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**Cooperation in strengthening environmental enforcement
4 Networks Conference
28-29 September 2023
Rome, Carabinieri's Officials School**

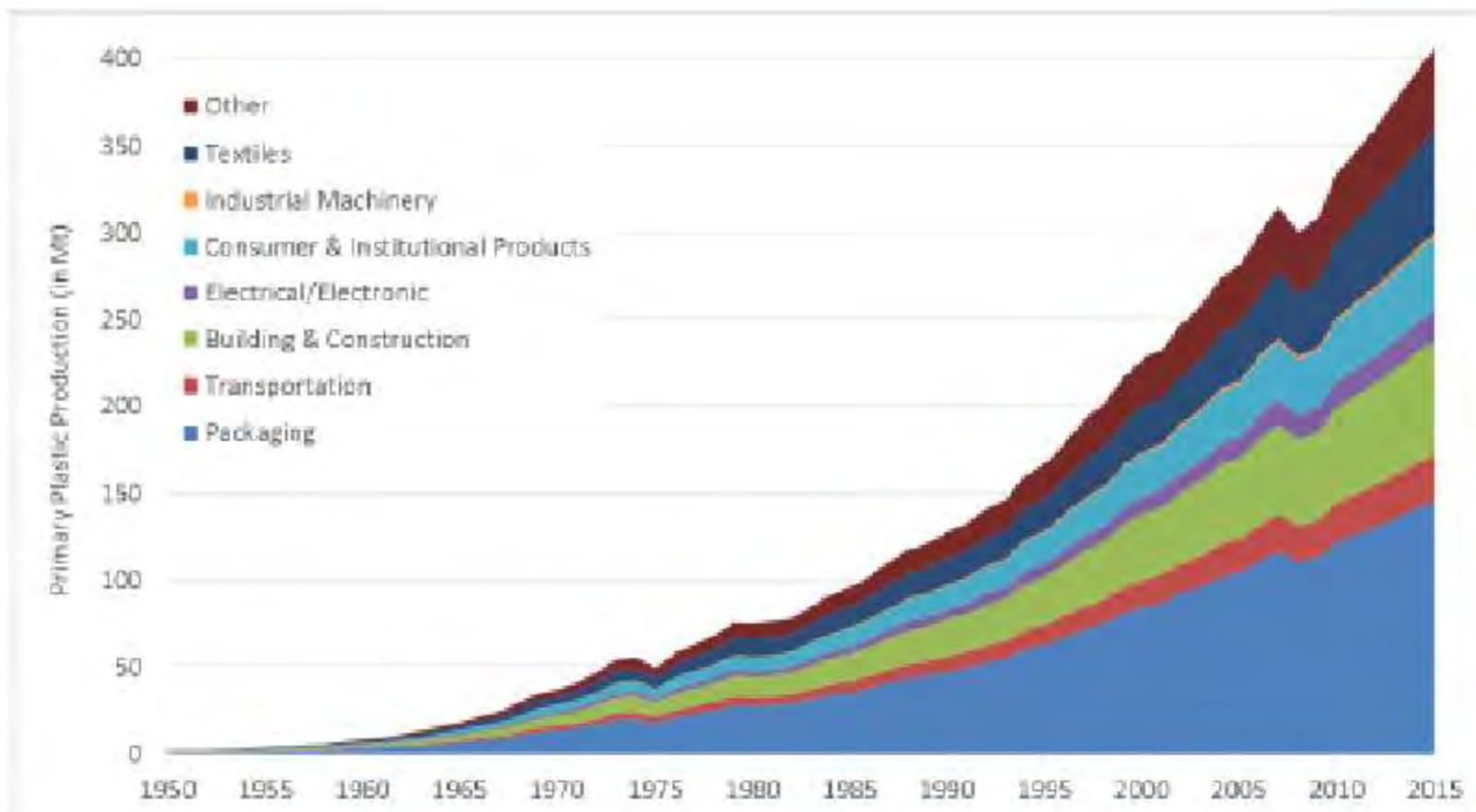


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Environmental Security Programme

Illicit Flows and Emerging Criminal Trends in the Global
Plastic Waste Market

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INTERPOL**



Source: Geyer, R., J. Jambeck and K. Law (2017), "Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made", *Science Advances*, Vol. 3/7, p. e1700782, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1700782>.

