

The background of the entire page is a vibrant underwater photograph. It shows a variety of colorful coral reefs in shades of orange, pink, and yellow. Several tropical fish are visible, including a large school of silver fish in the upper right, and various smaller species like striped tangs and butterflyfish in the lower half. The water is a deep, clear blue.

REPORT

ON THE

EUROPEAN

CITIZEN

CONSULTATION

BLUE
≈ **UP**
2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all European citizens who engaged in the participatory democracy initiative over the last six months. We also wish to extend our thanks to our volunteer chapters in 11 European countries for helping to bring this consultation to life and raising awareness among their communities, as well as to Civocracy, the platform that made the digital consultation possible.

Surfrider Europe is grateful to all the volunteers who assisted us in communicating and promoting the consultation. Furthermore, we wish to thank the 29 official supporters of Blue Up 2024 for helping us expand the reach of the initiative across Europe, from the North Sea beaches to the Atlantic Ocean cliffs and the Mediterranean.

The EU financing of the LIFE programme made this project reality, and we sincerely thank the European Commission for its continued confidence in our work. It is now time to prioritise citizens' concerns in the next European elections.

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1

THE BLUE UP 2024 CAMPAIGN

The Ocean and our seas provide us with food, resources, energy, well-being, recreation, culture and jobs. The Ocean produces approximately half of the oxygen in the atmosphere and is the biggest ecosystem on Earth. Yet the Ocean is also being used more and more for human activities, the pressures of which are accumulating and putting this incredible natural space at risk. Pollution, overexploitation, loss of habitats and biodiversity, and the effects of climate change are impacting the overall resilience of the Ocean.

Blue Up 2024 is a European campaign that aims to offer EU citizens and civil society organisations who care about and are committed to the Ocean the possibility to express their views on Ocean protection and bring them to European decision-makers.

In June 2024, European citizens will be invited to vote in all EU Member States to elect the new Members of the European Parliament. That offers the perfect opportunity to highlight the necessity of protecting our Ocean. Of the many candidates standing in the EU elections, some will go on to represent the 27 European countries in the European Parliament for the coming five years. The Blue Up 2024 coalition therefore intends to urge the candidates to place crucial policy decisions on establishing a healthy, vibrant, pollution-free and resilient marine and coastal environment high on the agenda – in the interest of cleaner, safer and healthier oceans in Europe.

The European Parliament is the only EU institution whose members are directly elected by citizens and which represents the voice of EU citizens. The European Union has the world's biggest maritime territory, with almost half of its population living by the sea. The European Parliament passes laws that concern all possible aspects of Ocean protection and votes on the budgets that will support those measures. It also contributes to international discussions on Ocean issues. In other words, the European Parliament can massively impact the state of our Ocean today and takes decisions that will hugely impact it tomorrow.

2

THE CITIZEN CONSULTATION

IT'S BLUEDY TIME, EUROPE!

A

METHODOLOGY

As part of this global campaign, we launched the largest citizen consultation on the Ocean at the European level, called *It's Bluedy Time, Europe!*

From December 2022 to May 2023, Ocean experts and Ocean-loving citizens reenvisioned the protection of the Ocean. Close to 400 proposals, ideas and solutions were shared on how the European Union can take action to better protect the Ocean during its next mandate.

To lay the framework for this large citizen consultation at the European level and expand its reach, the Blue Up 2024 coalition teamed up with Civocracy to build a digital space for all EU citizens and Ocean experts to gather in the same collective and interactive place.

Proposals were gathered in relation to **five different topics**: *Climate Change, Biodiversity, Pollution, Blue Economy and Health*.

It should be noted that proposals were posted by individuals, as well as by organisations.

THE FIVE TOPICS

TOPIC ONE

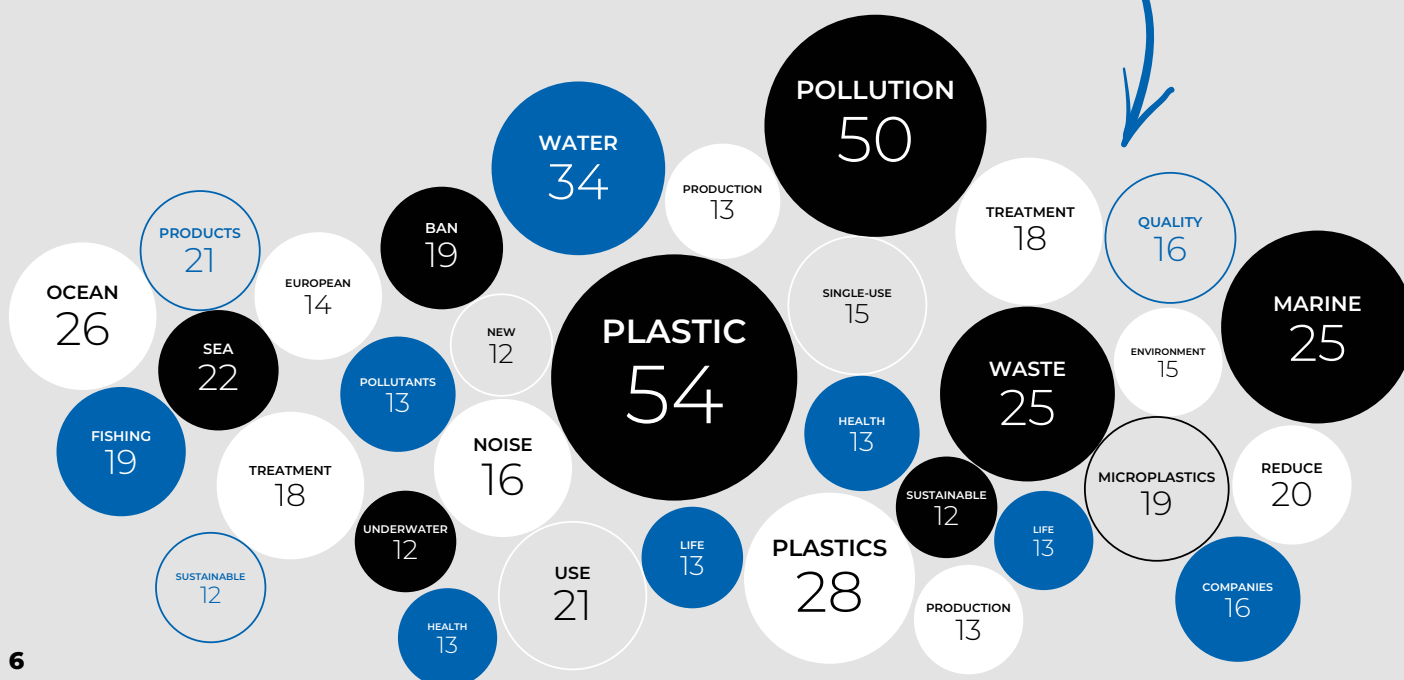
POLLUTION

ON THE TOPIC OF POLLUTION, CITIZENS WERE ASKED: “HOW TO REDUCE THE POLLUTION THAT IMPACTS OUR OCEAN?”

