



2019 ANNUAL REPORT



FOREWORD

If we have learned anything from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is that we are all inextricably connected with each other and the natural world. Without greater balance, we cannot survive as a species.

2019 saw an increasing recognition of the importance of a healthy ocean as the life support system of our planet. A United Nations report revealed that the ocean has absorbed over 90% of the heat trapped by our CO₂ emissions and, as the largest active carbon sink on earth, sequestered over 25% of the carbon of those emissions. But the ocean is getting warmer and more acidic at a much faster pace than originally anticipated. And global biodiversity is decreasing at an alarming rate, with ocean species going extinct even faster than those on land. The European Environment Agency published an assessment showing that European seas and ocean are no exception to these trends. Yet the ocean can only protect us against the climate crisis if it is resilient, with thriving and diverse marine life and healthy ecosystems.

For 30 years, Seas At Risk, together with our members, has contributed to the development of strong and sustainable marine policies in support of a healthy ocean. This includes legislation that would see EU seas clean and healthy and without overfishing in 2020. But in 2019, it became clear that despite some progress, these targets would not be achieved.

However, the tide is turning. In response to massive demonstrations calling for an ecological transition, and supported by a newly elected European parliament that saw a significant increase among Greens, the European Commission entered its new mandate with the launch of the European Green Deal. This commitment to ambitious climate and biodiversity strategies aims to shift investment and legislation towards a climate-resilient and ecologically diverse future. Early drafts of the Green Deal did not include ocean protection, but Seas At Risk pushed to make the Green Deal blue. We led the joint development, with five other NGOs, of the Blue

Manifesto, a detailed roadmap for healthy oceans by 2030, supported by more than 100 organisations across Europe.

In addition to the Blue Manifesto, we contributed to shifting the narrative on deep-sea mining. We led movements against heavy fuel oil in the Arctic and cetaceans bycatch, and shifted the needle on fisheries subsidies. Step by step, day by day, with briefs, intricate committee work, and relentless communication, we prepared for in-depth change in the way the ocean is taken into account in key European policies.

As we emerge from lockdown caused by the pandemic, most recovery measures focus on addressing the health crisis and dealing with the economic fallout. We must rebuild in a way that protects the fundamental elements we all rely on: and a healthy ocean is absolutely fundamental. Governments are under pressure to prop up large polluting companies and to drop environmental protections to make it easier for industry to operate. This will be presented as a choice – but choosing humans over nature is not a real choice. We must achieve a balance with the natural world, a coexistence which ultimately enables us to thrive. If we do not achieve this balance and take action to do better now, we will continue to face escalating global disasters.

The financial support for recovery provides an opportunity to make the transition to a more resilient socioeconomic model, one that supports social well-being, secures green jobs and promotes the sustainable use of natural resources within planetary boundaries. The Blue Manifesto is very timely and should guide efforts to build a more resilient and sustainable marine future. Seas At Risk will continue to push for this, to support our ocean, and with it our planet and people.



Dr. Monica Verbeek
Executive Director
Seas At Risk

2019 AT A GLANCE

Seas at Risk is a voice for the ocean, and for millions of European citizens who know that healthy marine ecosystems are vital and should be protected. Here are four key moments from 2019:



Making the European Green Deal Blue

The new European Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, launched an ambitious European Green Deal. However, ocean protection was not featured

in early drafts. We pushed to change that vision, and convince our policy-makers that we need thriving marine and coastal ecosystems to support a climate-resilient future. With five other NGOs, we developed the *Blue Manifesto*: a detailed roadmap for healthy oceans by 2030. The Manifesto was signed by more than 100 organisations all over Europe, and has become a critical reference document for European ocean policy.

Protecting Cetaceans Against Fishing



In the Bay of Biscay alone, 11,300 common dolphins died during the winter 2018-2019 as a result of fishing activities. In the Baltic Proper, the harbour porpoise is critically endangered. In July, Seas at Risk and our members Whale and Dolphin Conservation, International Fund for Animal Welfare and France Nature Environnement led a coalition of more than 25 NGOs to demand that the European Commission take emergency measures under article 12 of the Common Fisheries Policy. While the process is still ongoing at EU level, France has already agreed not to re-open pelagic fisheries in the Plateau de Rochebonne, off its Atlantic coast.

