

High-Level Panel on Plastic Governance: *A roadmap for the upcoming decade*

Side event organised in the framework of the [EurOCEAN Conference](#)

📅 09 October 2023, 16:00 – 17:30 CET.

📍 Aula 1. Edificio Redeiras - Universidade de Vigo. Rúa da Ribeira do Berbés, 11, 36202 Vigo

👤 Capacity limited to 40 participants (under previous registration).

🔗 Registration link: <https://bit.ly/LabPlas>

Description

Plastics play a vital role in modern society, being used in various fields of our daily life, however, this convenience comes at a significant environmental price. Most of the plastic waste ends up either in landfills or the natural environment, ultimately finding its way into the ocean. While global plastic production reached 390 million tonnes per year, it is estimated that nearly 10 million tonnes per year are entering the ocean. This extensive build-up of plastic in the environment poses a significant threat to ecosystems, human health, and the economy.

The EU project LabPlas is a collaborative project involving 17 organizations. Its purpose is to comprehensively study the sources, transportation, distribution, and impacts of plastic pollution. The project focuses on investigating small micro and nano plastics (SMNPs, <100 µm), typically overlooked in environmental monitoring but presenting the highest risk to organisms and human well-being. Through LabPlas, scientific evidence will be generated to inform regulatory efforts and dispel misconceptions about plastic properties. Additionally, the project will explore technological advancements, promote the use of biodegradable materials, and share its findings with national and international authorities as well as the industry to facilitate decision-making.

This High-Level Panel will be a platform for the plastic industry, the scientific community, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society to come together and discuss the multifaceted issue of plastic pollution, setting the base for the challenges of the next decade. The focus is on what various actors in Europe, including industry, society, and policymakers, are accomplishing to tackle this complex problem. Moreover, the HL Panel will highlight the ambitious research conducted under the LabPlas project, addressing key aspects of plastics in ecosystems, such as their sources, biodegradability, ecotoxicology, and environmental assessment. Intended to be a space of dialogue, this HL panel aims to foster collaboration, synergy, and coordinated actions among stakeholders toward achieving the goal of zero plastic pollution by 2050, as outlined in the recent EU's Zero Pollution Action Plan.

Panel discussion with

- 👤 **Ricardo Beiras**, LabPlas Scientific Coordinator, ECIMAT - University of Vigo
- 👤 **Mathilde Maure**, Policy and Project Officer, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). Atlantic Arc Commission.
- 👤 **Willem De Moor**, Deputy Director, JPI Oceans
- 👤 **Begoña Espiña**, Leader of the Water Quality Research Group, International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory
- 👤 **Gary Kett**, Co-Founder of the All-Atlantic Plastic Pilot Network. Researcher at the Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine and Environmental Research (CIIMAR).

Moderated by

Cynthia Gómez, LabPlas Project Manager, University of Vigo

V5. 02/10/23



Programme

16:00 – 16:05 Welcome and Introduction. *Natalia Ospina-Alvarez* (AIR Centre)

16:05 – 16:30 Opening presentation. Setting the scene: Plastic governance

Mathilde Maure (CPMR- Atlantic Arc Commission)

16:30 – 17:30 Panel Discussion moderated by *Cynthia Gómez* (University of Vigo)

16:30 – 16:50 Self-introduction of the panellists (5 minutes each)

16:50 – 17:30 Round table 'Plastic Governance: roadmap for the upcoming decade'

17:30 – 17:35 Final remarks and closing. *Natalia Ospina-Alvarez* (AIR Centre)

Brief Bios

Ricardo Beiras is graduated in Biology from the University of Santiago and holds a PhD in aquaculture from the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO). Since then, he worked as a marine researcher at the Plymouth Marine Laboratory (UK), the IFREMER Station d'Arcachon (France), the University of Antwerpen (Belgium) and the University of Vigo (Galicia, Spain) where he is a Full Professor in ecology, teaching Marine Pollution from 1995. He has been the head of ECIMAT, the University of Vigo's Marine Station, with a staff of ca. 20 people, for 10 years. He is an international expert in marine pollution (>140 papers in SCI journals). Supervisor of 11 finished PhD Thesis. Expert under contract for evaluation rounds of EU. Advisor of the IEO at ICES working groups. He has coordinated the JPI-Oceans Ephemere Project, a consortium of 16 Institutions from 10 countries targeting the ecotoxicological effects of microplastics on marine ecosystems and is the scientific coordinator of the LabPlas Project.