THE SUGGESTIONS MADE DEMONSTRATE A SENSE OF URGENCY, CONCERN AND PASSION ABOUT THE NEED TO ADDRESS PLASTIC POLLUTION AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IMPACTING OCEANS AND WATERWAYS.

THEY UNDERLINE THE NEED FOR THE EU TO LEAD THE WAY on international Ocean governance and for a multidisciplinary approach to identifying solutions.

ANALYSIS OF THE WORDING USED IN THIS DISCUSSION REVEALS THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS TO BE THE FOLLOWING:



The following were among the most

POPULAR POSTS

ON THE TOPIC OF POLLUTION:

**LIONEL SAYS:
LEGISLATE ON PLASTIC
PELLETS ISSUE**

"As we can see in a lot of places (for example on the Atlantic Coast in winter 2022-23), plastic pellet spills are a huge source of pollution! They are lost all along the value chain of their lifecycle (production, transportation, transformation...) We need a high-level legal framework at all levels to stop this pollution! We need high-level prevention measures (filters, pellet hoovers, improvement of the way they are carried), training of persons manipulating pellets and fees in case of pollution. Each loss of pellets should be declared."

CRISTINA SAYS:
**INCREASE WASTEWATER
TREATMENT INFRASTRUCTURES**

"Investments in improvements in the WWTPs and monitoring of their operation. Mandatory water treatment in all towns and cities and expansion of existing ones in tourist towns to provide a complete service in high occupancy seasons. Water treatment facilities for hotels and other tourist businesses, especially in towns with high occupancy variation. Improving regeneration water treatment in order to reduce waste water discharges into the sea and oceans and provide a new resource in areas with water stress. Direct discharges into the sea of wastewater without treatment through submarine pipes must be prohibited."

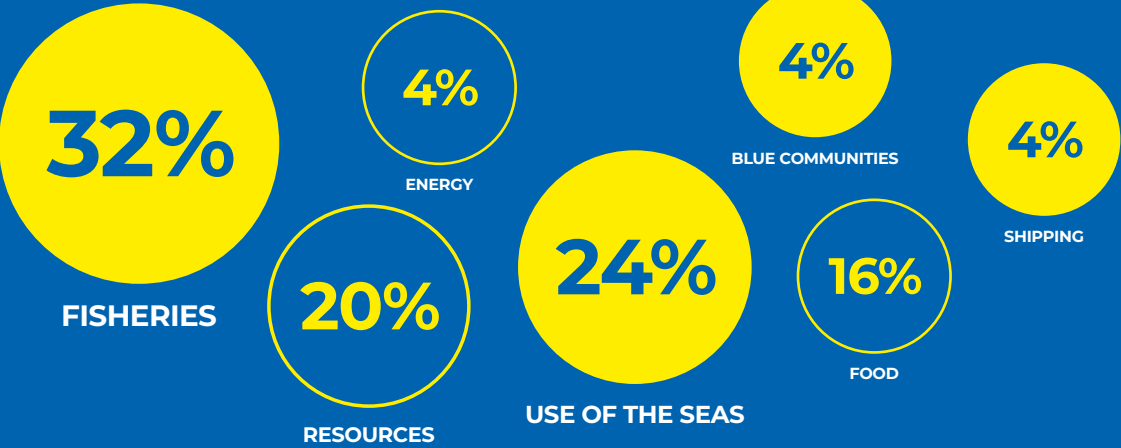
TOPIC TWO BLUE ECONOMY

ON THE TOPIC OF THE BLUE ECONOMY, CITIZENS WERE ASKED: “HOW TO MAKE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AT SEA COMPATIBLE WITH OCEAN PROTECTION?”

THE KEY MESSAGE CONVEYED IN THE RESPONSES IS THE IMPORTANCE OF PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AT SEA WHILE PROTECTING THE OCEAN AND ITS BIODIVERSITY.

THE POSTS REFLECT A SENSE OF URGENCY AND DETERMINATION with a focus on specific actions and policies to be implemented, such as redesigning EU fisheries legislation, strengthening marine protected areas, promoting sustainable fishing methods and banning harmful activities like deep-sea mining and shark finning.

ANALYSIS OF THE POSTS BY TOPICS REVEALS A FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:



The following were among the most

POPULAR POSTS

ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES:

EUROCEAN'S YOUTH SAYS:
VALUING BLUE NATURAL CAPITAL

“The current mechanism for the economic valuation of natural assets actively contributes towards their destruction. Blue Natural Capital is undervalued. To achieve a sustainable Blue Economy, the EU should develop a mechanism to evaluate the Blue Natural Capital of each marine country and all their Blue Economy activities, to be able to impose a policy according to the user-pay principle for the beneficiaries of the natural resources. The countries that effectively protect and have policies for Ocean protection should be paid for the services that are provided through their protected natural resources/ecosystems.”



TOPIC THREE CLIMATE CHANGE

ON THE TOPIC OF CLIMATE CHANGE, CITIZENS WERE ASKED: “HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE OCEAN?”

OVERALL, THE POSTS BY CITIZENS AND EXPERTS RECOMMEND A MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO REDUCING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE OCEAN. SOME SUGGESTIONS ARE AIMED AT REDUCING EMISSIONS DIRECTLY, WHILE OTHERS FOCUS ON MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE OCEAN, we need to transition to sustainable practices, protect and restore natural systems and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That involves banning harmful practices, investing in nature-based solutions and increasing coastal resilience through financial support and investment. The participants express clear concern for the state of the Ocean and the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems.

They offer a variety of solutions and suggestions and the sense of urgency in their tone indicates their conviction that rapid action is needed to address the problem. The participants also clearly call for governments, businesses and individuals to take responsibility and change their practices to reduce their impact on the Ocean and mitigate the effects of climate change.



The following were among the most

POPULAR POSTS

ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

YANA SAYS:

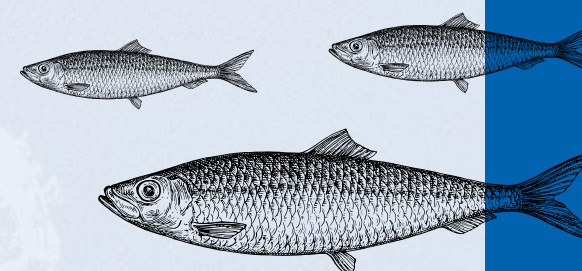
BAN OFFSHORE DRILLING!