219,000
signed our
"Save our Seas"
petition

+ 35%
Newsletter
subscribers

+19%
Twitter
followers

+ 31%
Press articles
mentioning SAR

Changing the Narrative on Deep-sea Mining

2019 saw a surge of calls for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, issued by the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (a global coalition of 70+ NGOs and of which Seas At Risk is steering member), Greenpeace International, WWF International among many others. These calls universally reflect the alternative narrative that Seas At Risk has advocated since 2012, i.e. that deep-sea mining can be avoided

if we transition to a circular and sharing economy that focuses on sustainable consumption and production in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal n°12. Our two-day workshop for NGOs was instrumental in convincing several EU-based NGOs to help us counter the industry's push towards increased mining - on land and in the deep sea. Our new coordination platform "Keep it in the seabed" has more than fifty members, bringing together NGOs working on deep sea mining, terrestrial mining and circular economy.



Ringfencing Fisheries Funding for Nature Protection

The marine environment is facing unprecedented degradation, through pollution, littering, unsustainable fishing, and seabed destruction. The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF), currently being negotiated, represents more than 6 billion euros in public funding for 2021-2027. With other NGOs, we advocated that at least 25% of the EMFF budget be ring-fenced to the restoration and protection of marine ecosystems.

The European Parliament voted in favour of this measure, but harmful fisheries subsidies were also reintroduced. The negotiations continue in 2020, and we will be paying close attention.



OCEAN GOVERNANCE

2019 was a year of political renewal, with the election of a new European Parliament and the establishment of a new European Commission. We made a concerted effort to ensure that marine priorities were high on the agenda of the new Parliament and Commission, through our '[Manifesto for the sea](#)', [video](#) and document with [priority actions](#) for

the von der Leyen Commission. Although early drafts of the ambitious European Green Deal overlooked ocean policy as a key element of sustainability and climate resilience, a joint push by Seas At Risk and other NGOs saw the Green Deal taking on a bluer hue. In 2019, we led the development of a joint [Blue Manifesto](#) with five

“ This vision for 2030 is not just wishful thinking. It is a pragmatic, well-researched plan to guide the work of Europe in the next decade.

- Blue Manifesto



other NGOs (Birdlife, ClientEarth, Oceana, Surfrider Foundation Europe and WWF). More than 100 other organisations signed it, **cementing the Blue Manifesto as a key reference document for ocean policy for the coming decade.** It stresses the need for marine and coastal ecosystems to be rich in fauna, flora and genetic biodiversity so that they can perform their natural functions and support life on earth. And most importantly, the Manifesto explains how to get there.

Backed up by the publication of the UNFCCC special report on the ocean, we highlighted the link between climate resilience and ocean protection. We organised side events at the G7 summit in Biarritz and at the "Blue COP" negotiations in Madrid, drawing attention to the impacts of shipping and fisheries on ocean resilience to climate change. We joined the large climate march in Madrid, with a banner: "Ending overfishing is climate action".

Marine Biodiversity

Ocean wildlife is being threatened from all sides. The key to successful biodiversity action is to get involved in every relevant sectoral activity: fisheries policies, industrial development activities and climate action. Marine protected areas can be an important part of the solution, if they are properly managed (and not just paper parks).



Our way of life harms the ocean

Take action now to save [#OurBlueLung](#)

Marine Directive: Must Try Harder

“

Marine depths are home to majestic whales, curious fish, sea mountains and vast expanses of algae and kelp forests. (...) Our governments have had other priorities. It is time to ask them to respect the law. Are you with us?”

- [Ourbluelung.eu](#)

When the Marine Strategy Framework Directive was adopted twelve years ago, European governments committed to have “ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive” by 2020. 2019 was the last year before this deadline, and governments are nowhere near achieving it. In May, we published an overview of EU action, jointly with Surfrider. Its title set the tone: “Must try harder”.

We launched the campaign [#OurBlueLung](#) as a way to communicate the need for much more decisive action on plastics pollution, underwater noise, overfishing, chemicals and intensive farming, sectoral issues that directly affect ocean biodiversity. This campaign helped raise awareness on actions needed to achieve Good Environmental Status for our ocean. We developed joint positions, through workshops and research papers, to prepare for the revision of the Directive in 2022-2023.



Well-managed Marine Protected Areas, not just paper parks.

In the EU, an estimated 12.4% of marine waters are officially protected from human activities. However, **a large share of them are simply “paper parks”, devoid of any protection** measures and with no policy or management plan in place to bar industrial or fishing activities. Through our project “Making MPAs work in Europe”, we provided technical and legal advice to our members and organised workshops to discuss national advocacy strategies for better Marine Protected Areas. These are some of the early “wins” from our members:

In the Netherlands, our member the North Sea Foundation pushed the government to submit management plans for three offshore MPAs, stopping bottom-contact fishing in large parts of the Dutch North Sea.

