

Proposal Report for Sustainable Engagement and Long-term Mobilisation of MerTerre

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Introduction

The MerTerre association is a non-profit organisation established in 2000 with a mission of reducing marine pollution. The association focuses on four main tasks: creating tools to document waste pollution data around France, coordinating actors of zero marine pollution and strengthening their capacity, raising public awareness and supporting the implementation of public policies. With the association's values of passion, kindness, perseverance and collaborative spirit, the association aims to bring systematic change to marine pollution through data-driven and citizen science methods. The association has three ongoing projects: Zero-Deschet-Sauvage France nationwide pollution data platform, Adopt'1 Spot, a collaborative science program, and Calanque Propres, a major citizen clean-up of the Calanques National Park.

The association is currently facing challenges in achieving long-term engagement and involvement of its members in its programmes due to a low threshold of active members and a high turnover rate in partners. For instance, its Zero-Deschet-Sauvage has 700 members, but only about 350 members are actively contributing data each month (~50% active rate). In addition, MerTerre's clean-up protocol consists of four levels of waste characterisation, with level four being the most specific, with over 250 categories of waste. Most members who are contributing data on ZDS are only doing waste clean-ups at level two.

This report aims to propose tailored strategies to MerTerre for sustainable engagement and long-term mobilisation of MerTerre's initiatives through three main strategies: expanding partnerships, community building and enhancing social media presence. Field survey methods such as interviews, case studies and questionnaires were used to analyse MerTerre's situation and to understand key stakeholders' needs.

1. Potential Partnership Ideas

1.1. Who to Contact

French Universities

Universities offer a high-impact route to expand the Zéro Déchet Sauvage (ZDS) and Adopt'1 Spot programmes nationally. By targeting environmental, marine science, sustainability, and biodiversity associations, MerTerre can integrate citizen science into academic and extracurricular life. We understand that MerTerre currently has a university network but we wanted to provide further examples of student organisations to reach out to across French regions. The following institutions and associations present strong potential:

- **Aix-Marseille University (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)** – Extend or evolve the BIODIV'AMU programme. Engage Pascal Carlier (Faculty of Sports Sciences, specialist in ethology) to integrate ZDS methodology.
- **University of Bordeaux (Nouvelle-Aquitaine)** – Collaborate with *Student Action for the Defence of the Planet (AEDP)* to run Adopt'1 Spot campaigns in coastal and river environments.
- **Nantes University (Pays de la Loire)** – Partner with GREEN (Responsible Group for Ecology of Nantes Students), CNEN, Little Feet of Nantes and Prot.Act World to link clean-ups with biodiversity monitoring and local waste prevention plans.
- **University of Western Brittany** – Work with ABEB and *Broussailles* to expand ZDS data collection along Brittany's coastline.
- **University of Lille (Hauts-de-France)** – Coordinate with Le Merle.

See table below for contacts.

Providing these associations with MerTerre's educational toolkit will ensure they can deliver long-term, high-quality data while raising awareness among diverse student communities.

Marseille-Based Initiatives

Marseille has an active network of environmental organisations whose goals overlap with MerTerre's. Focusing on your pre-selected favourites, collaboration could include shared clean-ups, data integration into ZDS, and joint awareness campaigns:

Clean My Calanques – Popular local NGO leading large, community-driven coastal clean-ups; ideal for embedding ZDS characterisation into their established events. We know that the challenge with this collaboration has been hitched on the categorisation element of the MerTerre data collection process. We hope that the future potential integration of AI could work as a tool to overcome this problem.

1. Marseille Solutions

Founded in 2014, Marseille Solutions imagines, builds, and scales innovative social and environmental solutions in Marseille and its métropole. They guide projects from idea to launch through co-construction, collective impact, and strong territorial anchoring.

MerTerre could benefit from their collaborative approach and clear strategic vision, making them a strong partner for scaling impactful local projects.

2. 7e Continent

Expédition 7e Continent is a non-profit dedicated to understanding, explaining, and reducing plastic pollution in the oceans through scientific expeditions, educational outreach, and media storytelling.

MerTerre could join their educational tours run with CITEO (already a MerTerre partner), leveraging an existing connection. Their extensive partner network also

offers valuable opportunities for MerTerre to forge new collaborations and increase visibility.

1.2. Managing Student, Teacher, and Leader Turnover

Turnover among student leaders, teachers, or association heads can disrupt ongoing participation. To ensure continuity:

1. **Institutional Agreements** – Anchor partnerships at the faculty or departmental level, ensuring programme commitments survive personnel changes.
2. **Onboarding Packages** – Provide an easy “handover kit” with Adopt’1 Spot/ZDS instructions, event planning checklists, and data entry guides for new leaders.
3. **Annual Induction Webinars** – Host a national or regional start-of-year session to onboard all new partner representatives, refresh returning ones, and align goals.

1.3. Implementation Plan

Phase 1: Outreach & Recruitment (Months 1–3)

- Map and prioritise target universities and Marseille initiatives based on geographic coverage and thematic relevance.
- Send bilingual (FR/EN) partnership proposals with a preview of MerTerre’s educational toolkit.
- Attend university “associative fairs” and local environmental events to secure buy-in.

Phase 2: Activation & Training (Months 4–6)

- Supply partners with starter kits (collection protocols, data entry tutorials, comms templates).
- Organise a Marseille-based “Launch Event” featuring multiple local partners for visibility and media coverage.

Phase 3: Integration & Data Flow (Months 7–12)

- Monitor participation rates, data quality, and collection frequency.
- Use ZDS dashboards to generate and share regional impact reports with partners.