“Offshore drilling urgently needs to stop! First, it pollutes our ocean plastic, chemical & underwater noise pollution; risk of spills). Secondly, it is part of the outdated energy system based on fossil fuels - that we immediately need to phase out if we want to have a chance of stopping climate change.”

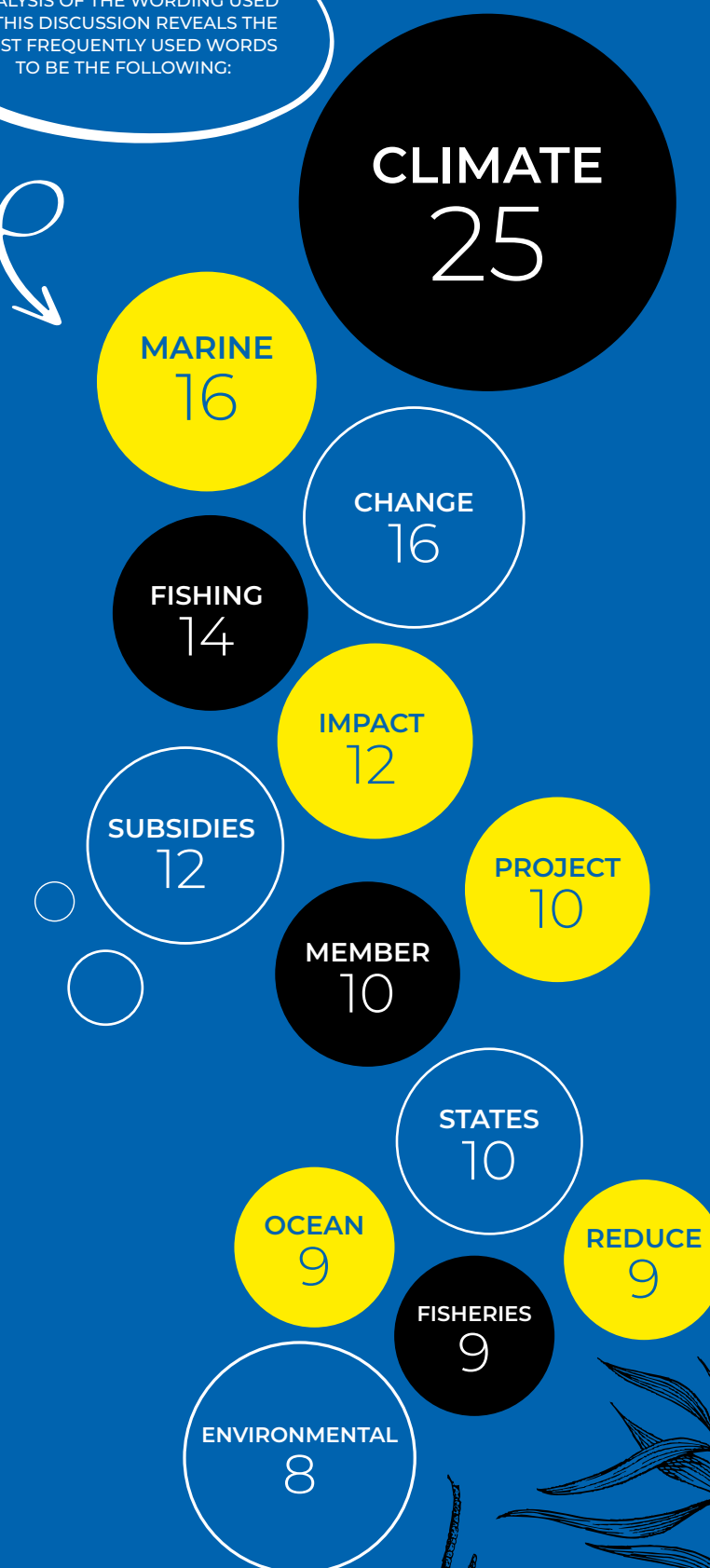
TOBIAS SAYS:

BAN BOTTOM TRAWLING

“Bottom trawling is the most destructive way of fishing, both for marine biodiversity and for the climate. We have to stop it now!”



ANALYSIS OF THE WORDING USED IN THIS DISCUSSION REVEALS THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS TO BE THE FOLLOWING:



TOPIC FOUR BIODIVERSITY

ON THE TOPIC OF BIODIVERSITY, CITIZENS WERE ASKED: “HOW TO PROTECT AND RESTORE THE OCEAN’S BIODIVERSITY?”

THE POSTS PROPOSE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH THAT INCLUDES A RANGE OF STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE HUMAN IMPACT on the Ocean and promote the conservation of marine ecosystems. They advocate the establishment of marine protected areas, the protection of endangered species and the prohibition of destructive fishing techniques and industrial activities in protected areas. They also highlight the need for promotion of sustainable fishing practices, responsible fish farming and reduction of the impacts of fishing gear and methods on sensitive species.

Additionally, the proposals focus on reducing the human impact on the Ocean through measures such as reducing noise pollution, banning chemical sunscreens in tourist areas with corals and stopping exploitation of the Ocean. Creating marine sanctuaries for the restoration of tidal marshes and coastal ecosystems, rewilding the marine environment and creating ecological corridors are also suggested as important strategies.

Finally, the participants call for European and international cooperation and regulation, including the creation of a European fund, adoption of uniform terminology for marine protected areas and clear regulatory action concerning deep-sea mining and use of maritime space. Overall, the tone is urgent and proactive, highlighting the need for immediate action to protect and restore the Ocean’s biodiversity.

The most POPULAR POSTS

INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

ALLÉGRA SAYS:
AN OCEAN FREE OF DRILLING, STARTING WITH A BAN IN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND THE ARCTIC REGION

“Offshore drilling is very harmful for Ocean biodiversity because of the fact that it leads to bad water quality: spills and uncontrolled discharges are so harmful for biodiversity, as well as underwater noises, which result in hearing loss, reduced catch rates of 40-80% and beach strandings for a number of species. Furthermore, offshore platforms often become dangerous waste: concrete bases left at sea are a time bomb for the marine environment due to the volume of contaminated water they contain. It is also an economic issue in that the value generated by the offshore oil and gas sector (and the jobs that go with it) has been declining for years. In addition, the existence of offshore drilling threatens other maritime sectors such as fishing and tourism. And lastly, we will never manage to limit global warming to 1.5°C if we continue to drill for oil and gas.”