In Ireland’s Waterford estuary MPA, following a complaint by our partner Coastwatch, courts stopped hydraulic dredging on a protected razor shell bed.

In Portugal’s Armação de Pera MPA, a bottom-up co-management system was created with the support of our member Sciaena.

Protecting cetaceans from bycatch

In July 2019, we launched a joint campaign with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation, IFAW and France Nature Environnement. Together, we urged the European Commission to take emergency measures to **protect the common dolphin in the Bay of Biscay and the Baltic harbour porpoise, two species at mortal risk of being caught in the gears of fishing boats** (an issue known as bycatch). In December,

we co-organised a high-level event in the European Parliament on cetacean bycatch. This increased awareness in Parliament and up to the level of the European Commissioner for Environment, Fisheries and Oceans. In December, France announced it would not open the season for pelagic trawling in a Natura 2000 area in the Bay of Biscay.

We led a joint effort of 17 NGOs that had

an impact on negotiations on the technical measures regulation of the Fisheries policy. We obtained stronger provisions to avoid bycatch of sensitive species. This will support NGO national work on cetacean bycatch in the coming years.



Maritime Spatial Planning

Different countries are taking very different approaches to implementing the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, with results that are often sector-driven rather than ecosystem-based. More and more economic activities, such as wind farms, fisheries, and aquaculture, are planned in Marine protected areas.

We published and disseminated our [Guide to maritime spatial planning with nature in mind](#) to help our members engage in public participation in their respective countries.



Sustainable food systems

In the European Union, we are still catching fish faster than they can reproduce. At Seas at Risk, we aim to end overfishing for all fish stocks. We also ensure that the environmental commitments made under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy are implemented effectively.

Fishing limits are negotiated every year by EU Fisheries

Ministers. Seas at Risk weighed in on the negotiations, alongside other organisations. We coordinated our actions, and our members' responses, at key moments in their countries and at key events at EU-level. We also organised celebrations for World Oceans Day. More than 500,000 citizens signed our petitions and we delivered them formally during the December Council of Fisheries Ministers. We

supported national campaigners with online tools that resulted in a large and coordinated social media presence and published op-eds and press releases that were widely quoted in mainstream media like the guardian. Our [video](#) on the Commission's greenwashing of the figures on overfishing triggered continuous discussions with DG MARE.

In October and December 2019, **EU fisheries ministers set**

54% of the fishing limits in line with the amounts recommended by scientists.

This means that overfishing continues for 46% of fish stocks in 2020. However, some of the most harmful excessive fishing quotas were mitigated and individual limits were more closely aligned with science.

Getting out of the "fish ghetto"

The Common Fisheries Policy clearly committed to end overfishing of all stocks by 2020, but it didn't happen. With the increasing recognition of the importance of a healthy

ocean for climate resilience, and the scientific establishment that fisheries are one of the main drivers of the unprecedented rate of marine biodiversity loss, we aimed to get

broader attention for overfishing and lifting it out of the "fish ghetto". We organised a dedicated event on this issue at the "Blue COP" in Madrid.





Subsidising our future

The European Maritime Fisheries Fund budget allocation for 2021-2027 is currently being discussed. The first plan presented by the Commission did not include a minimum expenditure for marine conservation. We worked with other NGOs to make sure that 50% of the 6-billion euro fund would be ring-fenced for nature protection, control and data collection, and that the fishing industry would not be subsidised for modernisation or renewal of their fleet which would increase capacity. We set up meetings with decision makers,

drafted briefings and amendments, and launched a public campaign including an online citizen platform. We also successfully collaborated with the industry platform Low Impact Fishers of Europe by agreeing on a joint position which was disseminated among decision makers.

The European Parliament voted in favour of allocating 25% of the budget to marine conservation, but some harmful subsidies are still planned. Negotiations will continue over 2020.

Making aquaculture sustainable by 2027

About 20% of the fish we eat in the European Union is farmed; it is one of the world's fastest-growing food sectors. But the aquaculture sector has its own environmental problems, including water pollution derived from nutrients buildup and plastics pollution. The common objective we set in the Blue Manifesto is that by 2027, "the EU adopts regulations that ensure that all aquaculture production in EU seas is non-polluting and does not rely on marine animal-derived feed ingredients."

Achieving this seemingly simple objective requires long, careful steps and intricate committee work. We are playing an active role in European discussions, as vice-chair in the Aquaculture Advisory Council, keeping partner NGOs informed and coordinating joint responses to reports and operational decisions. We are keeping close watch on aquaculture policies and funding, particularly through the European Maritime Fisheries Fund.