Phase 4: Review & Sustain (Annual)

- Conduct partner surveys to evaluate outcomes and capture lessons learned.
- Publicly recognise high-performing partners via social media and ZDS’s platform map.
- Renew agreements and recruit replacements for any lapsing partnerships.

<u>Region</u>	<u>University</u>	<u>Association / Programme</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Provence-Alpes-Cote d’azur	amU Aix Marseille University	<u>BIODIV'AMU</u> Propose an extension/evolution of this programme	Pascal Carlier, Lecturer at the Faculty of Sports Sciences of AMU, Doctor in ethology from the Paul Sabatier University of Toulouse
Occitanie	University of Motpellier	<u>The association:</u> <u>Brin de forêt</u> - not sure if active since 2021	

		<p><u>UMR Marbec</u></p> <p>(Supervised by the university - could be the link to this university)</p>	
Nouvelle Aquitaine	University of Bordeaux	Student Action for the Defense of the Planet - <u>AEDP</u>	<p>aedp.environnement@gmail.com</p>
Pays de la Loire	Nantes University	<p><u>GREEN Responsible Group for Ecology of Nantes Students</u></p> <p><u>CNEN - naturalist students</u></p> <p><u>Little Feet of Nantes</u></p> <p><u>Prot.Act World</u></p>	<p><u>green.asso.contact@gmail.com</u></p> <p><u>cnen.asso@gmail.com</u></p> <p><u>Petits.pieds.nantais@gmail.com</u></p> <p><u>https://www.univ-nantes.fr/vie-de-campus/vie-associative-et-engagement/prot-act-world</u></p>

Brittany	University of Western Brittany	<u>Association Brestoise des Etudiant.e.s en Biologie Broussailles</u>	<u>bureau@abeb.fr</u> <u>broussailles.asso@g mail.com</u>
Normandy	University of Rouen University Caen Normandie	Student life office (They don't have a list of associations on their website) <u>TEDS</u> – Transition écologique pour un développement soutenable	<u>bve@univ-rouen.fr</u>
Hauts de France	University of Lille	<u>Le Merle</u>	<u>asso.merle@gmail.c om</u>
Grand Est (Land locked)	University of Lorraine	Idées de Développement Durable Gaïa	<u>associationi3d@gma il.com</u> <u>gaia.etude@gmail.c om</u>

		Find both of these descriptions here	
Bourgogne-Franche-Comté (Land locked)	University of Burgundy	Groupe Naturaliste Universitaire de Bourgogne	FB Page Website

2. Community Building

MerTerre's goal to achieve zero marine waste relies on strong partnerships with key stakeholders, including regional and local governments, co-pilot structures, NGOs, businesses and educational institutions. Unlike traditional volunteer-driven beach clean-up NGOs, MerTerre develops waste characterisation protocols, documents, and analyses marine pollution around France. The association believes in data-driven, systemic change, which requires a different approach to community building and engagement. This section proposes strategies to increase data contributions to its data platform, Zero Déchet Sauvage, from new and existing members, enhance collaborations among institutional partners and foster a long-term commitment by partners through value-driven engagement.

2.1. Fostering a Sense of Ownership & Partnership

Current efforts by MerTerre to re-engage with inactive members of the Zero Déchet Sauvage (ZDS) platform and invite new volunteer-focused NGOs to join rely on manual emailing, which is essential but could be labour-intensive. The objective of the first strategy is to **motivate current members' engagement**, making them active contributors to the ZDS platform, fostering a sense of community, and, in turn, influencing and attracting new volunteer-focused beach clean-up NGOs to join ZDS. MerTerre can achieve this through:

A. *Dashboard personalisation and improvement*

- Relative Performance Benchmarking. E.g. you are contributing x% more than other users on this platform!
- Direct Impact Attribution. E.g. your data helped to analyse the impact of pollution at x/contributed to x data analysis.

B. Personalised Recognition and Leadership Opportunities

According to our field survey, MerTerre has employed similar tactics in other initiatives, but discontinued them as the number of participants gradually decreased and became insufficient to sustain them. Since the ZDS platform has over 700 members, but only 50% of the members are actively contributing data to the database. To increase the threshold of actively participating members and foster a sense of belonging among the members to the zero marine waste community, we propose a few new ideas of ways that MerTerre can engage with members of ZDS:

- Top Contributor Spotlight:
 - Timely feature of top data contributors on ZDS dashboard, annual newsletter and MerTerre's Instagram page according to:
 - Highest frequency of data contribution and or provided the highest data quality.
 - Organisations that have done beach clean-up with the highest level of characterising protocol
- Delegate leadership roles:
 - Provide leadership opportunities for members of participating NGOs to host events with MerTerre, such as:
 - Professional sharing at knowledge-exchange webinars for new members on the ZDS platform
 - Skill-based volunteering from university students who can analyse data on the ZDS platform
 - Educational campaigns at schools
 - Beach clean-up with characterisation training (only applicable to NGO in Marseille)

Overall, these methods are targeted to increase the interaction between MerTerre and to provide timely, positive and direct feedback on members' impact. Ultimately, to motivate the members' engagement and hence increase the frequency of contributing data to ZDS,

2.2. Gamification: Incentivise Consistent Platform Engagement

Gamification, through introducing points accumulation, a leaderboard system and a loyalty programme, can help MerTerre incentivise members of the Zero Déchet Sauvage (ZDS) to participate and contribute data in a recurring manner. The objective is to increase the current 50% threshold of actively data-contributing members on the Zero Déchet Sauvage (ZDS) platform.