ANALYSIS OF THE POSTS BY TOPICS REVEALS A FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:

18.75%

FISHERIES

6.25%

BLUE ECONOMY

37.5%

MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

12.5%

DEMOCRACY

18.75%

MARINE FAUNA

18.75%

PROTECTIVE/MPAS

TOPIC FIVE HEALTH

ON THE TOPIC OF THE HEALTH, CITIZENS WERE ASKED: "HOW TO GUARANTEE A HEALTHY OCEAN FOR US AND OUR PLANET?"

THE POSTS ON THIS DISCUSSION SUGGEST SEVERAL WAYS TO GUARANTEE A HEALTHY OCEAN FOR US AND OUR PLANET. Scientific knowledge, technological innovation and awareness among citizens are important drivers for a sustainable Blue Economy and Ocean health. The involvement of decision makers and the general public is crucial in order to establish policies that reduce the impact of human activities – such as pollution, overfishing and climate change – on the Ocean.

It is also important to protect specific species like sharks and rays that are essential for stable and productive ecosystems. Finally, creating international working groups and organisations that ensure harmonisation in the field of Ocean protection can help to address shared problems.

The most POPULAR POSTS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

LUCILLE SAYS:
STRENGTHEN THE LINK BETWEEN OCEAN AND MARINE SCIENCE AND POLICYMAKERS

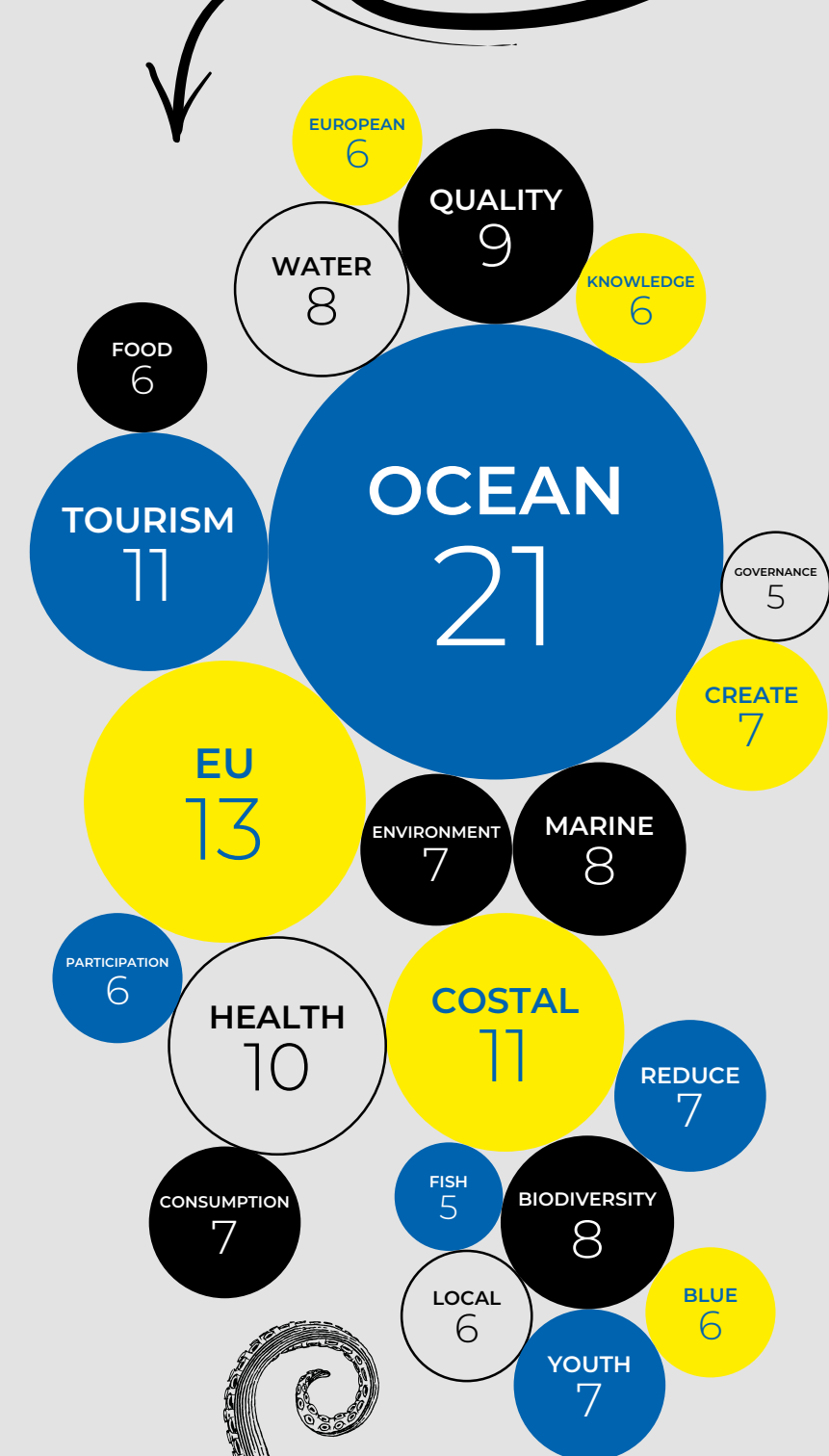
"We want to strengthen the link between scientific knowledge and Ocean governance, by:

- Providing policymakers with scientific knowledge on Ocean issues, in order to close the gap between science and policy
- Increasing research funding and capacity building in Ocean and marine sciences."

MARIANA SAYS:
THE OCEAN IS PART OF SOLUTIONS TO THE CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY CRISES

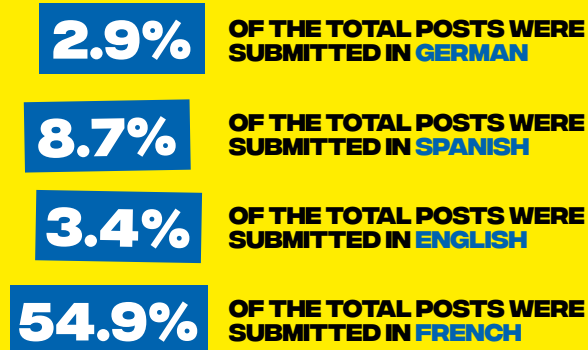
"We know the ocean is a really complex ecosystem and also a source of many solutions. We are all deeply connected to the ocean, and our future relies on its health and well-functioning. One of the biggest challenges that remains is to bring the ocean at the heart of climate discussions without which climate adaptation and mitigation is limited. The ocean, climate and biodiversity are closely interlinked and we should address them together rather than separately."

