



Aboard *Mediterranea*  
May 20th 2014

**Press release no.6**

**Progetto Mediterraneo: the expedition sets course to Tremiti islands. In a couple of days it will head southward to Apulia. Onboard researchers from the University of Siena will be carrying out the “Plastic Busters” project to save the Mediterranean**

The cultural and scientific expedition, that over the next 5 years is sailing throughout the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the Northern Red Sea, slipped the moorings of San Benedetto del Tronto and sets course to **Tremiti islands**, where it is due to arrive tonight, after stopping in Pescara and Termoli. From the tiny wild archipelago it heads southward to Apulia. In **Bari**, in a few days, researchers from the **University of Siena** are boarding in the framework of the “**Plastic Busters**” project, in order to carry out a scientific research on plastic waste dumped into the sea.

Plastic waste is a serious environmental concern for all the world to see but unknown as regards its effects on living organisms. *Plastic Busters* is part of an initiative to support sustainability launched through **Med Solutions**, a section of the **UN SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network)**; it is going to collect data on **dissemination, quantities and types of polluting plastic waste** along the Apulian shore stretching from Bari to Otranto, in order to study the **effects on marine organisms and human health**. An example of the situation in the Mediterranean: the researchers of the University of Siena detected up to 143 plastic fragments of different types in the stomach of sea turtles. That is no accident. **70-80% of the 3 billion waste dumped into the Mediterranean Sea is made of plastic** that contaminates animals and, thus, the food chain up to the fish served at your table.

“**Progetto Mediterraneo**” works in cooperation with the researchers of the *Plastic Busters* project who will photograph the status of **macro- and microplastic debris**, analysing their origin and nature. Through biopsy techniques, which are harmless for animals, and sophisticated eco-toxicological analyses, the researchers from Siena will study the **health status of different sample organisms**, marine invertebrates, fish, whales, sharks, and turtles, the animals that are most affected by plastic pollution.

The project will enable the **mapping of marine litter and its biological effects**, to detect and determine the areas to be safeguarded and, hence, **sustainable mitigation actions** to be taken.

The three-year project is raising funds and will cover the **hot spots and the ports of the Mediterranean countries**, with the cooperation of experts belonging to different research institutions and the main stakeholders of the Mediterranean ports.

The boat “**Mediterranea**” is at disposal of the *Plastic Busters* researchers for **sampling** in hot spots detected along the course of Progetto Mediterraneo, as well as for **dissemination and awareness campaigns** on the topic.

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