A. Points-Based System & Leaderboards

A points-based system and game-like leaderboard for members aims to turn the data contributing process to the ZDS platform into a game in order to incentivise the recurring participation of members. Coupled with other strategies in this section, we propose alternative incentives for NGOs, university societies or independent societies to carry out beach clean-up and record their data into the ZDS platform in exchange for social media features, visibility, physical merchandise, etc.

- For example, members can earn points based on:
 - Data entry. E.g. 1 point per entry
 - Level of characterisation. E.g. Bonus points for a higher level of characterisation and documentation of brand names
 - Engagement. E.g. Bonus points for being the top contributor of the month
- Public Leaderboard

Based on the current information about data entry from different locations, establish a public national, regional and local leaderboard of data contributors around France.

- Encourage competition between different locations.
- Ranking for each member. E.g. you rank #2 out of #total in France or x region
- Monthly or quarterly reset to encourage active encouragement

B. Challenges & Competitions

To increase the data integrity of ZDS, challenges can be introduced to NGO to increase the number of higher-level characterised waste collection and motivate members to record down brands making up the waste. For example:

- Monthly challenge. Categorise your waste according to the level 3 protocol (+10 points)
- Bonus challenge. Record down all the brands you found during your beach clean-up (+3 points)

C. Loyalty & Rewards

To create incentives for NGOs, societies and organisations to join and actively participate in the ZDS data network, MerTerre can offer non-monetary rewards or redeemable gifts and merchandise as a token of appreciation to top contributors or allow members to exchange using accumulated points. For example, members who participated actively throughout the year can be featured in MerTerre's annual report or data analysis reports to show MerTerre's appreciation and help smaller NGOs gain visibility. Other than that, MerTerre could also partner up with sustainable, local businesses that also work towards ecological transition to develop eco-friendly merchandise for MerTerre. One such example is a T-shirt or clothing with MerTerre's logo on it, which is also done by many other NGOs, e.g. Wings of the Ocean, to promote a common identity. By doing so, MerTerre is building a community

identity through common objects and providing a sense of belonging to the community members.

2.3. Online community forum: Creating Impact Through Peer Collaboration

To position MerTerre as a key influencer against abandoned waste and use MerTerre's mission and values to drive systematic and collaborative change to achieve zero marine waste while fostering peer learning. MerTerre can consider developing a new feature on the ZDS platform, an online community forum allowing members to create posts, comment and interact with each other. An online community forum can have the following functions:

- Different forums for different content, e.g. impact showcase, events promotion, policies & advocacy
- Allow mentorship and capacity building between large and smaller organisations or communities
- Allow debates on new policies and or current related issues
- Allow collaboration and partnership recruitment
- Auto-generated impact post after each data log

2.4. Implementation Plan

Phase	Objective	Key Actions
Development (0-3 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To acquire required resources and develop an improved dashboard, gamification system, forum and framework for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with developers to build new functions on ZDS. ● Establish protocol and methods to recognise top

	personalised recognition.	contributors.
Ideas Testing & Implementation (3-12 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the interaction with contributing members on ZDS and social media platforms. • Increased threshold of actively contributing members on ZDS. • Increase the number of level 3 and above characterised cleanups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test run and prototype new dashboard functions, gamification system and forum. • Design customised merchandise, redeemables or loyalty program framework.
Sustain (12-24 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and aim to increase engagement with the community • Attract new organisations to join ZDS. • Deepen partnerships with institutes to attract funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently engage with the community through the social media platform, dashboard features, and forum. • Utilise social media to interact with other NGOs to gain exposure. • Utilise impact and increased engagement to apply for state/national funding.
Scaling Up	Scale the ZDS platform for different uses. For example, partner with tech	

and Tech Upgrade (24 months and beyond)	companies to use the ZDS platform to assess the ESG impact of corporates. Introduce new features such as the use of large language models (LLM) to perform automated data summary and analysis, or machine learning incorporation to help members perform higher-level waste characterisation.
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3. Social Media Presence

3.1. Introduction

In the contemporary environmental advocacy landscape, social media serves as both a communications channel and a mobilization tool, allowing organizations to extend their reach beyond geographic and institutional boundaries. For NGOs such as MerTerre, whose mission centers on reducing and preventing diffuse abandoned waste across the Mediterranean, an effective social media strategy is not merely supplementary; it is integral to fostering public engagement, cultivating volunteer networks, and influencing environmental behavior at scale.

MerTerre currently maintains an active Instagram presence, showcasing clean-up activities, marine biodiversity awareness campaigns, and collaborative projects with partner organizations. MerTerre's Instagram handle is @asso.merterre, and they currently boast over 3,400 followers as well as 200+ posts¹! This visual storytelling approach aligns with the platform's strengths; however, a review of its digital footprint suggests untapped opportunities for expanding audience reach, deepening engagement, and enhancing content diversity. In particular, the emphasis on institutional actors and organizational achievements, while important for credibility, may inadvertently limit the resonance of MerTerre's messaging among grassroots audiences and younger demographics, who often respond more strongly to personal narratives and interactive content.

To identify potential improvements, this report analyzes two case studies: the Ocean Conservancy, a global leader in marine conservation with a robust and multi-platform digital presence, and Clean My Calanques, a Marseille-based grassroots organization known for its locally focused, community-driven social media campaigns. Both organizations demonstrate high-impact practices that could inform MerTerre's future strategy, particularly in terms of

¹ Ocean Conservancy. Instagram. Accessed August 10, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/asso.merterre/?hl=en>

consistent scheduling, volunteer-centered storytelling, and targeted youth engagement. By examining these examples and situating them within MerTerre's vision and operational context, this report provides actionable recommendations for strengthening the organization's social media role as a driver of environmental change.

