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.

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:**
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.
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:

- 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.

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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