

Blue Manifesto for Europe's seas

Priorities and urgent actions for the European Commission

April 2015



Our blue vision

Seas and oceans are vital for Europe's social and economic wellbeing, providing food, employment, energy, and resources for millions. However, the current over-exploitation of marine resources risks leading to irreversible degradation of marine ecosystems and loss of the services and benefits that they provide. Only by restoring our seas and oceans to health and securing productive ecosystems can the EU further develop and sustain a sound blue economy.

This will require the European Commission to urgently step up the EU's efforts to curb overfishing, marine biodiversity loss, pollution, unsustainable resource extraction and climate change during its current five year term.

We therefore urge the new European Commission to prioritise the following goals:

1. Ensure Good Environmental Status by 2020 through a strong implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
2. Complete an ecologically coherent network of well-managed marine protected areas by 2020, with the implementation of the Natura 2000 network (Birds and Habitats Directives) as the basis, in line with the requirements of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy;
3. End overfishing and allow for the recovery of fish stocks, while minimising the impact of fishing on the wider marine environment through full and timely implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy;
4. Ensure a sustainable blue economy that protects and maintains the diversity, productivity, resilience, and core functions of marine ecosystems through effective and integrated ocean governance under the Integrated Maritime Policy; and
5. Strengthen international fisheries and maritime governance, including in relation to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing, the conservation of endangered species, and the protection of the high seas.

As European NGOs working on the protection of the marine environment, we look forward to working constructively with the Commission on the priorities outlined in this Blue Manifesto, to deliver the protection that our oceans urgently require and deserve.

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1 Ensure Good Environmental Status by 2020

2015-2019 priorities

- **Secure effective implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**, by challenging weak implementation, strengthening co-ordination and joint action with regional seas conventions, and performing an effective evaluation of MSFD implementation, in order to strengthen action and secure a level playing field across Europe, ahead of the second cycle of implementation of the MSFD (starting in 2018);
- **Strengthen the Integrated Maritime Policy**, to ensure the integration of the MSFD and the different policies, agreements and legislative measures which have an impact on the marine environment (Article 1) and make Good Environmental Status (GES) the overarching political objective for all EU sectoral policies relevant to the marine environment;
- Ensure that the revision of the Commission Decision on GES **strengthens the implementation of the MSFD and the CFP** and secures the achievement of the GES 2020 objective;
- **Promote research** and take measures to address the cumulative impacts of anthropogenic activities on the wider marine environment; and
- Take the necessary action to **reduce by 50% the input of litter**, including derelict fishing gear, into the seas by pursuing a circular economy that prevents waste creation.

2015 urgent actions

- Evaluate national Programmes of Measures (Article 16), which are to be submitted in 2015, to secure an ambitious approach that adheres to the MSFD and other relevant provisions, including the requirement to implement the ecosystem approach and a narrow use of exemptions, in line with Article 14;
- Request that Member States and regional seas conventions take effective action to strengthen their environmental targets (Article 5 of the MSFD), improve coordination at a regional or sub-regional scale and heed the other recommendations of the Commission's evaluation of Article 12 implementation;
- Develop a detailed analysis on the progress in establishing Marine Protected Areas (as required by Article 21 of the MSFD), linking to the ongoing efforts on designation of marine Natura 2000 sites;
- Table ambitious proposals for a revised waste package, maintaining the high recycling targets from the scrapped proposal, and for the Port Reception Facilities Directive, both vital to achieving marine litter reductions;
- Table a legislative proposal to tackle micro-beads in cosmetics, as recently requested by five Member States in the Environment Council.

2 Implement an ecologically coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas by 2020

2015-2019 priorities

- Ensure **full implementation and compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives**, with a view to achieving a complete and well-managed network of marine Natura 2000 sites and cross-compliance in relation to the management of all uses of and activities on the oceans, including fishing, deep-sea mining and aquaculture, and to contributing to agreed targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- Ensure that Natura 2000 **designation precedes planning of maritime space**; and
- **Monitor whether sufficient investments are made in conservation** under the EU budget, particularly in relation to the protection and management of Natura 2000 sites, and, where the allocation of funds at national level is insufficient to support effective implementation, instruct Member States to review and respect the EU's funding priorities.

2015 urgent actions

- Initiate infringement procedures against Member States that have failed to designate and/or protect their marine Natura 2000 network (including Special Protected Areas and Sites of Community Importance) and urgently complete the process of addressing insufficiencies in designation, including by providing relevant recommendations during/after the Atlantic Biogeographical Seminar;
- Develop recommendations for Member States on improving management of Natura 2000 sites on the basis of the first Marine Management Seminar held in 2015;
- Mandate DG Environment to evaluate and ensure that national and EU fisheries management measures comply with the relevant provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives; and
- Ensure that the fitness check of the Habitats and Birds Directives leads to improved implementation and does not put into question the legal framework.