3.2. Ocean Conservancy: A Case Study

Ocean Conservancy, founded in 1972 and based in Washington, D.C., is one of the world's most influential marine conservation organizations. Its Instagram account, @oceanconservancy, boasts approximately 465,000 followers and has shared over 2,269 posts, demonstrating a consistent and robust digital presence². For NGOs aiming to harness social media as a tool for environmental advocacy, this scale and steadiness of engagement indicate that Ocean Conservancy has successfully transformed its online platforms into strategic assets for awareness, mobilization, and policy influence.

The organization excels in curating content that combines emotional appeal with educational value. Its posts alternate between striking ocean imagery, infographics that distill complex environmental data into accessible summaries, and intimate volunteer spotlights that humanize conservation work. For example, its annual International Coastal Cleanup campaign is bolstered on Instagram through compelling visuals of volunteers in action, paired with updated statistics and calls-to-action that encourage participation and sharing. This user-generated content strategy, encouraging followers to submit cleanup photos or tag the organization, enhances authentic connection and amplifies MerTerre's reach by turning volunteers into brand advocates.

Ocean Conservancy also maintains an intentionally diversified social media presence beyond Instagram. On TikTok it circulates short, engaging videos featuring environment-themed facts or explanations of advocacy tools, often aligned with trending audio to broaden discovery. On LinkedIn, content shifts to policy briefings, research findings, and institutional partnerships, reinforcing credibility with professional and donor audiences. This multiplatform strategy

² Ocean Conservancy. Instagram. Accessed August 10, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/oceanconservancy/>.

ensures tailored messaging resonates with various stakeholders: public followers, youth audiences, and policy partners alike.

Central to their success is a thoughtful content rhythm. Posts are scheduled with both frequency and occasion in mind, ensuring sustained visibility. Campaigns are often anchored to global environmental observances such as World Oceans Day and Earth Day, timed to intersect with broader media momentum, yet supplemented by regular updates in between to maintain engagement. Ocean Conservancy's approach consistently reflects three thematic pillars: science communication, actionable advocacy, and recognition of individual contributions. These pillars inform content that informs the public, invites participation, and celebrates community, creating a feedback loop that reinforces both mission and community.

For MerTerre, the Ocean Conservancy model suggests several transferable insights. Consistent, visually engaging posting schedules maintain audience attention. Highlighting volunteers and providing tangible calls to action make environmental engagement feel personal and achievable. User-generated content expands reach and builds trust. Finally, diversifying content across platforms ensures messaging hits the right tone and timing for different audiences.

3.3. Clean My Calanques: A Case Study

Clean My Calanques is a grassroots, Marseille-based environmental initiative focused on preserving the Calanques coastline through community-driven cleanup events and awareness campaigns. The organization's Instagram account, @cleanmycalanques, currently showcases around 75,000 followers and features vibrant content that captures both the region's natural beauty and the energy of its volunteer network³.

³ Clean My Calanques. Instagram. Accessed August 10, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/cleanmycalanques/>.

The account excels in fostering a strong sense of personal connection and local identity. Posts frequently highlight individual volunteers, capturing candid portraits and sharing personal motivations, such as an undergraduate biology student explaining why she spends her weekend collecting marine debris. These individual spotlights are accompanied by informal, conversational captions written in French, often with a touch of humor or regional idiom, making the tone both relatable and authentic.

A central feature of their approach is the use of Reels and Stories to deliver behind-the-scenes glimpses of clean-up events. For example, short video clips may show volunteers discovering unexpected finds, rescuing marine animals, or packing up their haul at the end of the day, all set to upbeat local music. These dynamic visual narratives invite followers to feel like part of the action, encouraging spontaneous community engagement and sharing. Another effective strategy is the use of interactive Story features like polls (“Paper or plastic?”), quizzes (“Guess how many bottles we picked up today?”), and stickers that are designed to invite real-time participation. This tactic transforms passive viewing into active involvement, keeping audiences engaged between full-length posts.

Clean My Calanques also leverages local partnerships and geotags in their posts, tagging regional influencers, cafés, or environmental co-op groups, which broadens organic reach and taps into existing social networks. The result is a layered presence that reinforces local relevance, deepens community ties, and makes each post feel like a conversation among neighbors rather than a broadcast.

For MerTerre, the strategic lessons from Clean My Calanques are clear: local, informal storytelling resonates deeply, especially when combined with interactive features and geotagging that root content in place. These choices support ongoing engagement, build a sense of regional pride, and invite followers to participate with ease.

3.4. Recommendations for MerTerre

The comparative review of Ocean Conservancy and Clean My Calanques' social media strategies reveals a set of actionable lessons for MerTerre to strengthen its digital presence. These suggestions are designed to both broaden the reach of MerTerre's content and deepen its resonance with diverse audiences, particularly in Marseille and the wider Mediterranean region. By strategically adjusting content style, visual identity, and engagement methods, MerTerre can align its social media more closely with its dual mission of fostering grassroots participation and influencing broader conservation policy.