ANALYSIS OF THE WORDING USED IN THIS DISCUSSION REVEALS THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS TO BE THE FOLLOWING:



SUMMARISING THE RESULTS

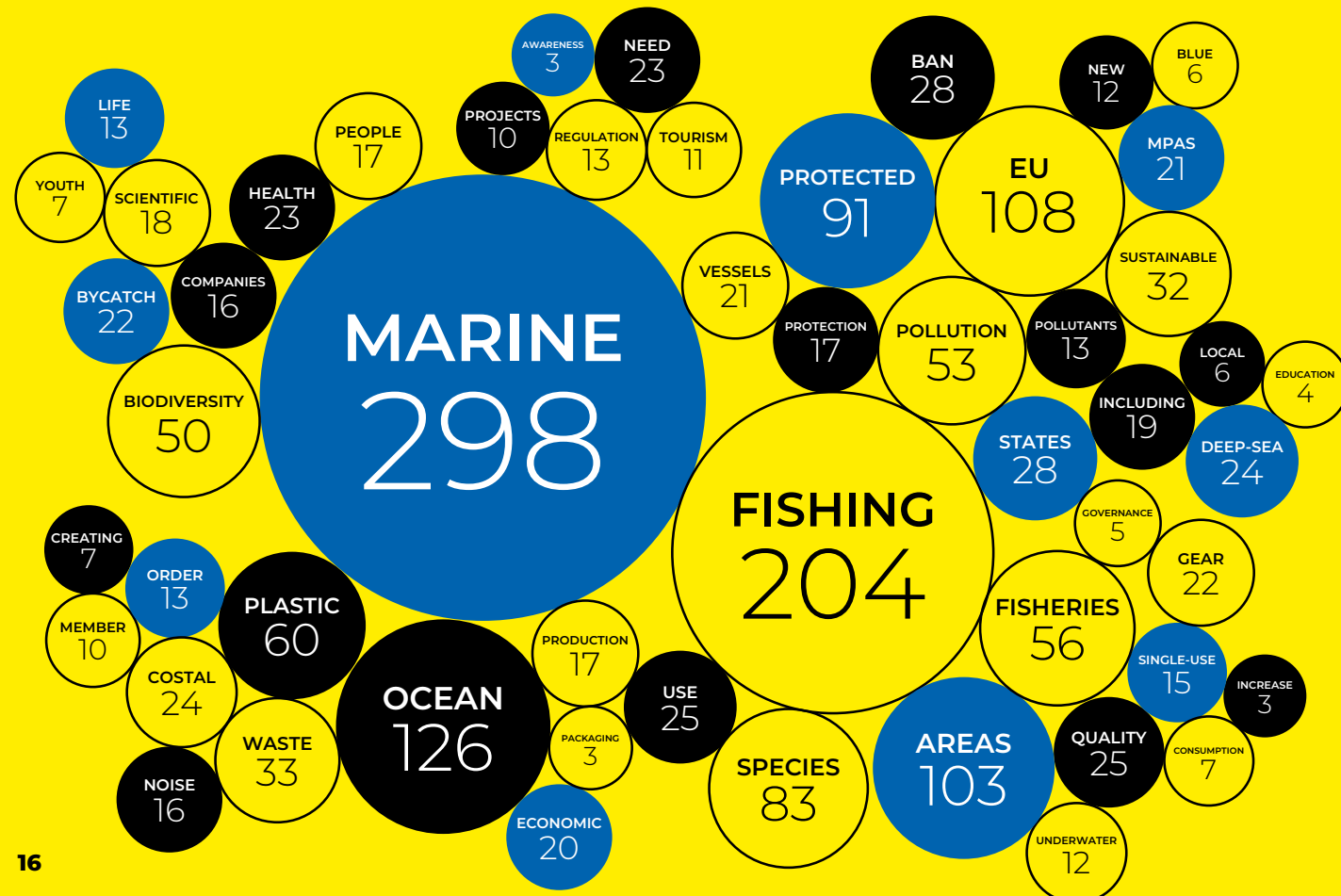
IF WE ANALYSE THE LANGUAGES USED TO SHARED THE CONTRIBUTIONS, WE CAN OBSERVE THAT:



Many solutions were proposed to protect the Ocean in Europe, including a focus on the Ocean, the climate and biodiversity nexus, urgent action at source, biodiversity protection, bans on harmful practices such as bottom trawling, eco-friendly desalination, promotion of local and vegetarian food, increasing the traceability of seafood products, rehabilitating illegal dumpsites and stepping up awareness and education. Other solutions include protecting more

areas from exploitation, imposing quotas based on impact, reducing fishing waste, taking action against microplastics and banning harmful practices like seabed mining, plastic packaging and aquaculture. It is important to raise awareness, educate the public and impose legal constraints on unsustainable practices.

We can gain an overview of the main concerns of citizens and the participating civil society organisations by looking at the keywords used across the modules:



CONCLUSION

THE “IT’S BLUEDY TIME EUROPE” CONSULTATION GAVE VOICE TO EUROPEAN CITIZENS BETWEEN 15 DECEMBER 2022 AND 9 MAY 2023, ALLOWING THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON OCEAN ISSUES.

Blue Up 2024 gathered citizen’s proposals on Ocean protection and synthesised them into a list of the leading 10 policy proposals to be brought directly to the European political parties.

The first phase showed us that experts and citizens were engaged and keen to share ideas concerning biodiversity, climate change, pollution, economic activities and health, as well as on wider topics, such as democracy, governance and education about Ocean protection.

It is important to highlight the fact that, despite different languages, the initiative managed to reach and engage people from a range of countries and with varying backgrounds and approaches towards Ocean protection and the specific topics related to it.



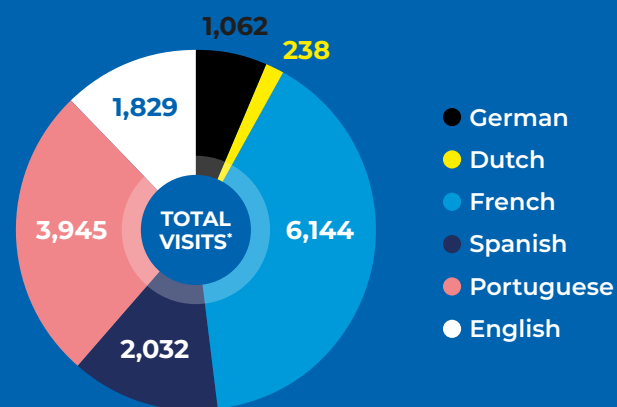
THE TOP TEN PROPOSALS

The top 10 proposals represent a summary of the almost 400 posts we gathered during the consultation. Given the number of posts we received related to democracy, we decided to create a 6th, new topic called Democracy. This was included at the end of the consultation as a firm foundation for building the 10 proposals to protect the Ocean.

