- [INDICIT press kit](#)
- [Dropbox with pictures](#)

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