Figure 1 – Global Plastics Production: 1950 to 2015

Source: Geyer, Jambeck and Law (2017)

EU Member State	KG waste per person
Ireland	57.9
Luxembourg	53.1
Estonia	49.1
Germany	37.6
Denmark	37.5
Portugal	36.7
Italy	36.5
UK	34.5
Austria	34.1
Spain	32.8
France	32.6
Hungary	31.5
EU 28	31.9

Table 1 - Annual Plastic Packaging Waste per head of Population in 2016
Source: (Statistica, 2019)



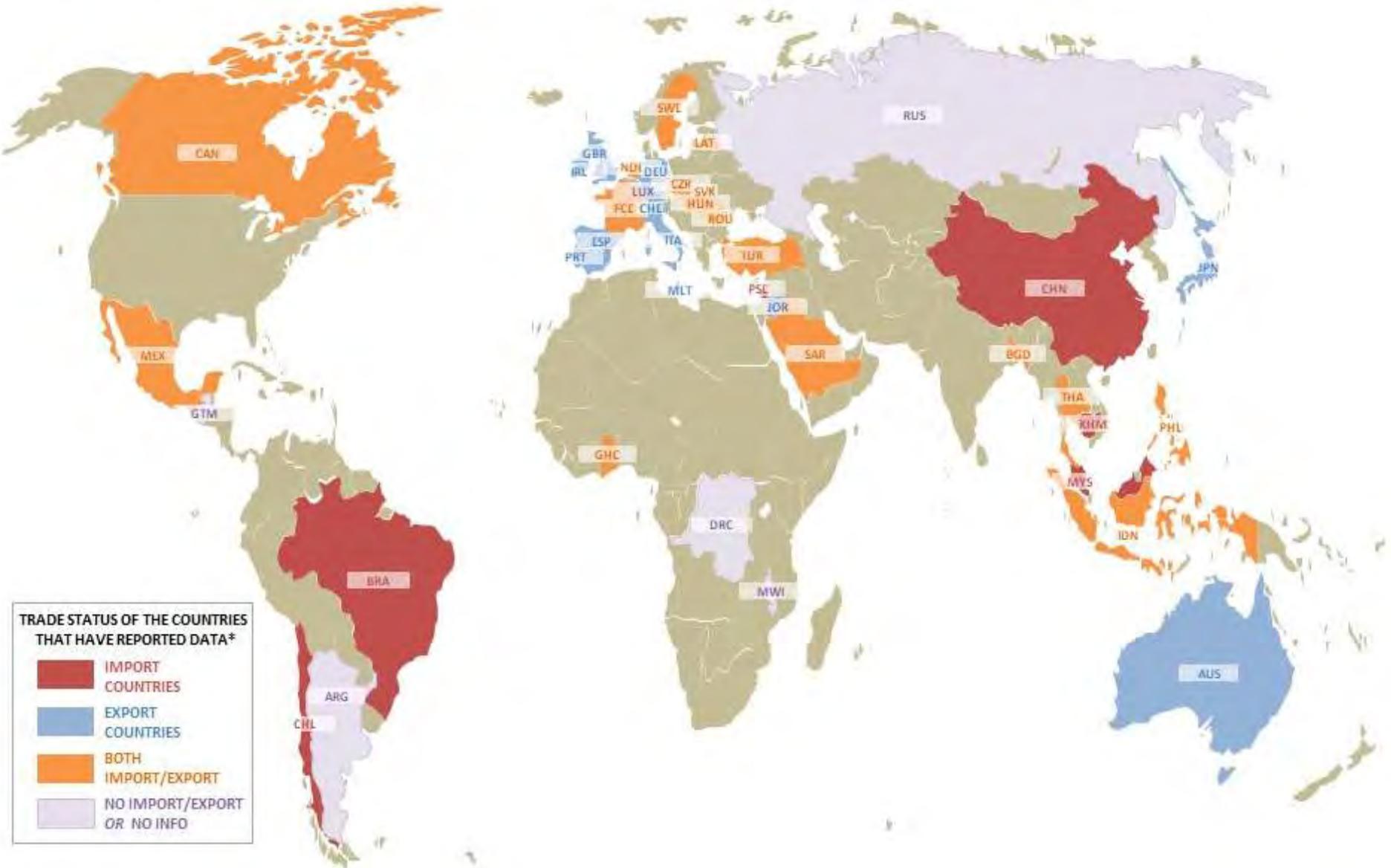
Map 1: International trade in plastic waste in 2016