Citizens from all European countries were invited to **share their support for the top 10 proposals for a better protected Ocean**. The platform supporting the 10 proposals was available in all countries of the European Union and was displayed in six languages, namely English, French, Dutch, German, Portuguese and Spanish, enabling us to reach **a total of 72,237 people**. The highest participation was recorded among French-speaking citizens, followed by speakers of Portuguese, Spanish, English, German and, lastly, Dutch.

We urge all the European political parties to take the proposals into account and to include them in their Electoral Manifestos ahead of the European Elections in 2024.

SUPPORT TO 10 DEMANDS FOR A PROTECTED OCEAN AT EU LEVEL PER LANGUAGE (PERIOD 30/03/23 - 09/05/23)



*It is important to consider that these numbers and tracking features take into account the traffic representing the visits of people that accepted the cookies on the Civocracy platform, conforming to the data protection policies. We are using Matomo as a tool to track the traffic of visits on our project pages.

POLLUTION

1 REDUCE POLLUTION IN ALL ITS FORMS

The diversity of pollution must be taken into account by European decision makers. Our demands:

- Reduce plastic production at the European and advocate for a reduction at global level,
- Remove the most dangerous chemicals from the market,
- Improve water treatment while investing in nature-based solutions,
- Transform the shipping sector,
- Impose the cost of pollution on polluters, rather than on final consumers,
- Enable the shift to local and closed-loop consumption.

BLUE ECONOMY

2 TRANSFORM THE BLUE ECONOMY

We need to reduce the pressures of the Blue Economy on the Ocean. Our demands:

- Evaluate and monitor the consequences of human activities at sea in order to limit their impacts to the greatest possible extent,
- Consult with coastal communities on possible alternatives and options,
- Drastically reduce emissions, pollution and impacts of the Blue Economy sectors, including maritime transport, as well as those of land-based economic sectors on the Ocean.

CLIMATE CHANGE

3 MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

We need to strengthen the Ocean's resilience to climate change. Our demands:

- Reduce global carbon emissions and those of the Blue Economy,
- Protect marine ecosystems, known as "blue carbon", and phytoplankton to maximise the Ocean's carbon capture capacity and potential.

4 PRESERVE COASTAL AREAS

We need to strengthen the Ocean's resilience to climate change. Our demands:

- Promote nature-based solutions as opposed to cumbersome options that have a negative impact on the environment,
- Restore biodiversity in coastal areas to protect the role of these areas as a buffer zone against the impacts of climate change.

BIODIVERSITY

5 PROTECT THE MARINE ECOSYSTEM THROUGH EFFECTIVE PROTECTED AREAS

It is urgent to ensure a healthy Ocean, for us and the planet. Our demands:

- Protect at least 30% of the Ocean, including at least 10% with full or high protection, including particularly vulnerable areas with high ecological value,
- Ban harmful and destructive activities near and within designated protected areas.

6 HALT THE LOSS OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY

To preserve the many resources of the Ocean, a real transformation of the Blue Economy is necessary. Our demands:

- Transition Blue Economy sectors towards virtuous practices and activities that generate neither pollution nor toxicity and are low carbon,
- Reduce noise emissions through the implementation of strict rules to regulate offshore drilling and shipping in particular.

HEALTH

7 PRESERVE THE OCEAN FOR THE HEALTH OF EUROPEANS

We derive multiple benefits from the marine world and must ensure that we can pass this incredible resource onto future generations. Our demands:

- Create zones dedicated to the "blue" activities that contribute to the preservation and protection of water,
- Promote education and raise awareness of the role the Ocean and seas play in the health of human beings and the planet,
- Strictly limit the supply of fish and seafood products to those coming from sustainable, low-carbon and local fisheries.

8 STRENGTHEN MONITORING OF MARINE POLLUTION

Marine pollution is growing, requiring us to step up our efforts. Our demands:

- Harmonise and extend pollution monitoring protocols throughout the continent,
- Increase funding for scientific research on all sources of contaminants and their impacts on health and the environment in the light of current and future challenges.

DEMOCRACY

9 BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE

Europe must rethink the governance of the Ocean in order to safeguard this precious resource. Our demands:

- Eliminate subsidies that benefit activities that harm the health of the Ocean,
- Shift to and invest in more sustainable production and consumption models to drastically reduce human pressures on the Ocean and our greenhouse gas emissions,
- Revise and improve the current decision-making process to make it more transparent, inclusive and based on the long-term interests of EU citizens, rather than short-term economic interests.

10 INCLUDE THE BLUE COMMUNITY

European governance must get closer to coastal populations in order to ensure our Ocean is truly protected. Our demands:

- Fight against illegal fishing, which accounts for up to 20% of fishing, and introduce more robust measures to put an end to overfishing, which affects some 30% of fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic and 80% in the Mediterranean,
- Reduce emissions from maritime transport that affect the health of populations living in ports in particular,
- Promote education of coastal populations on the marine environment and raise the awareness of citizens living far from the coasts.

OUR FIELDS OF EXPERTISE

OCEAN LITERACY

Ocean literacy has gained in political attention and visibility in recent years in the European Union. Understanding how we influence the Ocean and how the Ocean influences us is at the core of this concept, allowing us to make responsible choices to better protect our Ocean and make sustainable use of the opportunities it offers. The concept of Ocean literacy is not limited to children's (formal and informal) education. It is relevant to each of us taking (small and big) decisions that directly or indirectly impact the Ocean, namely citizens, parents, young people, decision makers, marine professionals and media professionals, not to mention the EU's elected representatives.

To strengthen Ocean literacy in Europe, the European Commission has launched the EU4Ocean coalition, which aims to unite the voices of Europeans to make the Ocean a shared concern. The initiative builds in particular on: (1) a platform for organisations and individuals engaged in Ocean literacy initiatives; (2) a European Youth Forum for the Ocean; and (3) a Network of European Blue Schools. The coalition supports collective action and brings the Ocean literacy debate to key policy discussions and communities. If you are not yet part of, connected to or supporting the EU4Ocean coalition, do come and contribute to its development! That will help it become a lasting and effective instrument contributing to the protection of the Ocean and to the sustainable use of its resources.

