DEFINING GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

# The interrelations between the marine environment and human activities in Albania

> Human activities on the coast have a profound impact on the sea and its habitats, resulting in changes to water quality and the entire ecosystem.

**Coastal urbanisation** (EO8) is linked to **loss of habitats** and local species (EO1). Coastal urban areas are also a source of **nutrient enrichment and pollution** (EO5, EO9, EO10). In Albania, nearly 15% of the coastline is urbanised.

**Tourist areas** both generate **marine litter** (EO10) and are affected by it. In Albania, international tourist arrivals have grown from 1.2 million in 2008 to 4.6 million in 2017 (the highest ten-year increase in the Mediterranean).

Marine turtles, marine mammals and sea birds (EO1) can get entangled in **abandoned fishing equipment**, or suffocate through ingesting **plastic debris** (EO10). In Albania, between 15-40% of all disposed plastic waste ends up in the sea.

**Litter** (EO10) floating on the surface can act as a carrier of **non-indigenous species** (EO2), which may also be favored by warming waters (EO7).

**Pollution** (EO5, EO9), **coastal urbanization** (EO8) and other human activities have a local effect on **water movements** and **temperatures** (EO7), which in turn affect the spread of **litter** (EO10), increase of **thermophilic species**, as well as the health of **habitats** and their species composition (EO1, EO4). Some climate change scenarios foresee a mean increase in air temperature of 1.7°C for Albania in 2050.

Nearshore activities can lead to the release of **contaminants** (EO9), which may have toxicological effects on **biodiversity** (EO1).

**Commercially harvested fish and shellfish** (EO3) may ingest **marine litter** (EO10). In Albania, 8,625 tons of litter enters the sea every year.

**Eutrophication** (EO5) can lead to harmful algal blooms, affecting **biodiversity** (EO1, EO4).

Oxygen depletion can impact **habitats** (EO1) and related **food webs** (EO4).

**Marine litter** (EO10) may cause physical damage to **fragile benthic habitats** (EO1), such as corals and posidonia meadows.

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