Source: Field Actions Science Reports. The journal of field actions [3]



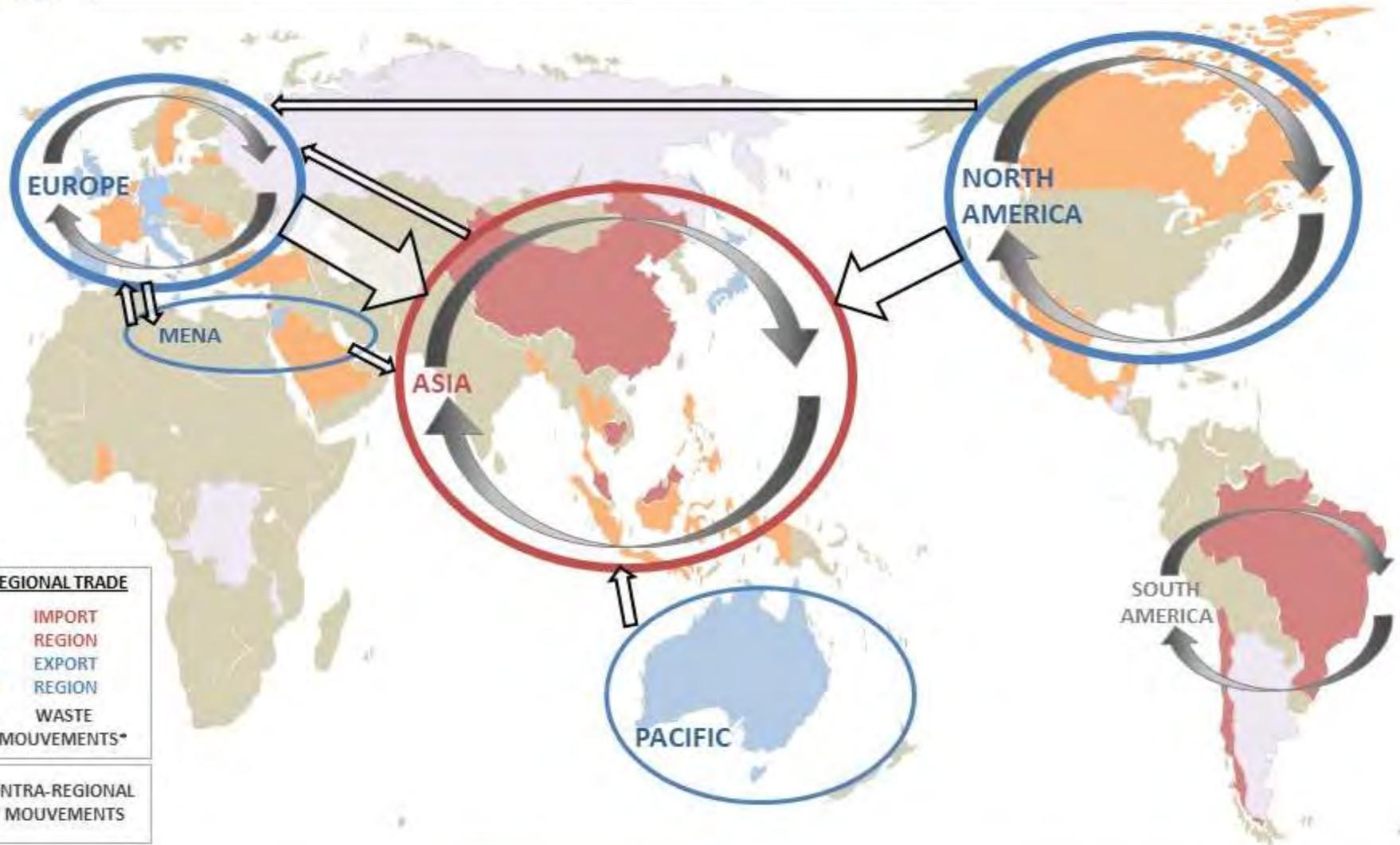
GEOGRAPHY OF THE COLLECTED DATA

40 COUNTRIES PROVIDED DATA ON OBSERVED TRENDS OF OR CASES TO INTERPOL



TRANSNATIONAL TRADE IN PLASTIC WASTE

EMERGING FROM INTERPOL DATA COLLECTION BASED ON 39 COUNTRIES CONTRIBUTIONS



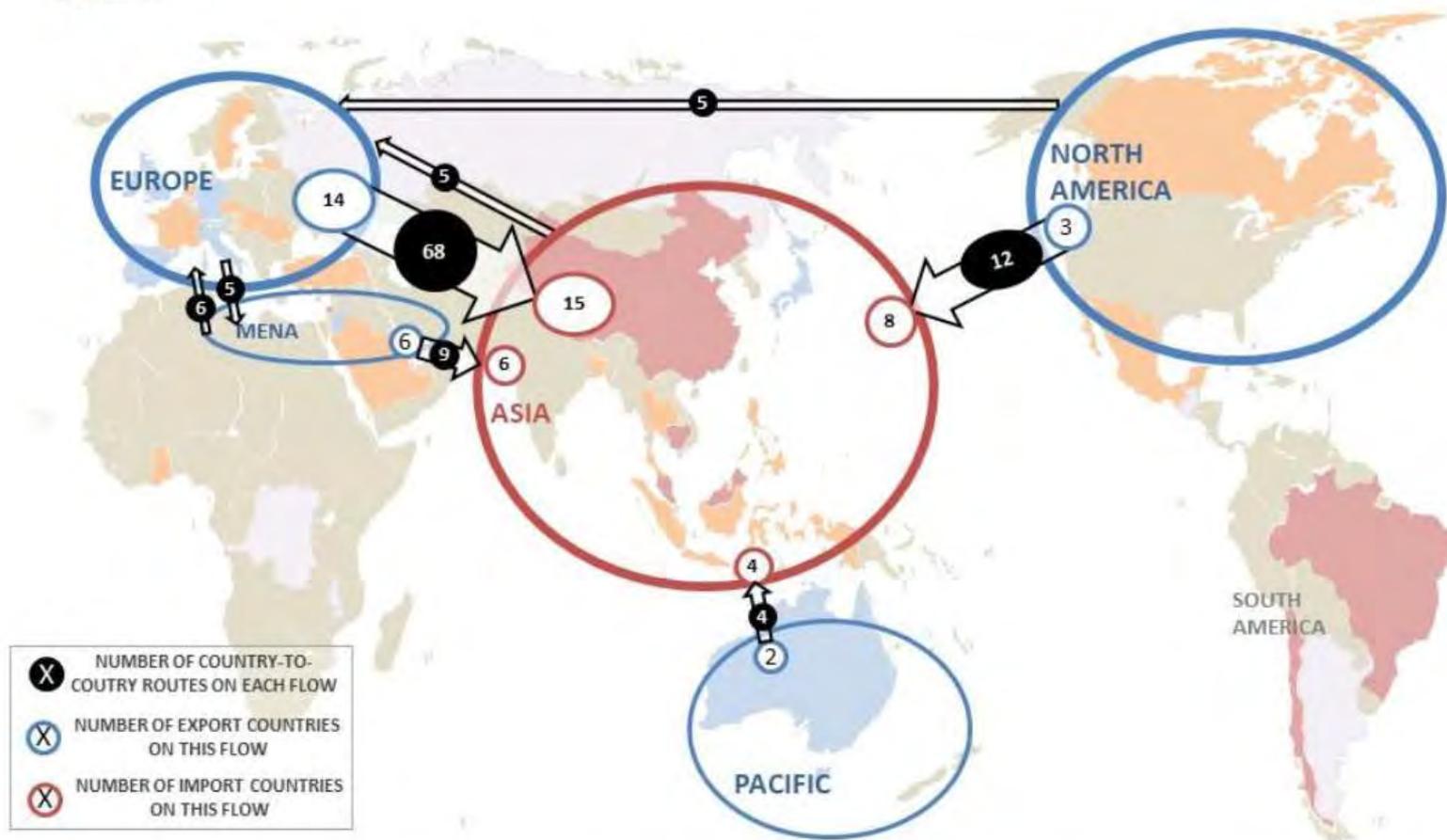
257 TRADE ROUTES

62 IMPORT COUNTRIES
57 EXPORT COUNTRIES

132 TRANS-REGIONAL ROUTES
125 INTRA-REGIONAL ROUTES