Acteon Environment

BIODIVERSITY AND RESTORATION

We are in the middle of the sixth mass extinction in the history of the Earth. This mass extinction has been triggered by man and it took us less than 200 years of unprecedented exploitation to reach this point. Countless animal and plant species are disappearing at an alarming rate. In fact, we do not even know whether many species now exist at all. In July 2022, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) presented its updated Red List of threatened animal and plant species. Of the more than 147,500 species recorded, nearly 41,500 are listed in categories of species that are under threat.

Yet for many species, such as guitarfish, it is not known whether they even still exist due to a lack of data. The current extinction rate far exceeds that of the Cretaceous period when the dinosaurs died out! The global biodiversity crisis is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century.

That is why we urgently need a strong Nature Restoration Law in Europe that is fit for purpose to tackle the twin biodiversity and climate crises. We are heading towards a mass biodiversity extinction and climate breakdown, threatening the very basis of life as we know it. Science is very clear on this. Efforts to address these crises and to restore our relationship with nature have been largely inadequate so far. Unsurprisingly, increasingly frequent droughts, floods and forest fires are making the effects of the crises ever more obvious all across Europe. The EU Nature Restoration Law is the unique opportunity of this decade to change the pathway from continuous deterioration to regeneration, steering towards a safe and resilient future in harmony with nature. Restoring nature means restoring our greatest ally in tackling the climate crisis and its severe impact, restoring our own health and wellbeing, and restoring our livelihoods and economies. Nature restoration is one of the best investments our society can make.

Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz (DSM)

POLLUTION AND BIODIVERSITY

For decades science has shown us the threat posed by the climate crisis. Unfortunately the predicted future is already here today. During that time, we have registered the collapse and loss of diverse species and marine ecosystems. Coastal coastlines are a fundamental pillar of the European economy, especially in the Mediterranean. For several months of the year, population density and crop production are shown to increase drastically in these populations, generating a demand for services and waste management exceeding current management forecasts.

Although waste management and control plans already exist, it is easy to see how wastewater discharges enter the sea without any treatment, due to the collapse of purification plants or the lack of such water treatment plants.

The increase in coastal pollution becomes evident when observing the evolution of the reefs surrounding coastal populations: loss of biodiversity, an increase in the number of invasive species and an increase in toxic compounds in the sea and the organisms living there.

The collapse of these ecosystems is reality, as shown years ago by the case of the Mar Menor lagoon, a situation that can be seen repeated on a larger scale in closed seas, such as the Mediterranean.

That makes it essential to implement more effective and comprehensive waste and pollution management plans if we want to ensure the preservation of our biodiversity. It is our duty as a society and as a species to sustain the environment that provides the very basis for our existence.

Reefers Project

NOISE POLLUTION

Ship strikes, underwater noise and greenhouse gas emissions from the 119,000+ commercial vessels that ply the Ocean pose a serious conservation and welfare threat to whales, other marine species and habitats around the world.

Whales, dolphins, porpoises, fish and other marine life are negatively affected by underwater noise pollution, both temporarily and in the long term. This is because they rely on sound for survival: to find food, to communicate with one another and to navigate. Half of this noise is produced by the commercial shipping sector, which has increased globally since the expansion of marine trade routes over the last decades.

In order to reduce underwater noise levels, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) calls on the EU to adopt effective measures to be implemented by Member States. For example, limiting ship speeds in Europe would reduce noise pollution and the risk of ships colliding with whales by around a quarter, as well as lower fuel consumption, CO2 emissions and air pollution from shipping by around 8% respectively.

International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

OCEAN GOVERNANCE

We need to strengthen the link between Ocean and marine science and policymakers, by increasing the resources for transdisciplinary research on Ocean issues and creating a science-policy interface on Ocean sustainability.

Ocean governance can be understood as the processes that operate within and between states, civil society and local communities and the market, including industry, in the field of Ocean issues. We want to strengthen the link between scientific knowledge and Ocean governance, by providing policymakers with scientific knowledge on Ocean issues, in order to close the gap between science and policy. That can be achieved through workshops, summer schools, training sessions or the creation of a platform gathering a

wide range of stakeholders, such as the International Panel on Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) as mentioned in the joint communication on the EU's International Ocean Governance agenda. Opening up this Ocean knowledge to a range of stakeholders could provide a true science-policy interface that is not limited solely to policymakers, but also open to other actors, such as companies, NGOs, civil society and local institutions, thereby helping to integrate knowledge on the Ocean into Ocean governance at different levels and in multiple sectors. By taking advantage of synergies between IPCC, IPBES and other similar regional initiatives, the creation of a global platform could ensure a whole-of-the-Ocean approach by taking the complex interrelations between Ocean challenges and other global challenges into account.

We are calling for an increase in research funding and capacity building in Ocean and marine sciences (such as Horizon Europe on the European level). That can be achieved through financial support for early-career scientists, reprioritisation of funding towards interdisciplinary Ocean research, increasing PhD funding in the field of Ocean and marine science and funding various UN Ocean Decade activities.

Eurocean's Youth

DEMOCRACY – FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE

Flags of convenience (FoC) refer to the practice of registering vessels in countries with less stringent regulations and enforcement, allowing them to bypass stricter controls and engage in illegal fishing activities. Here are some possible measures:

Strengthening Flag State Responsibility: The EU can push for stricter regulations and enforcement measures to hold flag states accountable for the actions of vessels flying their flags. That would involve working with international organisations and agreements to ensure that flag states fulfil their obligations to combat illegal fishing and maintain high standards of vessel registration and control.

Promoting Port State Measures: The EU can encourage the adoption and implementation of robust port state measures to combat illegal fishing. That would involve an obligation for thorough inspections of vessels entering EU ports, including those flagged under countries known for lax regulations, to ensure compliance with fishing rules, documentation and catch reporting requirements.

Blacklisting Non-Compliant Vessels: The EU can establish a blacklist of vessels engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities, including those operating under flags of convenience. That would restrict their access to EU ports, services and markets, serving as a deterrent and encouraging flag states to take action against vessels flying their flags that are engaged in illegal activities.

Strengthening Regional Cooperation: The EU can work closely with regional fisheries management organisations and neighbouring countries to address the issue of flags of convenience. That would involve sharing information, coordinating efforts to combat illegal fishing and encouraging regional agreements that promote responsible vessel registration and control measures.

Encouraging Transparency in Fishing Activities: The EU can promote greater transparency in fishing activities, including vessel ownership and beneficial ownership information. By requiring comprehensive disclosure of ownership structures, the EU can help expose potential cases of flags of convenience and make it more difficult for vessels engaged in illegal fishing to operate covertly.

