



Strategies of circular Economy and Advanced bio-based solutions
to keep our Lands and seas allIVE from plastics contamination

No more haunting by ‘ghost nets’: bio-based and biodegradable nets could be the solution.

Press release: 20 May 2021

Celebrating European Maritime Day (20 May 2021), researchers in Paphos, Cyprus organised a clean-up operation to collect ghost fishing nets and derelict fishing gear from the local seabed.

Two partners from the EU-funded SEALIVE project, the NGO, AKTI Project and Research Centre and the environmental research and consultancy, ISOTECH Ltd organised the event in cooperation with local organisations, the Paphos Fishermen Association and the diving organisation, CYDIVE.

“Ghost nets” are nets that have been either accidentally or deliberately lost, abandoned or discarded in the marine environment. While these nets, and other derelict or abandoned fishing gear, no longer serve any purpose for the fishing industry, the nets continue to entangle fish and other marine animals. This can have devastating effects on marine ecosystems.

Fishing nets have been identified as an item of particular concern as part of the European Directive on Single-use Plastics that will come into effect in July 2021. The Directive includes actions to target the collection and recycling of old fishing nets. However, the collection of fishing nets that are lost accidentally at sea remains a challenge.

SEALIVE is working to address these issues by developing bio-based fishing nets made from green alternative materials such as micro-algae. Production of the nets is more sustainable compared to those based on traditional fossil fuel plastics. The nets will also be compostable at an industrial scale. This is particularly important because recycling infrastructure for fishing nets is currently not available in most countries and the recycling of traditional fishing nets can be both labour-intensive and financially non-viable.

SEALIVE’s goal is to enable a transition to biodegradable, compostable nets, coupled with supporting infrastructure for the collection of old nets. This will create a market for otherwise useless fishing nets, providing an additional incentive for the fishing industry to move to sustainable methods of disposal. In addition, if biodegradable nets are lost or discarded in the marine environment, they will degrade much faster than conventional nets, limiting their “ghost net” potential.

ISOTECH will work with Cypriot fishermen to test SEALIVE’s biodegradable fishing nets in real-life conditions for 12 months. The results from this pilot test will help to evaluate the effectiveness and

operability of the nets and contribute to the advancement of research and the development of more market competitive products.

Commenting on the event, Ms. Anna Tselepou, representing AKTI, said *“We are proud to work with our local and international partners to develop better, more sustainable ways of protecting our oceans. Fishing has always been important to Cyprus and we are working to enable and support our fishermen to move to more environmentally friendly practices that will protect our marine heritage for generations to come.”*

End of Press Release

About the SEALIVE Project

The **SEALIVE** project (Strategies of circular economy and advanced biobased solutions to keep our lands and seas alive from plastics contamination) is funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 funding programme and will run from 2019 – 2023. The project aims to reduce plastic waste and contamination in our environment by boosting the use of biomaterials and contributing to the circular economy with cohesive bio-plastic strategies.

sealive.eu | [@EU_SEALIVE](https://twitter.com/EU_SEALIVE)

For more information

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under grant agreement No 862910 (SEALIVE). This output reflects only the author's view and the European Union cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.