

WHAT IS MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION AND HOW TO REDUCE IT?

Microplastics are small pieces of plastic materials (less than **5 mm** in size). They are in different shapes, colors and polymer composition. As plastic materials are durable and do not biodegrade, plastics stay in the environment for a long time turning into smaller and smaller particles we know as microplastics.

Scientists have found microplastics in every environment and medium, however the concentrations tend to be higher in aquatic ecosystems, such as seas, rivers and lakes.

Some of the **sources** of microplastic pollution in lakes can be improper waste management, untreated sewage discharge, agricultural run-off, nearby roads, run-off after rainfalls and transport via air.

Primary microplastics

designed to be small



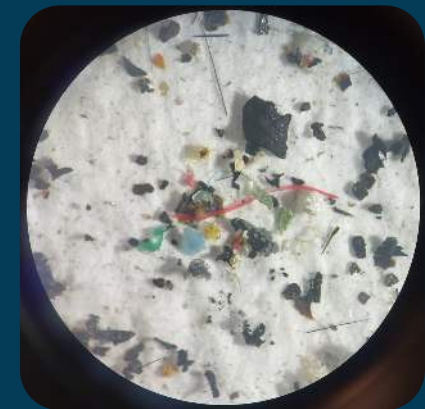
Secondary microplastics

breakdown of larger plastic items



HOW POLLUTED ARE OUR LAKES?

Little is known about microplastic pollution in lakes in **Poland**, **Lithuania** and **Latvia**. In the framework of **Lakes connect** project several lakes were chosen and visited 3 times - before, during and after the active **tourism season**.



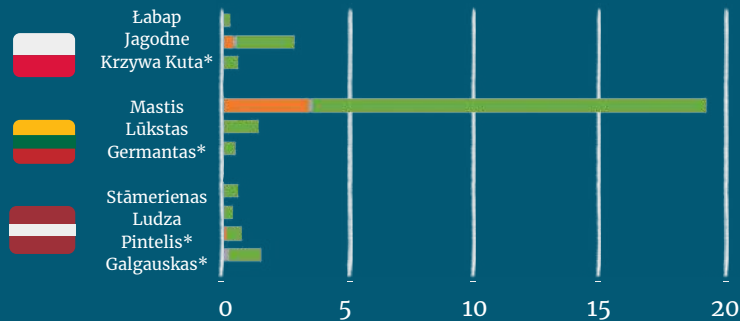
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MICROPLASTICS IN LAKES

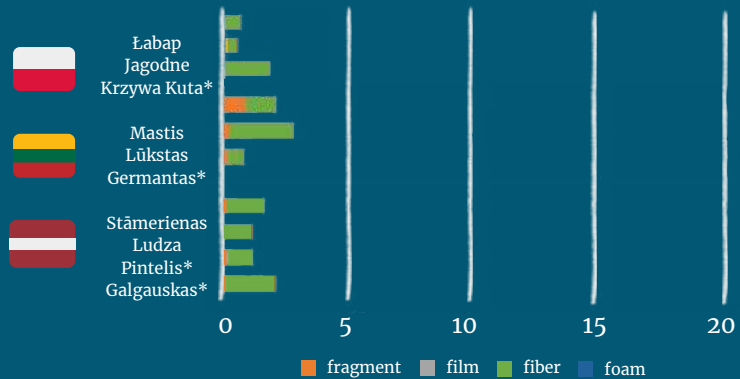
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fragment film fiber foam

The graph shows the amount of **microplastics** in the **surface water** of lakes studied throughout the project. Lakes marked by an asterisk (*) represent lakes that are more remote whereas the other lakes are in urban areas and/or face higher anthropogenic pressure. Important note - **not all microplastics in the lake are due to tourism alone.**

The numbers represent plastic particles per **1 m³** of water. It is evident that microplastics are found in every lake and there is some seasonal variation.

The largest proportion of microplastics found were **fibers**, followed by fragments, films and finally foams.

The full report on our findings and possible sources can be accessed through our project webpage: interreg-baltic.eu/project/lakes-connect/



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HOW TO REDUCE MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION?

- choose zero waste products
- avoid single-use plastic items
- recycle or properly dispose of waste
- avoid synthetic garments when possible
- choose eco-friendly products, e.g. for boat paints
- treat sewage discharge

