

Goal number 14: Life below water

What is it?

Healthy oceans and seas are important to our existence. They cover 70 percent of our planet and we rely on them for food, energy and water. Yet, we have managed to do huge damage to these precious resources. We have to protect them by eliminating pollution and overfishing and immediately start to responsibly manage and protect all marine life around the world. People all over the world, including Iceland and Denmark, are buying plastic every single day. A lot of the trash, will end up in the oceans, because it won't be reused.

Plastic in Denmark

Over the past years, plastic has been a very discussed subject in the society, between the politicians and in media's. In Denmark, it has become very popular to classify your trash in different trash cans. Like glass, general waste, bio waste and of course plastic. This will definitely help to reduce the trash and especially plastic, to get into the oceans. Because, when trash is classified, it is easier to reuse.

Recycling

There are recycling bins for everything. Glass wine and juice bottles are recycled in big recycling dumpsters located on just about every city block.

Plastic bottles and recyclable cans can be returned to automated receptacles at most grocery stores. The machines will accept all your bottles, calculate the return, and print out a receipt that any of the store's cashiers can convert into cash for you: refillable glass bottles up to and including 0.5 litre - 1.00 kroner; refillable glass bottles over 0.5 litre - 3 kroner; cans, glass and plastic bottles under 1 litre - 1.00 kroner.

More and more stores in Denmark, is beginning to take money for plastic bags, when people shop in their stores. Matas was the first store in 2009, that started taking money for the small bags, that people normally would get for free, when they had to buy products, in the very popular store in Denmark. First, people got mad because they now had to pay 1 or 2 kr, for a little indifferent plastic bag. But now, 10 years later, studies show, that now where a lot of

stores takes money for plastic bags, the consumption of plastic bags from stores, has been halved.

And now, stores like h&m also takes money for plastic bags. When stores takes money for the bags, less people wants to buy them, because they cost money.

The overall goal, with the danish plastic bag system, is that we only use plastic when it is really necessary and stop using it when it is not. And it is unnecessary to bring home 17 plastic bags, every time you go shopping, when you can just bring a reusable bag out of another material, like fabric or leather.

Denmark is worst country in EU to recycle plastic, because in Denmark all of the trash gets used again. Either it will be reused in different ways, or it will be burned in a incineration plant. But Denmark do not recycled a lot of there plastic. They only recycled 10,5% of the plastic that's used. In fact Denmark has produced 8.3 billion ton plastic in the past 65 years, and that's is a really high number for a little country.



Plastic in Iceland?

Plastic is a big problem in the world and it is difficult to get rid of it. Nowadays, most homes have adapted recycling. In them, you can put all kinds of recyclable products such as metal, cardboard and plastic, Plastic that is recycled is compressed in the SORPU bs. in Gufunes. From there it is sent to Sweden where it is either recycled or burned for energy production. But some plastics are, of course, buried and not used for energy efficiency and it is something that needs to be fixed.

One of the biggest problems of plastic that is thrown into the ocean is microplastic.

Microplastic is a tiny pieces of broken down plastic that is so small that sometimes you can barely see it.

Plastic that ends up in the sea travels with the ocean current until it arrives at a reaction surface where ocean currents meet and collect the plastic. It is known about five islands in the world's oceans, but these islands are considered to be many times larger than Iceland.

Plastic can also end up in the food chain when fish, such as cod, eat plastic and then we and sharks or seabirds eats the cod and then the plastic is stuck in our bodies.. It is likely that toxins that cling to plastic can get higher and higher up the food chain and eventually to our human population.



Microplastic is also being transmitted into drinking water. Many samples have been made on the water to check the amount of plastic. In water samples taken from a water supply in Reykjavik, it was found that 0.2 to 0.4 plastic particles were found in each liter of water. These are far better results than came to light abroad, but despite this, these are not good results and need to be addressed.

It takes about 500 years to dissolve the plastic and even after that it is still in the wild. Plastic is colorful and therefore animals can easily be confused with plastic and any food, but the plastic does not dissolve in the digestive system and consequently becomes trapped in the stomach of the animals and causes digestive disorders that later can lead to death. Animals do not just eat the plastic, but they also stick to it, for example, they can be fitted with plastic

bites or old fish. If this happens, the animals are at risk of suffocation or an ugly lesion that later becomes infected. About one million marine birds and one hundred thousand marine animals die each year due to plastic pollution in the sea.



What can you do to reduce plastic in the oceans.

Well first of all you can stop buying plastic bags and just all sort of unnecessary plastic actually, instead of buying plastic again and again you can reuse what you already bought. Some people think that when they buy something with cardboard they do something help the environment because they buy their stuff in another material than plastic. But there is also plastic in allot of the products which looks like cardboard. Plastic is a great way to hold food and liquids inside and it is a cheap and useful material, that a lot of people are using in their everyday life. But it is slowly destroying our planet.

Taken from: <https://www.globalgoals.org/14-life-below-water>

Welcome to the United Nations. (e.d.). *World oceans day 8 june*. Taken from: <http://www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/>

Plastiðjan. (e.d.) *Plast og umhverfið*. Taken from: <https://www.plastidjan.is/um-okkur/plast-og-umhverfid/>