



MAELSTROM

Smart technology for MARinE Litter SusTainable  
RemOval and Management

## Press Release

# MAELSTROM Sunset Beach Cleanup @ Vila do Conde

21/09/2024

Vila do Conde, Portugal



## Vila do Conde hosts the second edition of the MAELSTROM Sunset Beach Cleanup

On the upcoming 21st of September, Vila do Conde will be the stage for the second edition of the MAELSTROM Sunset Beach Cleanup, an initiative that aims to combine environmental preservation with the contemplation of the night sky.

The event, which celebrates World Cleanup Day and is part of the European Climate Pact and EU Beach Cleanup initiatives, begins at 4 p.m. and invites the public to join in a beach cleanup action and multidisciplinary activities focused on environmental awareness. This initiative is part of the European H2020 MAELSTROM project, which

develops innovative technologies for the removal of marine litter, already implemented in Portugal and Italy. **The meeting point will be in front of the Environmental Monitoring and Interpretation Centre (CMIA) of Vila do Conde, on Avenida Marquês Sá da Bandeira.**

After the cleanup, which will last until late afternoon, participants will be welcomed with a snack at 7 p.m., followed by an entertaining programme dedicated to marine litter and microplastics. The evening will conclude with a cosmic walk led by the Counting Stars team, a group of astronomers and astrophotographers who will provide a stargazing session, inviting attendees to rediscover the wonders of the cosmos.

The MAELSTROM Sunset Beach Cleanup is part of the World Cleanup Day celebrations, a global action that mobilises over 190 countries to emphasise the urgent need to rethink our environmental impact and the necessity of protecting the oceans for future generations. The initiative is organised by the Interdisciplinary Centre of Marine and Environmental Research (CIIMAR), Vila do Conde City Council, CMIA, Counting Stars, and the CIMA Research Foundation. It counts also with the support of a wide network of institutional partners, including the Portuguese Plastics Pact, the Portuguese Marine Litter Association, the University of Malta, the Mar de Experiências project, Águas do Norte, UNIFARDAS, Focus On Critical Action (FOCA), and DOCAPESCA.

## **BUT WHAT'S THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MICROPLASTICS AND THE STARS?**

We believe that it's essential to fully understand our Planet, observing what happens both above and under us so that we can truly love it, care for it and protect it. A recent report by the European Research Executive Agency (REA) estimates that there are five hundred times more microplastics on Earth than there are stars in the Milky Way!<sup>1</sup>

The numbers indeed impressive: every year, more than 11 million tons of garbage end up in our oceans and of these, around 80% are plastics which are impacting

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<sup>1</sup> [https://rea.ec.europa.eu/news/innovative-eu-research-projects-fighting-plastic-pollution-2023-06-02\\_en](https://rea.ec.europa.eu/news/innovative-eu-research-projects-fighting-plastic-pollution-2023-06-02_en)

ecosystems, marine life and people's health by entering the food chain. It is therefore extremely important to promote awareness, the adoption of policies, good practices and behaviors that can reverse the current situation. During the UN Oceans Conference (UNOC), held this year in Portugal, the Secretary General of the United Nations António Guterres declared that “*we are responsible for the problems in the Oceans, and we need to provide solutions*”; it is precisely with this motivation that the MAELSTROM project, CIIMAR, the Vila do Conde City Council, Counting Stars, CMIA and CIMA Research Foundation came together to organize an event that will not bring solutions but will certainly invite people of all ages to reflect deeply on the subject.

**In order to guarantee everyone, the best possible experience, participation in the event is subject to prior registration until September 19th through the link: <https://forms.gle/X7XZu7nyaPcxubtd6>**

## **THE EUROPEAN PROJECT MAELSTROM**

Funded by the European Commission under the H2020 Programme, MAELSTROM (Smart technology for MArinE Litter SusTainable RemOval and Management) brings together a consortium of 14 international partners with the mission to research and implement innovative technologies for the identification, collection, recycling, and recovery of marine litter. Over the past four years, the project has developed and installed a robotic platform in Venice and a Bubble Barrier in the Ave River estuary, in Vila do Conde. Both technologies are designed to remove marine litter with the least possible environmental impact. At the same time, the project promotes various awareness-raising activities on this topic, with the direct involvement of citizens.