1. Diversify Content Through Individual Spotlights

Currently, MerTerre's Instagram account largely emphasizes partnerships with institutions, documentation of organized clean-up events, and formal reports of activities. While these are valuable in establishing credibility, the success of Clean My Calanques shows that integrating personal narratives can dramatically increase audience connection. A monthly or bi-weekly "Volunteer Voice" series could profile individuals involved in MerTerre's initiatives, such as long-term volunteers, new recruits, regional partner representatives, or even local residents who benefit indirectly from clean-ups. Posts could include portraits, candid event photos, and quotes about personal motivations or memorable experiences. This human-centered approach can transform abstract environmental issues into relatable stories, creating an emotional hook that encourages ongoing engagement and even volunteer recruitment.

2. Increase Use of Interactive Features

Ocean Conservancy's use of polls, question boxes, quizzes, and "Did you know?" challenges demonstrates how interactive content fosters a sense of participation even among followers unable to attend events in person. MerTerre could implement weekly Instagram Stories that

encourage interaction, such as polls on the most frequently found waste types during a given month or quizzes about endangered Mediterranean species. This format provides immediate feedback to followers, gamifies the learning process, and maintains activity between larger campaigns or reports. Importantly, this approach could serve as a gateway for casual followers to become more actively involved in MerTerre's work, bridging the gap between online awareness and offline action.

3. Implement a Consistent Posting Schedule

One of Ocean Conservancy's strengths lies in its clear, consistent rhythm of content release, which keeps audiences engaged year-round. MerTerre could establish a quarterly posting calendar that balances educational content, event promotions, real-time clean-up updates, and volunteer spotlights. For example, Mondays could feature environmental facts and infographics; midweek posts could spotlight community members or partner organizations; weekends could recap events with photo galleries or short videos. Consistency improves performance in social media algorithms, making content more visible to followers and improving the likelihood of organic growth. Even during slower operational periods, pre-scheduled evergreen content, such as archival images from past clean-ups or environmental tips, can sustain activity.

4. Integrate Local Identity and Visual Storytelling

Clean My Calanques' integration of Marseille's landscapes, dialect, humor, and visual references plays a critical role in connecting audiences to place. MerTerre could adopt a similar strategy, weaving in iconic Marseille visuals, from the Vieux-Port at sunrise to the limestone cliffs of the Calanques, paired with captions that reference local culture, traditions, or idioms. Using a mix of professional photography and volunteer-submitted images could create a balance between high-quality branding and authentic grassroots representation.

Multilingual captions, particularly in French and English, could extend MerTerre's reach while keeping its local identity intact. This localized approach could strengthen community ownership of conservation efforts, making environmental stewardship feel like a point of shared cultural pride.

5. Strengthen Partnerships Through Co-Branded Campaigns

Both Ocean Conservancy and Clean My Calanques collaborate extensively with partners to broaden their audiences and diversify content. MerTerre could initiate co-branded social media campaigns with Marseille-based cafés, local environmental startups, diving clubs, or artists. For instance, a "Plastic-Free Marseille" week could feature daily educational posts from MerTerre alongside contributions from partners showcasing how they reduce single-use plastics in their operations. Each participant could share posts across their own platforms, multiplying audience reach. By visually branding these collaborations, using shared hashtags, logos, and graphic templates, MerTerre could create campaigns that are memorable, replicable, and scalable for different regions.

6. Target Youth Audiences Through Program-Specific Channels

Youth engagement remains a relatively untapped opportunity for MerTerre's digital outreach. Drawing on the success of Clean My Calanques in mobilizing younger audiences, MerTerre could launch a youth ambassador program with its own dedicated content stream, such as Instagram Story "takeovers" led by student volunteers. These takeovers could document an ambassador's week of environmental action, including clean-up events, educational workshops, and behind-the-scenes glimpses of organizing efforts. Collaborations with local schools, universities, and youth cultural organizations could expand reach further, while curated youth-led challenges, such as plastic-free lifestyle weeks, could encourage peer-to-peer recruitment.

7. Monitor Engagement Metrics and Adjust Accordingly

One of the defining features of Ocean Conservancy's strategy is its evidence-based approach, using analytics to continuously refine content. MerTerre could conduct monthly engagement reviews, tracking metrics such as average reach, post saves, click-through rates, and growth in follower demographics. These insights should directly inform content planning, identifying which types of posts generate the most meaningful interactions. For example, if posts featuring individual stories consistently outperform institutional announcements, the content calendar could be adjusted accordingly. Over time, this feedback loop would make MerTerre's social media strategy more adaptive, efficient, and aligned with its long-term goals.

By implementing these strategies, MerTerre can position itself at the intersection of grassroots community engagement and authoritative environmental leadership. Drawing from both global and hyperlocal examples, these recommendations aim to balance professional credibility with the accessibility and relatability that drive sustained online engagement!

4. Field Survey

4.1. Visitor Perception

The field survey conducted as part of the *Zéro Déchet Sauvage* program yielded a total of three completed responses (see appendix 1 for full questionnaire responses). While this small sample size limits the statistical representativeness of the findings, it nonetheless offers valuable qualitative insights into public perceptions of abandoned waste along the Marseille coastline. It also reflects one of the central challenges faced in this field component: engaging passers-by in conversation and securing their time to complete the survey proved significantly more difficult than anticipated. Factors contributing to this difficulty likely included the pace of activity in tourist-heavy areas, language barriers, and a general reluctance among beachgoers to pause leisure activities for participation in a formal interview. The limited dataset highlights the need for future iterations of this work to integrate more proactive, incentive-based recruitment strategies to boost response rates.

