

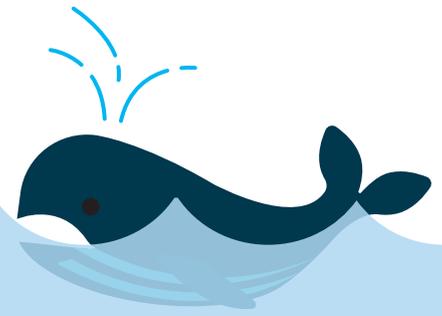


**SEAS AT RISK**

for the protection and restoration of the marine environment



# MANIFESTO FOR THE SEA



## European seas are in a sorry state

European seas are in a sorry state. Successive governments have allowed over exploitation, pollution and mismanagement of an environment that was once abundant and diverse. The citizens of Europe know this, and they expect more from their leaders. Over 60% of Europeans believe that neither national governments nor the EU are doing enough to protect the environment<sup>1</sup>. Europeans are deeply connected to the water and half of the population of maritime countries are located within coastal regions<sup>2</sup>.

The protection of European seas should be central to all European parties' manifestos. All EU governments are committed to achieve healthy European seas by 2020<sup>3</sup>. Simple changes in policy can lead to healthier, more resilient oceans for all Europeans to enjoy for decades to come. We therefore call on European political parties to make your manifestos marine.

Commit to the following actions, which scientists, economists and society – your voters – all call for, to address key threats to our seas and oceans and manage them sustainably.

## Protect our marine biodiversity

Commit to protecting at least 30% of EU seas in networks of well managed Marine Protected Areas.

**Science:** Over 650 marine fish species, 180 marine bird species, five turtle species and almost 40% of the world's known marine mammals are found in Europe's seas. Sadly, less than 20% (and often much less) of all marine species, habitats and ecosystems are considered as being in Good Environmental Status<sup>4</sup>. Scientists globally agree that at least 30% of our seas should be well- managed Marine Protected Areas to enable ecosystem recovery<sup>5</sup>.

**Society:** Over half a million citizens signed statements in support of the conservation of biodiversity on land and at sea, to avoid that EU legislation would happen at the expense of the environment.

**Economy:** Marine Protected Area networks have been proven to be worth billions for tourism. The Commission reports that the marine Natura 2000 network generated approximately €1.5 billion of benefits in 2011. This could increase to €3.2 billion if the marine Natura 2000 coverage doubled<sup>6</sup>.



1 European Commission, webpage 'Environment poll: citizens trust the EU, but expect more', last updated 11/04/2018

2 Eurostat, 'Nearly half of the population of EU countries with a sea border is located in coastal regions', Statistics in Focus, No 47/2009, June 2009.

3 European Commission, webpage 'Legislation: the Marine Directive', last updated 18/05/2017.

4 European Environment Agency, Marine Messages, 2014.

5 IUCN, 'Motion 53 – Increasing marine protected area coverage for effective marine biodiversity conservation', World Conservation Congress, Final version 28 January 2017.





## Save the seas from our waste

Commit to supporting upcoming EU legislation to drastically reduce single use plastics, and work towards an overall reduction in the use of plastic.

**Science:** Up to 50% of the marine litter on Europe's beaches is made up of disposable, use-once plastic items. An estimated 100,000 tonnes of plastic from EU countries ends up in the sea every year, from coastal land areas alone<sup>7</sup>. We cannot recycle our way out of the plastic pollution disaster, around 40% of Europe's 'recycled' plastic is actually shipped to other continents, and most plastic packaging is not recyclable anyway.

**Society:** Citizens have woken up to the vast quantities of unnecessary plastic in their lives and the damage it is doing to the marine environment, more than 750,000 people signed a petition asking for EU legislation. Measures to reduce plastic are also popular, with high public support for plastic bag charges and similar measures.

**Economy:** Marine litter can cause serious economic damage with losses for coastal communities, tourism and fishing. The cost across the EU for beach cleaning alone is approximately €630 million per year.