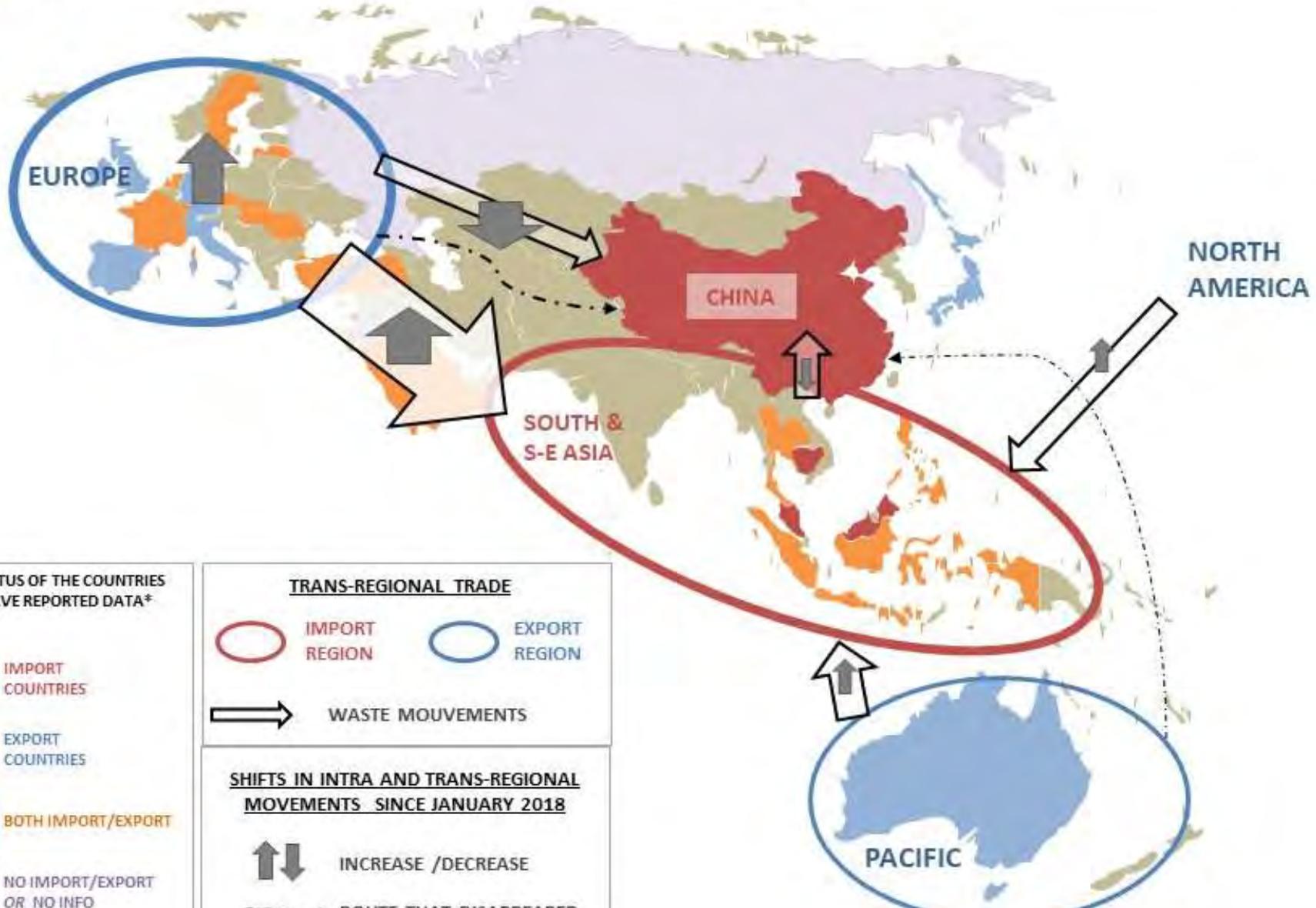
TRANS-REGIONAL ROUTES CHARACTERIZING THE TRADE IN PLASTIC WASTE



132 TRANS-REGIONAL TRADE ROUTES

INCLUDING 95 DESTINED TOWARDS ASIA

MAIN CHANGES OF ROUTE IN THE GLOBAL TRADE IN PLASTIC WASTE SINCE JANUARY 2018



GROWING CRIMINALITY RELATED TO PLASTIC WASTE SINCE 2018:

Increase in transnational plastic waste trafficking

Growing trade routes towards emerging destinations (in particular in South East Asia) are exploited for illegal shipments. **Misdeclaration as key Modus Operandi**



New plastic waste import restrictions (**domino effect**)



RISK: further re-routing towards new and vulnerable countries (very probable)



Illegal plastic waste containers under inspection
Port Klang, Malaysia, May 28, 2019 (©Shutterstock)

Increase in illegal plastic waste treatment and disposal

Plastic waste imports towards **unauthorized recycling facilities**

Illegal disposal of domestic waste (e.g. illegal landfills)

Waste fire (deliberate / accidental due to waste accumulation)