3 Secure the recovery of fish stocks and a shift towards low-impact fishing

2015-2019 priorities

- Secure an **end to overfishing** for all stocks, in compliance with Article 2 of the CFP Regulation, including through action under the external dimension;
- Request scientific advice and monitor progress in relation to achieving the objective of **stock recovery** to biomass levels above those capable of producing maximum sustainable yield (B_{MSY});
- **Promote the transition towards selective, low-impact fishing** that minimises adverse environmental impacts, including through allocation of fishing opportunities, minimising bycatch and incidental catches, and through appropriate technical measures;
- Propose and facilitate the timely adoption of **ecosystem-based Multiannual Plans (MAPs)** that include the objective to restore fish stocks to levels above B_{MSY} , limit exploitation rates to below F_{MSY} levels, contain conservation reference points in line with the objective and related safeguards, and measures that minimise environmental impacts and contribute to achieving Good Environmental Status under the MSFD;
- **Regulate deep-sea fishing** to achieve sustainability and protect seafloor habitats, including through a phase-out of destructive deep-sea bottom fisheries;
- Reinforce the EU fisheries control system and **eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; and**
- Set out and implement a roadmap to **eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies**, in particular where they contribute to overcapacity, overfishing, IUU fishing or destructive fishing methods, and promote an end to harmful fisheries subsidies in the context of the World Trade Organisation.

2015 urgent actions

- Propose Fishing Opportunities for 2016, in line with scientific advice and in accordance with Article 2.2;
- Ensure that proposals for MAPs for the North Sea, Western Waters and Eastern Mediterranean Sea are in line with the CFP, as outlined in the priorities above;
- Widen the scope of the Data Collection Framework to all necessary marine data, including data on incidental catches of non-fish species, make all data publicly accessible and enforce compliance with data collection obligations;
- Work with the Council and European Parliament to secure the adoption of a strong deep-sea fisheries regulation, based on the 2012 proposal, which includes a phase-out of deep-sea bottom trawling, and including Parliament amendments relating to the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems and impact assessments for deep-sea fisheries; and
- Step up measures to enforce compliance with the IUU and Control Regulations, including by securing sufficient resources for implementation, and do not undermine or weaken these regulations.

4 Develop a sustainable blue economy based on the ecosystem-based approach & integrated governance

2015-2019 priorities

- **Strengthen governance under the Integrated Maritime Policy** to ensure the full integration of the objectives of the MSFD, Water Framework Directive and other EU environmental policies into the Common Fisheries Policy, the Blue Growth strategy and other maritime sector policies;
- In doing so, ensure the **application of the ecosystem-based approach** in all aspects of planning, management and governance of maritime activities, marine space and resource use;
- Apply the **precautionary and polluter pays principles** to emerging Blue Growth sectors (i.e. seabed mining, aquaculture, ocean energy, marine biotechnology and maritime and coastal tourism) and increase research and data collection to evaluate their impacts on the wider ecosystems;
- Pursue a **zero-waste circular economy** based on renewable resources in order to avoid reliance on deep-sea mining and to prevent marine litter;
- Ensure that **Member States apply an ecosystem-based approach** in their maritime spatial plans by 2021, supported by the application of Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA); and
- **Minimise impacts of aquaculture on the environment** by ensuring sustainable sourcing of feed, avoiding escapes by adopting technical standards and reducing the impact of chemicals and medicine use.

2015 urgent actions

- Ensure that Blue Growth strategies and the action plans for sea basins are fully in line with the MSFD targets and programmes of measures, and are developed and implemented in consultation with Regional Seas Conventions, environmental authorities and stakeholders;
- Develop transparent criteria for environmentally responsible aquaculture and evaluate the national multiannual aquaculture programmes funded by the EMFF against these criteria;
- Hold a wide public debate on deep-sea mining, promote and invest in alternatives, such as recycling, re-use, eco-design, sharing, repair and alternative materials, including a full analysis of their market potential;
- Ensure that no deep-sea mining activities are authorised by Member States unless any such activities adhere to EU marine conservation and environmental protection standards, including ex-ante environmental impact assessments and transparent data and information handling, and until the designation of a network of protected areas has been completed in line with existing commitments; and
- Ensure that stakeholders are fully involved in the development of guidance for the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and can participate in expert groups.

5 Promote sustainable international fisheries and maritime governance

2015-2019 priorities

- Actively **promote sustainable fisheries practices** through bilateral and multilateral cooperation with non-EU countries, which support healthy marine ecosystems and the well-being of coastal communities;
- Ensure that the EU plays a leading role in **securing an agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond the jurisdiction of States;
- Promote specific and robust EU and international governance solutions for the **protection of the Arctic and Antarctic**;
- Continue to pursue an agenda **of sustainability and reform in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)** and other relevant international fora, in particular in relation to improving stock management, the conservation of endangered species, the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), compliance and transparent decision-making;
- Continue to co-operate with other key seafood market states to **eliminate IUU fishing** and to take EU action when countries fail to co-operate in the fight against IUU fishing; and
- Make the **EU a model region for clean, climate-friendly shipping** and show leadership internationally.

2015 urgent actions

- Secure the adoption by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) of marine protected areas in the East Antarctic and the Ross Sea, and ensure significant progress towards marine protected areas in the Weddell Sea and the Antarctic Peninsula;
- Work towards an endorsement by the UN General Assembly to begin the development of an agreement under UNCLOS for the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond the jurisdiction of States;
- Obtain the adoption of a Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and Fisheries, including clear and ambitious targets and science based indicators within the context of the post 2015 development agenda;
- Ensure a coordinated and strong EU involvement in the International Seabed Authority to ensure an effective and precautionary environmental regulatory framework to prevent adverse impacts of deep-sea mining exploration and exploitation and to guarantee full data transparency;
- Work towards an agreement by the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Paris (COP 21) of a strong greenhouse gas emissions reduction target for international shipping and ensure that any measures adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) conform to this; and
- Table a proposal for the future Fisheries Authorisation Regulation that has a strong legal framework that is transparent, accountable and fair, and closes loopholes that allow IUU activities.