


A JOINT MANIFESTO FOR THE 2024 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

AN OCEAN OF CHANGE 2024





The Ocean is suffering from the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises.

Sea levels are rising and temperature records are being broken at unprecedented rates. Marine biodiversity collapses are rapidly extinguishing natural ecosystems. Pollution is harming the seas and our health in dramatic ways.

This pressure on the Ocean is threatening people too.

Europe's seas are among the most overexploited in the world and marine nature is in a poor state. Harmful human activities, such as unsustainable fishing practices, oil and gas exploration and exploitation, maritime transport, pollution, dredging, and coastal development have contributed to the loss of most of the rich biodiversity of the Ocean. Rising temperatures and ocean acidification are exacerbating this ecosystem decline, leading to impacts on coastal communities and their livelihoods due to, for example, sea level rise and extreme weather events.

These man-made disruptions affect not only the livelihoods of fishers and coastal communities, but everyone - as we all rely on the Ocean for a stable climate and for our very existence. This is why we need an urgent, fair and just transition to a low-impact blue economy that leaves no one behind.

The window of opportunity to avoid major and likely irreversible damage, and combat the inevitable effects of climate change is closing very quickly: the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that global emissions will need to peak by mid-decade (2025) and then quickly decline if we are to restrict global heating to 1.5°C. Stopping human-induced climate change and restoring healthy, resilient, biodiversity-rich ecosystems, including in the Ocean, are our most urgent tasks if we are to save our civilisation.

WE NEED TO BRING BACK HOPE THAT THE OCEAN WILL SUSTAIN US IN THE FUTURE – HERE IS HOW.



3 ACTIONS

TO SAVE

THE OCEAN



In 2019, the EU embarked on the “European Green Deal”, an unprecedented attempt to turn our economy away from ecological degradation and the pursuit of short-term interests, to build a resilient and equitable society that can live in harmony with the natural world. However, the “Blue” is still missing from the “Green” Deal.

With the largest sea territory in the world, the EU needs to bring a Green Deal to the Ocean.

To that end, we call on the EU to deliver the following actions in 2024 and beyond:





#1

ADOPT AN OVERARCHING AND AMBITIOUS EU OCEAN DEAL

An Ocean Deal is needed to create an overarching framework that integrates existing and potential new legislation related to the marine environment and assures coherence between different sectoral policies, while making them fit for preserving and protecting our Ocean as well as coastal communities.

The objective of the Ocean Deal should be to **achieve a healthy and resilient Ocean for the benefit of people and planet alike**. To do so, it should acknowledge that the protection, preservation and management of the Ocean and its resources is a common responsibility and establish **the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable Ocean which supports the livelihoods of EU citizens in a fair and equitable way**.

The Ocean Deal should set ambitious targets and measures to achieve the Good Environmental Status of EU seas as soon as possible.

The Ocean Deal should:

- ☑ Bring full policy coherence and ensure that sectoral legislation, for example related to food (fisheries and aquaculture), transport or energy production, delivers full implementation, and no watering down of EU environmental and social commitments;
- ☑ Improve compliance with and enforcement of environmental rules at national and European levels;
- ☑ Increase transparency of ocean-related activities, notably by removing the legal barriers to the publication of data related to these activities;
- ☑ Integrate strong reporting and access to justice provisions, to ensure full accountability;
- ☑ Ensure that the planet's and citizens' interests are fully represented in advisory and consultative bodies.

#2

SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF AMBITIOUS POLICY OBJECTIVES FOR THE OCEAN WITH AN EU OCEAN FUND

To support the implementation of an ambitious EU Ocean Deal, an EU Ocean Fund is needed.

This fund should be based on two components: one dedicated to measures for the long-term restoration and conservation of the marine environment, and another one dedicated to the just transition of ocean-related economic sectors towards more sustainable, fair, decarbonised and low-impact activities for the benefit of all.

In addition to the establishment of this fund, subsidies which are harmful to the marine environment should be identified and eliminated as soon as possible and no later than 2027, both at the EU and Member State levels.

Taxpayers' money should be invested in delivering the objectives of the Ocean Deal. The revision of the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) in 2027 will be an opportunity to do so, and to increase the level of funding dedicated to the Ocean overall.

#3

PUT THE OCEAN AT THE HEART OF THE EU DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

It is not possible to streamline ocean-related policies through the current fragmented EU decision-making process. In order to overcome the current siloed approach to policy-making, we call on the EU to:

- ☑ Establish an Ocean Committee in the European Parliament that will be responsible for the Ocean Deal and the Ocean Fund. This Ocean Committee should replace some of the current committees such as the Committee on Fisheries as well as the Committee on Transport and Tourism when it comes to maritime topics, in order to break silos and ensure coherence among sectoral policies related to the Ocean, including climate and the protection of the marine environment;
- ☑ Create an Executive Vice-President for the Environment and the Ocean in the new European Commission;
- ☑ Organise a joint Council meeting of Environment, Energy, Fisheries and Transport ministers within each Council Presidency to make progress on the implementation of the Ocean Deal.

AMBITIOUS AND EFFICIENT SECTORAL POLICIES

In order to achieve a healthy and resilient Ocean for the benefit of people and planet, current ocean-related sectoral policies will need to be revised and new policies will need to be adopted to:

- ✓ Enhance our efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt to its consequences, including through nature-based solutions;
- ✓ Embark on and carefully plan a nature-positive energy transition at sea;
- ✓ Establish robust protection and meaningful restoration of marine biodiversity;
- ✓ Transition to fair and low-impact fisheries (in terms of bycatch, habitat disturbance and carbon emissions);
- ✓ Promote the consumption of less and more sustainable seafood for EU citizens;

- ✓ Halt pollution at sea in all its forms, in particular plastic pollution, marine litter, chemical contaminants, underwater noise and nutrient pollution;
- ✓ Stop destructive extractive activities at sea, including - but not limited to - deep-seabed mining and offshore oil and gas exploitation;
- ✓ Ensure the delivery of ecosystem-based Maritime Spatial Planning;
- ✓ Decarbonise maritime industries;
- ✓ Transition to low-impact and sustainable coastal and marine tourism;
- ✓ Ensure that the EU plays an international leadership role in the just transition at sea.

More detailed information about our asks for ocean sectoral policies is included in our [Blue Manifesto](#).

These sectoral demands are supported by thousands of citizens and 30+ Ocean organisations across Europe under the [Blue Up 2024! Campaign](#).





CONCLUSION

The Ocean is experiencing multiple emergencies and challenges which are threatening our well being, health and livelihoods, but there is hope for the future.

With the three actions outlined in this manifesto, the EU can create a new vision for the Ocean that places its health and resilience at the centre.

Adopting an overarching and ambitious EU Ocean Deal, supporting the delivery of ambitious policy objectives with the creation of an EU Ocean Fund, and putting the Ocean at the heart of the EU decision-making process are critical steps towards a healthy and resilient Ocean for the benefit of people and planet alike.

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