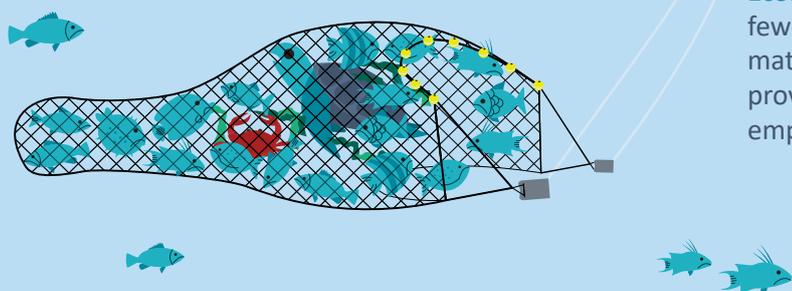
## End overfishing and ensure all fisheries are sustainable

Commit to supporting sustainable fisheries by promoting strong measures in the Common Fisheries Policy and working against any attempts to water down these important laws.

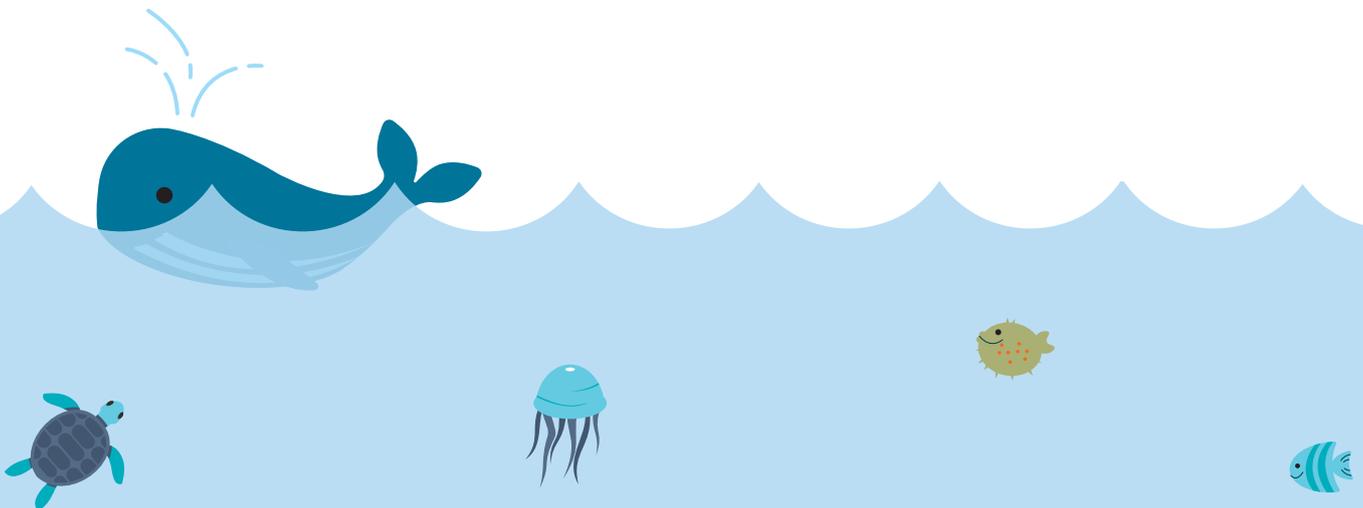
**Science:** Our fish stocks continue to be threatened by overfishing despite the comprehensive reform of the Common Fisheries Policy which MEPs worked hard to achieve. Currently about 40% of the 71 assessed fish stocks in the Northeast Atlantic are fished above scientifically recommended exploitation levels, while almost 70 stocks remain without assessment, at the same time a shocking 87% of assessed stocks in the Mediterranean are still overfished<sup>8</sup>. The lack of action to reduce by-catch means that high numbers of protected marine mammals, seabirds and turtles keep being accidentally caught in fishing nets.

**Society:** Your voters support sustainable fisheries – during the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, over 870,000 people supported the petition to end the practice of discarding fish.

**Economy:** It makes no sense to overfish, leaving fewer and fewer fish to reproduce. This is basic maths backed up by numerous studies which prove the considerable economic and employment benefits of fishing sustainably<sup>9</sup>.



# The future of European seas lies in your hands



European seas are in a sorry state. Successive governments have allowed over exploitation, pollution and mismanagement of an environment that was once abundant and diverse. However, simple changes in policy can lead to healthier, more resilient oceans for all Europeans to enjoy for decades to come. We therefore call on European political parties to make your manifestos marine and commit to:

- Protecting our marine biodiversity.
- Saving the seas from our waste.
- Ending overfishing and ensuring that all fisheries are sustainable.



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