Despite its modest scale, the survey provided meaningful indications of shared attitudes and awareness levels. Across the three respondents, there was unanimous agreement that marine litter poses a serious environmental problem, particularly in terms of its impact on wildlife and the overall health of the Mediterranean Sea. Each respondent identified plastic debris, specifically bottles, food wrappers, and disposable utensils, as the most visible and concerning category of waste. All three also expressed dissatisfaction with current waste management infrastructure, citing either a lack of bins in key locations or bins that were already overflowing during peak visitor times.

One notable observation is that awareness of MerTerre and the *Zéro Déchet Sauvage* program varied. One respondent, a Marseille resident, had heard of MerTerre but was unfamiliar with its concrete activities or how to participate. Another, a tourist, had not heard of the

organization at all prior to the interview. This suggests that even among environmentally concerned individuals, name recognition alone is insufficient without sustained visibility campaigns that clearly communicate the organization's role and avenues for involvement.

When asked about potential solutions, respondents converged on two main themes: increased educational outreach and improved waste disposal infrastructure. Educational outreach was described in both formal and informal terms, ranging from school-based programs to visible public signage explaining the ecological consequences of littering. The infrastructure-related suggestions included installing more bins in high-traffic areas and ensuring more frequent waste collection, especially during the summer tourism season.

In terms of engagement, all three participants indicated they would be more likely to participate in cleanup events if such activities were paired with other attractions, such as community picnics or cultural programming. This points toward the potential value of multi-purpose events that combine environmental action with social and recreational appeal, thereby lowering the barrier to participation. Social media also emerged as a recommended outreach tool, with Instagram specifically mentioned as a platform participants follow for environmental content.

Although the survey's small size limits generalizability, these findings align with broader patterns observed in coastal conservation work, where public concern for marine litter is high but active participation in mitigation remains inconsistent. The results underscore two important priorities for MerTerre: increasing its visibility among diverse audiences, and framing participation opportunities in ways that connect environmental action to community and culture.

4.2. Understanding MerTerre's Needs

To understand the needs and problems that MerTerre is facing, we conducted an interview with Julie Gomez, the coordinator of the Zero Deschet Sauvage (ZDS) platform, who is also the person in charge of communicating with other non-profit organisations as well as members of ZDS. As Julie is not fluent in English, we utilised the live transcript function on Google Translate and Teo, data and collaborative platforms project manager of MerTerre and our main contact for this project, was also present during the interview to help us **overcome the language barrier**.

The objective of the interview is to:

- (a) Understand the issues that MerTerre is facing with engagement and long-term participation of its members or partners in their programs (such as contributing to the ZDS platform or participating in the Adopt'1 Spot program).
- (b) Understand the current methods and efforts by MerTerre to engage with its **existing** partners.
- (c) Understand the current methods and efforts by MerTerre to attract and contact **new** partners.
- (d) From the results, generate ideas and propose new methods to overcome the above challenges for MerTerre.

From our insightful discussion, we understood that Julie is the main contact with other organisations that MerTerre is working with. MerTerre is working with 7 co-pilot organisations nationwide, such as “Mountain Riders”, an organisation working on zero mountain waste, and 6 other organisations in different regions of France. The role of these organisations is to engage with local organisations and gather data for the ZDS network, similar to local “MerTerre” in their region, as Julie described. On top of logging data to the

ZDS network, some organisations are also co-pilots of the Adopt'1 Spot programme, a collaborative citizen waste collection programme initiated by MerTerre.

Understanding the Problem

However, MerTerre has been facing difficulties with certain partners. One of the co-pilots that MerTerre is working with was not regularly logging data to the ZDS network, and MerTerre is considering ways to engage with them or replace them. Secondly, due to the high turnover rate of students and teachers at educational institutes, it makes it difficult and time-costly for MerTerre to partner with them as MerTerre needs to train and retrain people regularly. Other than that, the participants for other initiatives by MerTerre are visibly declining to such a point that it was hard to keep the programmes running and also restricted the use of engagement tools such as monthly features on Instagram. Notably, many organisations that were contributing to the ZDS platform were only doing level 2 clean-ups, and even rarely, the brands of the wastes collected were recorded, restricting the usefulness of the data recorded on the ZDS platform.

Existing Strategies Used By MerTerre

To prevent suggesting past ideas or strategies that MerTerre but failed at, we asked Julie what the current strategies MerTerre is using or has used. According to Julie, MerTerre is:

- (a) Keeping an internal record of each partner's engagement status through manual rating and a spreadsheet.
- (b) Attending and presenting at international conferences such as the recent Third United Nations Ocean Conference, Nice 2025 - UNOC3.
- (c) Providing a yearly newsletter and annual report for its partners.
- (d) On the ZDS platform:

- (i) A dashboard feature allowing users to see the geographical location of clean-ups around France and an overview of collected waste.
- (ii) Each NGO has an individual profile with contact information.

By becoming co-pilot organisations of MerTerre, organisations are incentivised to participate as they benefit from:

- (a) Gaining visibility through the partnership and joining the ZDS platform.
- (b) Financial support and support from MerTerre in acquiring financial resources.

5. Conclusion

This report provides practical ideas to help MerTerre build stronger partnerships, engage more people, and make a bigger impact in fighting marine waste. The goal is to create long-term solutions that keep volunteers and partners involved over time. The main proposed strategies of this report are, firstly, working closely with universities and local groups across France. By making formal agreements and creating simple training materials, MerTerre can build partnerships that last, even with the high turnover rate of staff and students. Secondly, to make the data collection process more rewarding, MerTerre can incorporate new features like leaderboards and public recognition in its existing ZDS platform, which will encourage more groups to participate regularly.