Mathilde Maure has a background in International and European Environmental Law. Over the course of her career, she worked for several regional authorities both in Italy and France in the field of EU Project Management for sustainable development and biodiversity preservation. Through her work at the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, she focuses on marine pollution and ecosystems preservation. In this regard, she took part in the CleanAtlantic project (Interreg Atlantic Area Programme) where she worked on the diffusion, among Atlantic Regions, of a Policy Toolkit on how to address marine litter issues. She also cooperates with other Atlantic stakeholders through EU projects such as BlueMissionAA (Mission Oceans and Waters) or FreeLitterAt (Interreg Atlantic Area). Finally, she focuses on the analysis of maritime pollution and marine ecosystems policies at the EU level, while addressing this topic with the AAC Member Regions.

Willem De Moor is Deputy Director at the secretariat of the Joint Programming Initiative for Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans). JPI Oceans is an intergovernmental platform that strives to increase the impact of national investments in marine and maritime research and innovation. By joining forces, JPI Oceans focuses on long-term collaboration between EU Member States, Associated Countries and international partners. The platform provides its member countries with a shared voice, strategic agenda and action plan to address complex ocean-related societal challenges that cannot be solved at national level. Before joining the JPI Oceans secretariat Willem worked as a policy adviser at the Flemish Ministry for Economy, Science and Innovation. He will give an overlook to JPI Oceans projects on 'Microplastics in the marine environment' as part of one of JPI Oceans' pilot activities.



Begoña Espiña is since October 2016, the Leader of the Water Quality Research Group at INL in Braga, Portugal. Dr Espiña focuses her research on developing portable and automated measuring devices for the selective detection and quantification of water chemical and biological contaminants, including micro- and nanoplastics, and developing methods for nanomaterials' fate, bioaccumulation and toxicity with special emphasis on implementing the safety-by-design concept.

Begoña Espiña holds both Bachelor's (2003) and PhD (2009) degrees in Biology from the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), Spain. She has been the principal investigator of several European and national funded projects and coordinated the Interreg Atlantic Area project NANOCULTURE (2019-2022). She is currently PI for several EU projects (LABPLAS, D4RUNOFF, Sbd4Nano, AIHABs and DIGIRAS) and coordinator of the EEA grant OPTIRAS. Begoña is a core member of 2 working groups in Water Europe (European Platform for Water) and a member of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC).

Gary Kett is a Marine Biologist who specialises in coastal ecosystem health, particularly in plastic pollution, animal health, and science for society. He gained his PhD at the Environmental Research Institute of University College Cork, Ireland where he investigated the impact of climate change on aquatic animal health and disease. He is currently working at the CIIMAR Institute, Portugal on the MAELSTROM project for Marine Litter Sustainable Removal and Management. Alongside other Early Career Ocean Professionals from Europe, Brazil, and North America, they formed the All-Atlantic Plastics Pilot Network. This network aims to identify and implement science-based solutions for citizens, policymakers, and businesses with the goal of improving the health of our Ocean ecosystem.

Cynthia Gómez [moderator] studied biology and obtained her master's degree (MSc) in Environmental Sciences from Wageningen University in the Netherlands. She holds a position as Project Manager in the Ecotoxicology and Marine Chemical Pollution Research Group at Vigo University, Spain. She has international experience in Europe, Africa, and America, leading diverse teams across various projects encompassing environmental impact assessments, sustainable development policies, and nature conservation initiatives. She is currently the project manager for the H2020 LAnd Based solutions for PLAstics in the Sea Project LabPlas.

Natalia Ospina-Alvarez [host] is an Innovation Manager in Blue Economy & Senior Project Officer at the AIR Centre (Portugal), where she is involved in different projects and initiatives related to marine and environmental sciences. Marine Geoscientist and Environmental Researcher specialising in Coastal and Marine Systems, she holds a PhD in Marine Sciences from the University of Barcelona (2012) and has participated in more than 15 international research projects with multidisciplinary teams from different countries. Over the last 15 years, she has worked as a researcher at several research institutes and universities in Europe, having the opportunity to address various approaches and methodologies for the analysis and monitoring of trace elements and emerging contaminants in the environment and participating in oceanographic cruises in diverse sea basins. Currently, she acts a 'Contact Node' for the Atlantic Ocean at the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership - SBEP.

