

Use Case Scenario for Transition Agendas

LIVING LAB – UTRECHT – PFAS IN THE NORTHEAST ATLANTIC SEA REGION

**EMPOWERING COMMUNITY- LED
ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC**



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Use case Overview

Use case title

Living Lab Utrecht – PFAS in the Northeast Atlantic Sea Region

Short Description

Three Living Labs were organized as part of the EU-funded Source to Sea: Zero Pollution 2030 (SOS-ZEROPOL2030) project, which aims to deliver a stakeholder-led zero-pollution framework for achieving the European Union's long-term ambition of 'Zero Pollution' in European seas. On April 23rd-24th 2024, a Living Lab was organized in Utrecht by Wageningen University & Research, in collaboration with the partners of the Source to Seas- Zero Pollution 2030 project. The objective was to identify governance gaps and challenges to eliminate or reduce the usage and emissions of PFAS, which are chemicals known for their resistance to environmental degradation and potential harm to humans. The final group of participants comprised of 15 external participants and 8 project team members. The external participants included Dutch, Belgian and Swedish representatives of manufacturers, hospitals, research institutes, water authorities, government bodies and NGOs. The program of the Living Lab sessions enabled the creation of new substantive knowledge around the complexity of addressing marine pollution and exploring governance gaps and challenges and best practices and future opportunities.

Country and Region

Netherlands (Utrecht)/ North-East Atlantic

Type of transition agenda

Strategic roadmap

Domain/Sector

Marine Science; Environmental Protection; Coastal Management

Current status

Pilot

Geographical scope

Regional Sea (specify): North-East Atlantic

Organization's categorization

Regional or local (public) authority; NGOs, foundations, community-based organizations; SMEs and Large Entreprises; Research organizations and academia.

Promoter's information

- Organisation's name: GRID Arendal
- Place: NORWAY
- EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Seas related project: SOS-ZEROPOL2030

Use case duration

- From Year 2024 to Year 2024
- Number of Months: 1

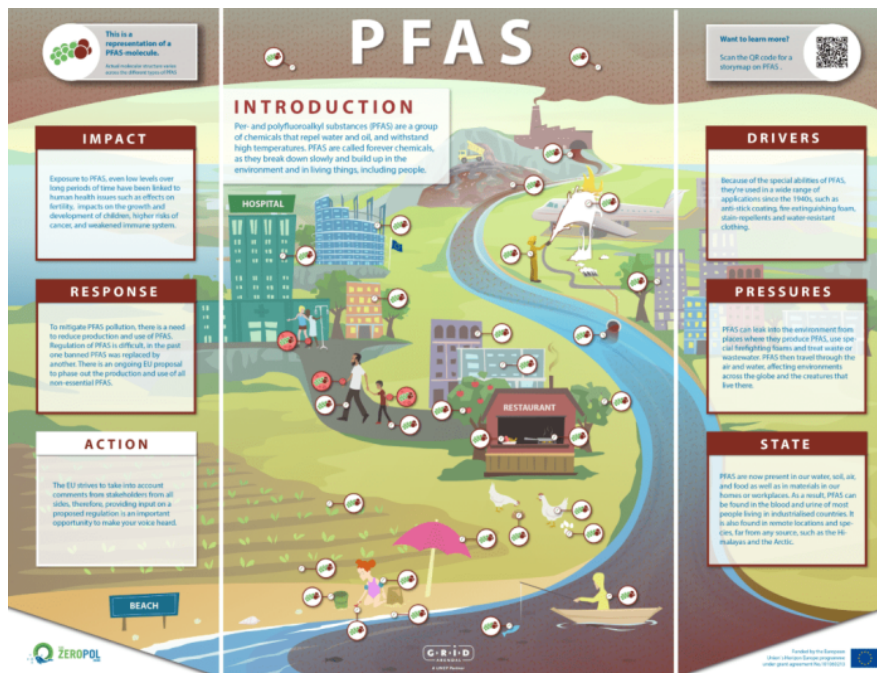
Keywords

PFAS/Medical sector/Zero marine pollution

Website link

<https://soszeropol2030.eu/>

Use case picture



Design

Alignment and contribution to the objectives of the EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Waters 2030.

The pilot of this living lab contributes an essential step in the iterative process towards the goal of co-producing a holistic framework towards zero marine pollution by 2030.