In this digital age, social media plays an important role in reaching new and especially younger audiences. By sharing more volunteer stories, using interactive posts, and teaming up with local partners, MerTerre can inspire more people to take action. The success of groups like Clean My Calanques shows how local, personal content connects with people better than formal messages.

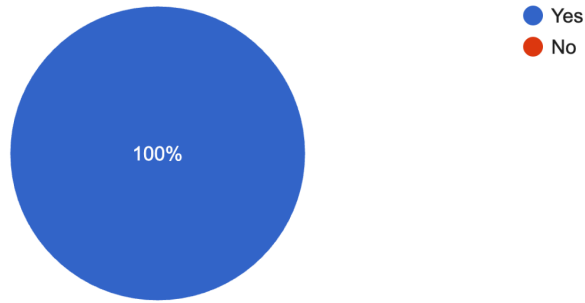
The small survey done for this report revealed important insights, which is that many people care about marine waste but don't know how to help. Making activities fun and social, for example, combining cleanups with community events, could attract more volunteers. A respondent also proposed that a mobile application with missions and rewards could make participation easier and more appealing, especially for younger people.

These proposed strategies align with MerTerre's mission and values of passion, kindness, perseverance and collaborative spirit. MerTerre needs a stronger community in order to drive sustainable, systemic change to combat marine pollution.

Appendix 1 - Field Survey Questionnaire Response

Before today, had you heard about the issue of diffuse abandoned waste, small litter like cigarette butts, wrappers, and plastic items scattered in public spaces?

3 responses



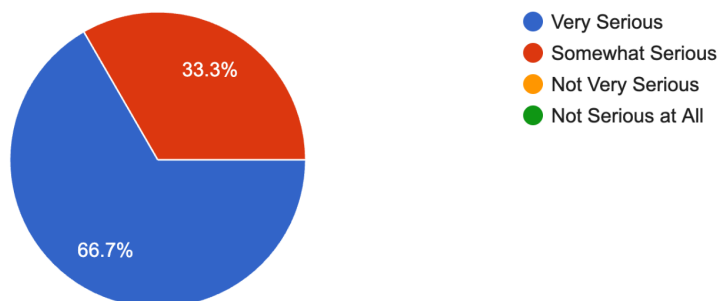
In your opinion, how serious is this problem in Marseille?

3 responses



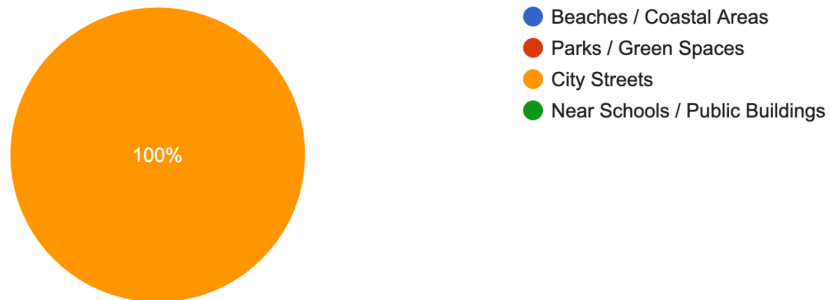
In your opinion, how serious is this problem in France overall?

3 responses



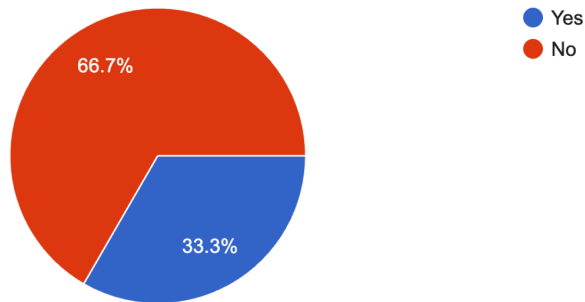
Where do you most often notice this kind of waste?

3 responses



Are you aware of any laws or rules in France or Marseille that aim to reduce this kind of waste?

3 responses



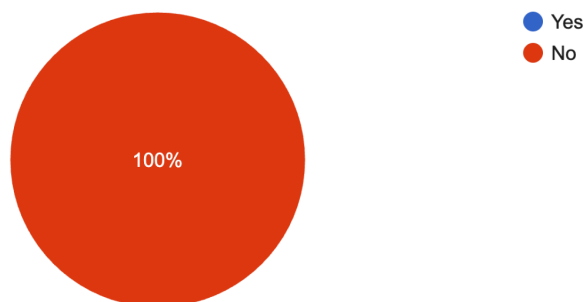
If your answer was "Yes", which laws have you heard of?

1 response

I know there's a law against illegal dumping in the street, and another one that prohibits throwing cigarette butts and trash on the ground, but I think these laws aren't really enforced.

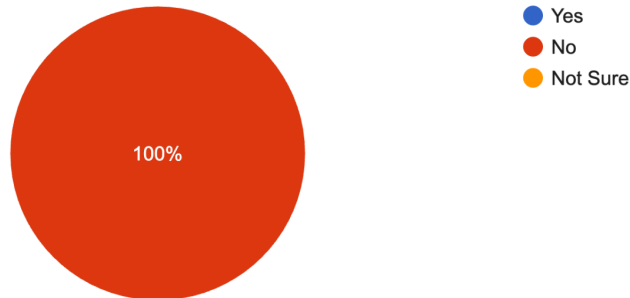
Have you heard of MerTerre or its programs like Zéro Déchet Sauvage or Adopt'1 Spot?

