

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

**Deutsches Zentrum
für Luft- und Raumfahrt e. V.
Linder Höhe
51147 Köln
-DLR-**

and

**Organisation
Adress**

- each individually referred to as „Party“ or collectively referred to as „Parties“

Preamble

WHEREAS, the Parties are engaged in or are collaborating with the *“Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!”* citizen science initiative. Originally launched in 2016 in Germany under the name *“Plastic Pirates”* by the Kiel Science Factory with funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the initiative continued in 2018 and 2019 as part of the BMBF’s research focus *“Plastics in the Environment”*, in collaboration with the Ecologic Institute.

In 2020, during Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the campaign was expanded to include the trio presidency countries—Germany, Portugal, and Slovenia—and implemented as a joint action by their respective Ministries of Education, Science, and Research during the period 2020–2021.

Building on this momentum, the initiative was scaled up at the European level through the Horizon Europe project *PlasticPiratesEU*¹, which has taken place between June 2022 and May 2025. During this period, Belgium (Flanders), Greece, France, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia joined the initiative.

The *“Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!”* initiative contributes to several key European policy frameworks, including the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and the Water Framework Directive. It also supports the EU Mission *Restore Our Ocean and Waters* by generating valuable data on plastic pollution in freshwater and marine environments, fostering environmental awareness among young people, and promoting scientific literacy.

The Parties **acknowledge** the vital role of citizen science in tackling marine and riverine pollution – in particular plastic pollution – and in advancing policy objectives to tackle (plastic)

¹ Grant Agreement No: 101088822

pollution under the EU Mission *Restore Our Ocean and Waters*, the European Green Deal, Sustainable Development Goals the UN Ocean Decade, and the UNEA Resolution 5/14.

The Parties further express a **shared interest** in ensuring the continuity and long-term sustainability of their cooperation through the establishment of a dedicated network, independent of third-party funding.

As a foundation for further discussion and collaboration, the Parties hereby **agree to summarize the outcome of their exchanges to date in the following Memorandum of Understanding** (hereinafter referred to as the “MoU”).

This MoU is **non-binding** and **reflects the intentions** of the parties for further cooperation.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Parties agree as follows:

Article 1: Objectives and Scope

1.1 The Parties **acknowledge** the overarching objective of the 'Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!' initiative: to engage young citizens as citizen scientists in the systematic collection of data on (plastic) litter in European rivers and coastal environments, with the aim of improving data availability, supporting evidence-based policymaking, and raising awareness of environmental pollution in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner.

1.2 **Nothing** in this MoU shall be interpreted as establishing a joint venture, agency, partnership, consortium, or any other legal entity or business relationship between the Parties by virtue of signing this MoU.

1.3 The Parties have engaged in discussions regarding the potential formalization of their cooperation and network through a **future agreement** (hereinafter referred to as the “Contemplated Agreement”). Based on their exchanges to date, the Parties understand that the Contemplated Agreement is **intended** to include, inter alia, the following provisions:

- Establish a binding agreement to found an association with its own legal personality and an adapted name for the initiative that does not limit its geographical scope.
- Set out a governance structure.
- Define categories of membership.
- Outline the roles and contributions of members, including but not limited to:
 - Organizing samplings and ensuring data verification,
 - Participating in annual General Assembly and working group meetings,
 - Conducting communication, outreach, and social media activities,
 - Submitting verified data and annual reports.
- Establish binding rules for data sharing and intellectual property, specifically regarding the use and publication of data collected under the “Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!” initiative². Data will be made available in alignment with the Open Science practices and the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).
- Ensure that participating organizations retain rights to their original contributions, while granting the initiative a non-exclusive, royalty-free license to use and distribute data for scientific and educational purposes.
- Define clear procedures for scientific validation and harmonization of methodologies across participating countries.
- Require that all publications based on the initiative’s data duly acknowledge the contributing institutions and the broader Plastic Pirates network.
- Enable collaboration in advocacy, funding applications, training workshops, and policy engagement to support the long-term sustainability of the network.
- Include mechanisms for periodic review, membership changes, expansion, and voluntary withdrawal, with appropriate notice and transition measures.

² Or any other name the Parties choose.

Article 2: Next Steps

The Parties **intend** to continue their collaboration prior to the conclusion of the Contemplated Agreement. Accordingly, under the framework of this MoU, this may include:

- Maintain active communication and collaboration through regular updates, meetings, knowledge exchange, and by providing relevant information on the designated SharePoint platform;
- Contribute in-kind support, such as personnel time, expertise, and dissemination efforts, without any obligation of financial commitment;
- Collaborate on joint funding proposals and advocacy activities to support the continuity and growth of the initiative;
- Share data collected under the “*Plastic Pirates – Go Europe!*”³ initiative in accordance with Open Science practices and the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

Article 3: Notices

Any notices under this MoU shall be communicated in writing and addressed to all Parties simultaneously, using the contact details provided at the beginning of this MoU or any subsequently updated contact information. Each Party shall ensure that its contact details are kept current and shall promptly inform all other Parties in writing of any changes.

Article 4: Other Provisions

5.1 No oral agreements have been made. Any amendments or additions to this MoU must be made in writing. This requirement for written form also applies to any waiver of the written form requirement itself. Amendments will be added only by the approval of all Parties.

5.2 Should any provision of this MoU be or become invalid, this shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions. In such a case, the Parties shall replace the invalid provision with one that best reflects the original intention and purpose. The same shall apply in the event of omissions of legally required provisions.

5.3 This MoU shall enter into effect on the date of the last signature and shall remain in force until the conclusion of the Contemplated Agreement. In case no Agreement is made until 31. May 2027, the MoU shall be cancelled.

5.4 Nothing in this MoU shall create an obligation for any Party to enter into the Contemplated Agreement. Each Party reserves the right to withdraw from these negotiations and, by extension, from this MoU at any time. Such withdrawal must be communicated in writing to all Parties. The withdrawing Party agrees to support an orderly transition of its contributions to ensure minimal disruption to the ongoing cooperation.

5.6 Any disputes arising from this MoU shall be resolved amicably through informal dialogue among the Parties involved.

³ Or any other name the Parties choose.

This document is executed in counterparts. The compilation of signed pages constitutes the full agreement.

[Name of the Party]

Date: XX.XX.2025

Place: [City], [Country]

Signature: _____

Full Name: [First Name], [Last Name]
Title: [Work Title]