Challenge's definition and Primary Objective

Marine contamination and pollution occur as a direct result of human activities taking place on land, and PFAS from the medical sector emerging a big concern in the North-East Atlantic. The objective was to identify governance gaps and challenges to eliminate or reduce the usage and emissions of PFAS, which are chemicals known for their resistance to environmental degradation and potential harm to humans.

End users

Medical sector

Gender equality and diversity

To ensure that the Living Lab participants represented a diverse and representative group, a list was compiled with people to invite, based on their expertise, interests, role, responsibility, professional affiliation and position in the product chain, connections and ties to strategic policy and decision-making groups, country of origin, and gender. In terms of gender balance, 70% of the external participants were female, while 30% were male. According to the geographical distribution, 80% of the external partners came from the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden

Implementation

Implementers

Regional or local (public) authority; NGOs, foundations (public and private), professional association, community-based organizations; SMEs and Large Enterprises; Research organizations and academia;

Concrete Solutions and Actions taken

The Living Lab took place over two days. On the first day, the focus was on the current situation in terms of challenges and governance gaps throughout the product lifecycle (production of the raw material, manufacturing

(process) of the final product, usage, and end-of-life). The second day focused on the steps to be taken to reduce or eliminate PFAS throughout the product lifecycle, the needs and preconditions and prioritization criteria. Part of this exercise was to define best practices and opportunities. Since PFAS emissions can occur in different stages of the product lifecycle, from production to end-of-life, all stages, their respective stakeholder groups and the choices that can be made at each stage were examined in more detail. For this purpose, a diverse group of international experts and stakeholders involved in various capacities across different stages of the product lifecycle were contacted and invited. In total, 49 people were contacted.

Community Engagement Needs

There is lack of awareness about the different types of PFAS, exposure to PFAS and the topic in general. Community engagement is important for awareness raising, capacity building and changes in everyday life and use of products, transparency and advocacy on PFAS prevention and reduction below safe limits with politicians and regional institutions.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Technical Risks

Identified challenges included the potential for reduced availability of medical products and the associated quality of care, the risk of regrettable substitutions, but also human health- and environmental risks associated with not acting.

Operational constraints

NA

Legal/Regulatory Constraints

Concerns were raised regarding the potential implications of restrictions on PFAS, particularly within the healthcare sector. Specifically, the (non) essentiality of PFAS in various applications was discussed, questioning what truly constitutes essential use and highlighting the need for clearer definitions. Can the usage be reduced, eliminated or replaced by alternatives and if so, when? Change is needed, but who of the actors decides? (patient-hospital-manufacturer national government-EU government)?

Ethical and Social Considerations

The Living Lab had to align with all participants' agendas, lowering the risk for participants of being undervalued, since formal & integrated participation was a core principle of the approach.

Results & Impacts

Outputs

Regulatory development, stakeholder involvement, transition strategy away from PFAS (cost analysis and PFAS alternatives).

Outcomes

- Environmental impacts: Knowledge about the use and emissions of PFAS in the medical sector and mitigation strategies, accounting for environmental impact
- Economic impacts: PFAS strategies including economic viability.
- Social impacts: The findings show the success of the Living Labs methodology in creating novel stakeholder coalitions for co-creation.

Operational benefits

NA

Lessons learned and take aways for the future

The results and insights coming out of the Living Lab provide essential input to the development of scenarios focused on PFAS reduction, which will be deliberated upon in a subsequent Living Lab session. These insights encompass lessons specifically related to the medical sector, as well as broader lessons related to applications of PFAS in other sectors, where similar challenges occur throughout the product chain.

Scalability

Regional -> Global

Replicability

The Living Labs were held in three EU regional sea areas to align with and support the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) regional approach to the management of European seas and to be able to address specific regional challenges.

PFAS is a global issue, not just limited to the EU, requiring international cooperation to reduce or eliminate its use effectively. A worldwide approach is essential to make meaningful progress in addressing this challenge.

Transferability

These insights encompass lessons specifically related to the medical sector, as well as broader lessons related to applications of PFAS in other sectors, where similar challenges occur throughout the product chain.

Post project sustainability

The results and insights coming out of the Living Lab provide essential input to the development of scenarios focused on PFAS reduction, which will be deliberated upon in a subsequent Living Lab session.



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