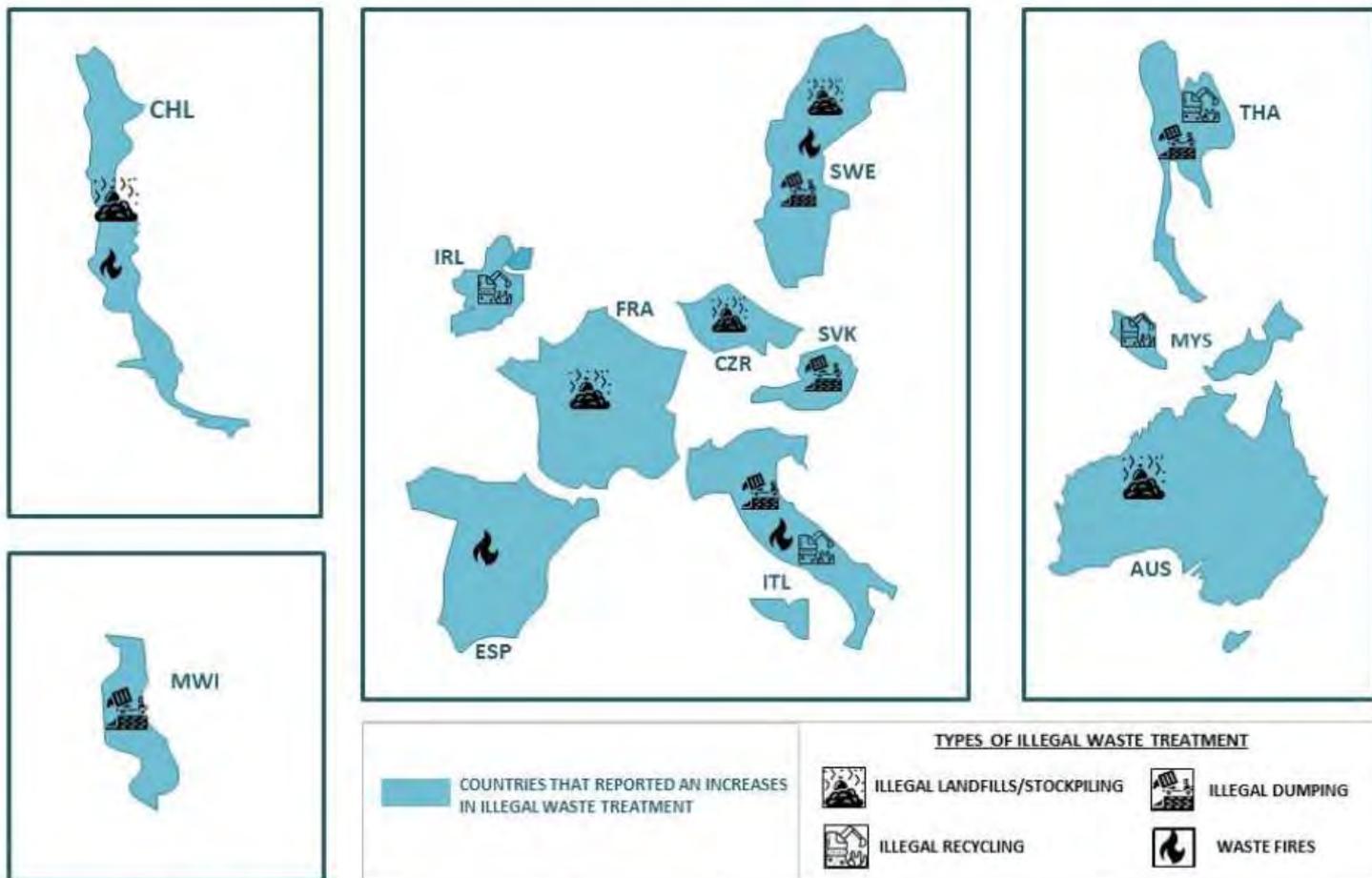
Increased marine plastic debris



Fishing boat getting entangled in plastic
Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam June 4, 2018
(©Reuters)



CHARACTERIZING THE INCREASE IN ILLEGAL WASTE TREATMENT



Map 9. Types of illegal waste treatment activities observed as increasing since January 2018 in concerned countries

POLLUTION CRIME AMID COVID-19

Emerging risk factors during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Closure of (legal) recycling facilities

Enforcement resource limitations

Increase in plastic and medical waste

Emerging criminal threats during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Illegal recycling of medical waste** fuelling the **sale of fraudulent medical products**
- **Increased mismanagement of hospital waste** from both legitimate hospitals and clandestine clinics; **increased risk related to the management of vaccination waste**
- **Growing illegal dumping and fire of domestic waste globally, particularly of plastics** (fall in virgin plastic price; decrease in recycled plastic demand)
- **Risk of increased tax evasion** and trafficking in the waste sector



March 2020: In an illegal recycling factory detected during a raid in Thailand, a worker is re-enacting ironing used masks under police instruction (© Yahoo News)

Key criminal features and modus operandi in the plastic waste sector

- Misdeclaration and use of fraudulent documents remain key modus operandi
- Transit countries
- Involvement of Organized Crime Groups in the plastic waste sector

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhancing **inter-agency responses** to overcome limitations of power, strengthen inter-agency cooperation for stronger expertise and mandates
- Developing risk indicators and **financial investigations** in response to detection and investigative challenges
- Enhancing international **waste traceability** through better information exchange and intelligence sharing between import and export countries

- Enhance the use of existent **secured communication channels** to share critical intelligence
- Clarify the requirements from export countries to proceed with **repatriation**
- Bringing clarity to rapidly changing import regulations



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Thank You

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