Website: <https://www.maelstrom-h2020.eu> | E-mail: [info@maelstrom-h2020.eu](mailto:info@maelstrom-h2020.eu)

## **WHAT TO BRING FOR THE BEACH CLEANUP**

- Comfortable clothing and footwear
- Reusable water bottle
- A big smile and lots of energy to clean the beach!

**For info on MAELSTROM Sunset Beach Cleanup, please contact:**

Email: [sunset.beach.cleanup.2024@gmail.com](mailto:sunset.beach.cleanup.2024@gmail.com)

Mobile: +351 965618400



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ORGANIZING PARTNERS



**CIIMAR** is one of the leading research and advanced training institutions in Portugal and at international level, working on the frontier of Ocean Knowledge and Innovation. Over the last 20 years, CIIMAR has focus on promoting awareness, adoption of practices, behaviors and responsible choices, involving various sectors of society, through multiple projects and actions crossing Science and Society. In the MAELSTROM project, CIIMAR leads the networking activities between existing European blue technologies and marine litter stakeholders; it will also ensure the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of an innovative technology for the removal of marine litter (a Bubble Barrier) in the Ave River, in Vila do Conde.

Website: <http://www2.ciimar.up.pt>

Contacts: [bioluis@ciimar.up.pt](mailto:bioluis@ciimar.up.pt); [ispinto@ciimar.up.pt](mailto:ispinto@ciimar.up.pt); [gkett@ciimar.up.pt](mailto:gkett@ciimar.up.pt)



The **Vila do Conde City Council**, within the scope of the Environment and Sustainability Intervention Areas, is committed to improving the local environment, including urban planning, heritage preservation and waste management services, recognizing the global environmental challenges and the importance of each one of us contributing to a healthier environment. In this sense, it supports and encourages initiatives in Education, Training and Environmental Awareness.

Website: <https://www.cm-viladoconde.pt>

Contact (Communication Office): joana.seixas@cm-viladoconde.pt | +351 252 248 400



**Counting Stars** is an astrotourism company formed by a team of Astronomers and Astrophotographers who are passionate and specialized in the mysteries of the night sky, on a mission to reconnect people with the wonders of the universe by providing unforgettable and immersive experiences. The observation of starlight has always been an inspiration for mankind, having played a fundamental role in cultural, scientific and civilizational development. In this context, Counting Stars supports events that unite the contemplation of the stars, science and environmental preservation, in the mission of a more sustainable future.

Website: <https://www.countingstars.org>

Contact: hello@countingstars.pt



The **Centre for Environmental Monitoring and Interpretation Center of Vila do Conde** (CMIA) is a municipal facility coordinated, at a technical-scientific level, by the Interdisciplinary Center for Marine and Environmental Research (CIIMAR) of the

University of Porto. Its main objectives are to contribute to increasing public knowledge and awareness in the various fields of the environment. To this end, it promotes and develops information, training, research, monitoring, awareness and education initiatives, as well as scientific, technical and didactic material. It is thus constituted as a platform of excellence and is a reference in the area of environmental literacy and in the pursuit of sustainable development through education.

Website: <https://www.cmia-viladoconde.net>

Contact : [cmia@cm-viladoconde.pt](mailto:cmia@cm-viladoconde.pt)



**CIMA Research Foundation** is a research center based in Italy specialized in the study of disaster risk reduction and conservation of marine biodiversity. Within the MAELSTROM project, CIMA coordinates the communication and dissemination activities, raising awareness on the impacts of marine litter, promoting behavior change regarding plastic consumption and facilitating the involvement of all those interested in the project's activities and results.

Website: <https://www.cimafoundation.org>

Contact: [isabel.gomes@cimafoundation.org](mailto:isabel.gomes@cimafoundation.org)

#### **Useful Links:**

<https://www.maelstrom-h2020.eu/>

<https://www.cm-viladoconde.pt/>

<https://www2.ciimar.up.pt/projects.php?id=163>

<https://www2.ciimar.up.pt/>

<https://www.cmia-viladoconde.net/>

<https://www.countingstars.org/>

<https://www.worldcleanupday.org>

[https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/eu-beach-cleanup\\_en](https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/eu-beach-cleanup_en)