3 responses



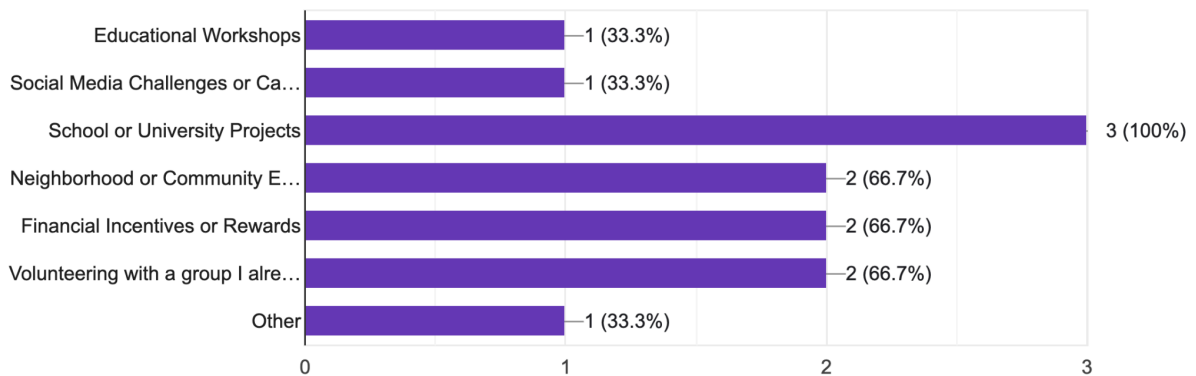
Do you think current efforts by Marseille or the French government are enough to address this problem?

3 responses



What would make you more likely to take part in an initiative to fight abandoned waste? (Select all that apply)

3 responses



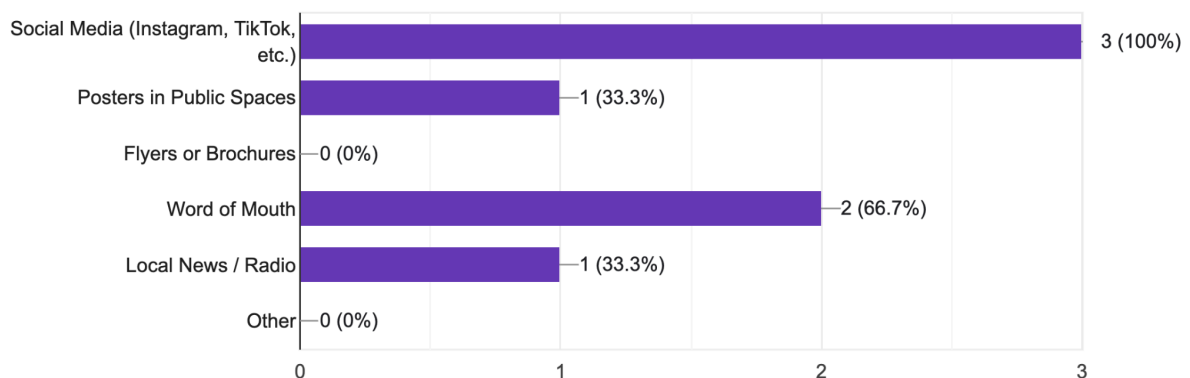
If you answered "Other", what would make you more likely to take part in an initiative to fight abandoned waste in your own words?

1 response

A mobile app like Pokémon Go that encourages people to pick up trash for a mobile game and reward the player

Which communication channels are most likely to reach you?

3 responses



If you answered "Other", which communication channels are most likely to reach you in your own words?

0 responses

No responses yet for this question.

In your opinion, what's the most effective way to prevent abandoned waste in Marseille?

3 responses

Put in place more public bins and a better garbage truck system (there is not enough bins in my opinion and most of the time people do not make the effort to recycle but it is not incentivized by the waste management system in Marseille).

Stricter laws. Getting a fine if waste is being dumped in public spaces/nature.

Create deposit stations in cities where people could drop off their own waste, or waste collected elsewhere, in exchange for a cashback system. Each deposit would give a few cents or euros, credited to a rechargeable card that works like a payment card (such as a credit or prepaid card). This card could then be used to purchase products or services from partner stores.

This would allow the emergence of two types of elements:

Rewarding responsible consumers, who would simply bring their own waste to designated collection points to receive a small amount of cashback based on what they spent to consume.

The emergence of active collectors, who would roam public areas (parks, streets, roadsides...) in search of waste, with the goal of exchanging it for greater financial compensation. For some, this could become a real additional source of income, or even a regular activity.

Do you have any ideas for MerTerre to raise awareness or get more people involved?

3 responses

- Partnerships with other associations to combine voices together and raise more awareness globally.
- Expanding communication channels, especially social media platforms as this topic will most likely matter for the future generations who tend to be more influenced by media in general.
- Being physically represented in coworking spaces to do some sensibilization events where MerTerre could raise awareness to the workers working for different companies in Marseille (e.g., the Now coworking space in Vieux-Port could be a good example as the age average is pretty low there in comparison to the whole job market)

No

Create an app that displays local missions near your location, which you can join with a single click. The goal would be to highlight the social and fun aspect of the activity, with small icebreaker sessions at the beginning and a casual drink or get-together at the end, so people leave not only with memories but potentially with new friends.

The app would also offer exclusive rewards, like reusable water bottles or limited-edition t-shirts after completing a certain number of missions. These rewards wouldn't be available for purchase with money but with point, in order to create a real sense of belonging and community.

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