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WASTE COLLECTION 'RACE' RAISES SEA POLLUTION AWARENESS

 SUSTAINABILITY

Europe's "first garbage collection competition" draws attention to one of the world's most polluted bodies of water: the Mediterranean

What was referred to as Europe's "first garbage collection competition" took place in Marseille on May 30. The goal was to raise awareness of plastic pollution in the Mediterranean Sea. Merging elements of a race and a treasure hunt, 20 teams, made up of two swimmers and two kayakers, aimed to collect 8 km of waste from the sea.

[Le Grand Défi](#), or The Grand Challenge, was co-organised by the French environmental protection brand [Sauvage](#), [Palana Environment](#) and the [Amos Sport Business School](#). It was inspired by Emmanuel Laurin and his film [The Great Sapphire](#), which featured Laurin's 120-km swim between Toulon and Marseille, where he collected more than 100 kg of waste.

"With this event, we want to raise awareness that the protection of the environment is of concern to everyone, especially as 80 percent of the waste in the Mediterranean comes from the land," said [Sindie Aissa of Amos](#), one of the event's organisers.

Participants included several prominent athletes, including Coralie Balmy, an Olympic swimming champion, and world athletics champion Muriel Urtis. All of the €140 per-team entry fees are being donated to environmental causes.

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Website: www.sauvage-med.fr

Takeaway:

The Mediterranean is one of the most polluted bodies of water in the world and is “turning into a dangerous plastic trap,” [according to a 2018 WWF study](#). While the sea accounts for just 1 percent of the world’s marine waters, it contains 7 percent of their microplastics. [Le Grand Défi organisers said](#) they wanted to take advantage of Marseille’s high-concentration of elite athletic talent to raise awareness to this dire environmental issue, to “shine the challenge through their voice.” Springwise has spotted other attempts using sporting events to bring attention to our polluted seas. Last year, a group of sailors used the [Volvo Ocean Race](#) as an opportunity by [forming a yacht team](#) to launch a new ocean health campaign.