Supporting Capacity Building: The EU can provide support to developing countries to enhance their capacity to regulate and control vessels flying their flags. That could include technical assistance, training and financial resources to strengthen their legal frameworks, enforcement capabilities and monitoring systems, reducing the incentives for flags of convenience.

Addressing the issue of flags of convenience is crucial in the fight against illegal fishing, as it undermines efforts to ensure sustainable and responsible fishing practices. By implementing these measures, the EU can contribute to curbing illegal fishing activities associated with flags of convenience and promote a more transparent and accountable fishing industry.

Fish4Me

IMPACTS OF FISHING, FARMING AND TRANSPORTATION

According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity, IPBES, the five greatest threats to marine biodiversity are:

1. Direct exploitation
2. Destruction of habitats
3. Climate change
4. Pollution
5. Invasive alien species

All of these are linked to what we eat and how we produce it.

Blutopia calls on EU policymakers to adopt effective measures to reduce stresses on the Ocean that are caused by our diet. Specifically, that means: reducing the amount of animal products on our plates, especially in the restaurant and catering industry; encouraging Ocean-friendly practices at sea and on land, such as angling and agroecology; and also promoting development of the seaweed industry. Plant-based, organic, local and seasonal food should be easy and accessible to everyone.

Blutopia

BLUE JOBS AND EDUCATION

Investing in more initiatives to give an active voice to young people and young Ocean professionals to better understand their social, economic and environmental concerns with regard to Ocean-related economic activities. That can follow the model of the EMB Young Ambassadors initiative, for example.

Scientific careers must be more financially sustainable and stable. There should be regulations in place to promote academic contracts in academic institutions and to ensure women's maternity rights during academic scholarships (in Portugal at least, scholarship funds expire despite women not being able to work due to pregnancy and childcare); overall, these careers should be treated like other jobs and be properly regulated with stronger labour rights. More stable academic careers can help combat job instability (in relation to seeking jobs and the associated requirements) and promote innovation and identification of solutions to ensure Ocean protection.

Funding grants need to be created that are exclusively geared towards employment creation (in the form of both contracts and internships) in marine areas for young people in order to encourage people to pursue and continue marine careers.

Corrente D'Atlas

ECOCIDE / EU FISHING BEYOND EU WATERS

The European Union should be a leader in Ocean protection and conservation. An Ecocide Law would provide a much-needed legal framework to protect Ocean wildlife and marine ecosystems by recognising the intrinsic value of the Ocean and its ecosystems, with several significant benefits. An Ecocide Law would benefit the Ocean by:

Preventing environmental destruction: Ecocide refers to unlawful or wanton acts committed in the knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by such acts. Adopting an Ecocide Law would allow the EU to establish clear legal frameworks and enforce penalties for activities that harm the Ocean. This can act as a strong deterrent against actions such as overfishing, habitat destruction, pollution and illegal dumping, helping prevent further environmental destruction.

Promoting sustainability and biodiversity: The Ocean is a vital ecosystem supporting a wide range of marine species that contribute to global biodiversity. An Ecocide Law would enable the EU to promote sustainable practices and conservation efforts. That could include stricter regulations on fishing quotas, protection of critical habitats and promotion of sustainable fishing techniques beyond EU waters and in international waters.

Addressing climate change impacts: Climate change is causing significant disruptions to the Ocean, including rising sea levels, Ocean acidification and changes to marine ecosystems and increasingly extreme weather events. An Ecocide Law could enable the EU to address the root causes of these impacts. By curbing activities that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, such as industrial pollution (plastics, chemicals, shipping etc.) and offshore oil and gas exploration, the EU can play a crucial role in mitigating climate change effects on the Ocean.

International leadership and collation: The EU has a strong reputation for its environmental policies and commitments. Adopting an Ecocide Law would demonstrate the EU's commitment to sustainable development and make it a global leader in Ocean conservation. The EU can drive positive change and establish a framework for global Ocean governance.

Gallifrey Foundation

PLASTIC POLLUTION

Plastic pollution is one of the major threats to Ocean health, with global plastic production expected to quadruple by 2050. Globally, it is estimated that up to 12 million tonnes of plastic end up in the Ocean every year, with an estimated 100,000 mammals and more than one million birds dying as a result of that pollution. Plastic has also been found in our bodies, as well as in our water and food, putting our very own health at risk too.

Future EU decision makers will need to prioritise tackling plastic pollution of our Ocean at source since it is impossible, too costly and unrealistic to remove all plastics, including microplastics, from the sea. That means addressing the exponential increase in both the production and use of plastic, cutting down their use at source, eliminating major sources of plastic pollution, holding polluters accountable and making them financially responsible for the plastic pollution they generate, redesigning plastic products for prevention, reuse and non-toxicity and supporting the upscale and mainstreaming of reuse and refill systems, as well as improving plastic waste management.

Surfrider Foundation Europe

WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

As is well known, 80% of marine waste comes from inland. Some of the measures that must be taken to prevent this waste from reaching the sea are the following:

- Investments to improve waste management from industrial and urban sources, especially in towns near the coast.
- Investments in cleaning up natural areas, riverbeds and other places where abandoned waste accumulates.

- Investments in improvements in wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and monitoring of their operation.
- Water treatment facilities for hotels and other tourist businesses, especially in towns with high fluctuations in occupancy.
- Prohibition of direct discharges of untreated wastewater into the sea through submarine pipes.

Asociación Vertidos Cero

MICROPLASTICS FROM TEXTILES

Microfibres are plastic fibres that are shed from synthetic textiles and clothing when they are worn or washed. The level of release in this process can vary according to the synthetic material and the cleaning or washing process. Their small size (less than 5mm) means that they cannot be captured by standard washing machine filters, so they leak into the wastewater or sewage systems. If left unfiltered, they are released from there into waterways and subsequently into the marine environment. They cause harm to riverine and marine species and can ultimately enter the human food chain.

Microfibres have been found to be present in oceans, rivers, soil and even in the air. Insufficient research means that the extent of the problem is not yet clear, but it is estimated that microfibres from synthetic textiles account for over 34% of the total microplastic load in the Ocean, making them one of the largest contributors of microplastics into global waters.

Preventing leakage of microfibres into the environment requires a co-ordinated and determined response from all sections of society. European Member States, national governments and transnational institutions must design and implement strategies and legislation that specifically target this type of pollution.

European governments and the European Commission must take vigorous action to ban or set strict limits regarding discharge of plastic microfibres from any source, including introducing an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for textiles. European governments must take unilateral action to ensure that all washing machines are fitted with filters by 2025. They must also introduce initiatives at all levels of governance to educate about the effects of microplastic pollution and achieve widespread public awareness.

KIMO International



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