Sustainable production

Plastics directives: Time for Implementation

2019 started with two big victories against marine litter. The Single-Use Plastics Directive was finally adopted in June 2019, introducing a ban on a select number of throw-away items. It followed the adoption, in December 2018, of the Port Reception Facilities Directive to address waste from ships and fishing vessels that accounts for around 27% of marine plastic pollution.

Both directives included the main asks outlined in our position paper and 2017 study. We are on the right track, but we are not quite done: it's now time to make sure these two directives are properly and ambitiously implemented. We participated in the development of the European Commission's guidance for Member States. We helped our members advocate for ambitious transposition of the directives into national law. We developed [implementation guides for national decision makers](#) and helped our members share their good practices across Member States.

Shifting to a circular economy

Getting rid of plastics in the long-term involves shifting to a circular economy, where we consume less, recycle and re-use raw materials. We were involved in the preparation of the Circular Economy

Action Plan, published in March. Seas at Risk participated in three events on the circular design of fishing gear. We also worked in close collaboration with NGO networks at both EU and national level, such as the

Rethink Plastic Alliance and Break Free From Plastics. International processes towards a global treaty on marine litter and harmonised monitoring protocols are ongoing and we are monitoring them closely.

The plastic in our bodies

At the end of 2018, following intense joint advocacy from Seas at Risk and other Rethink Plastic networks, the European Parliament finally recognised the problem of microplastics and called on the Commission to ban them in cosmetics and cleaning products by 2020. The European Chemicals Agency then launched a restriction process on microplastics intentionally added in products. We contributed to the consultation with other NGOs, and were quoted in news

articles, such as the story on "The plastic in our bodies" published by Politico. We also initiated policy development on plastic production pellets, which are still being released into the open environment throughout the supply chain. We inspired the future recommendations on the topic by OSPAR (by which 15 Governments & the EU cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic). The European Commission is monitoring progress closely while considering future regulation to prevent pellet loss.



Deep-Sea Mining: Changing the Narrative

We are challenging a well-oiled narrative: that urbanisation and the transition to renewable energy would require more mining, making deep-sea mining a necessity. In reality, we can protect our oceans from this trauma if we transition to a circular and sharing economy that focuses on sustainable consumption and production in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal n°12.

Our two-day workshop Deep-sea mining, changing the narrative, was an opportunity to convince other marine NGOs, and NGOs working on terrestrial mining and the circular economy, to share our effort and to develop counter-arguments together. **We extended our influence to non-marine arenas to solve the problem at the source.** We held meetings with the Transport & Environment campaign group, and with the Climate Action Network, to come to a coordinating position. The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (70+ NGOs), Greenpeace, WWF and many other NGOs issued calls for a moratorium on deep-sea mining,

as inspired by our position. Our online platform “Keep it in the seabed” will ensure continued exchange of information and coordinated action. We prompted the OSPAR convention to consider supporting the calls for moratorium.



Shipping

Slower ships for healthier seas

In 2018, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) set a clear commitment to decarbonising the shipping sector, with a target of reducing total shipping emissions by “at least 50%” by 2050. It is the first time an entire industrial sector has committed to such a target. For 2019, our focus was on the urgent adoption of short-term measures to peak emissions quickly.

To reach this target, **the best short-term measure is to reduce ships’ speed**. We pushed this proposal in IMO negotiations

through 2019, supported by two new SAR-commissioned studies, one on the economic impact of slow steaming and another on the multi-environmental benefits of reduced ship speed. The [infographic](#) summarising the findings of the latter study on greenhouse gas emissions, underwater noise, and ship collisions with whales received wide press attention. We also actively participated in Commission stakeholder meetings on EU Member States’ input to the IMO climate negotiations.



Three quarters of Arctic summer sea ice has disappeared since the 1970s, opening an easier route for an increasing number of ships to cross the Arctic, using heavy fuel oil. In the event of an oil spill, this particular fuel would be impossible to clean up, and would devastate the Arctic environment. Heavy fuel



No more heavy fuel oil in the Arctic

combustion also produces high levels of black carbon, accelerating ice melting.

As a founding member of the Clean Arctic Alliance, we took over the management and coordination of its heavy fuel oil ban campaign. **At the end of 2019, five out of eight Arctic States were supporting a ban on the use and carriage**

of heavy fuel oil by ships in the Arctic: Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and the United States. Denmark has also adopted a similar position, and even Canada and Russia appeared to be accepting that a ban is coming. The campaign also received support from industry, such as the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators.

Seas At Risk

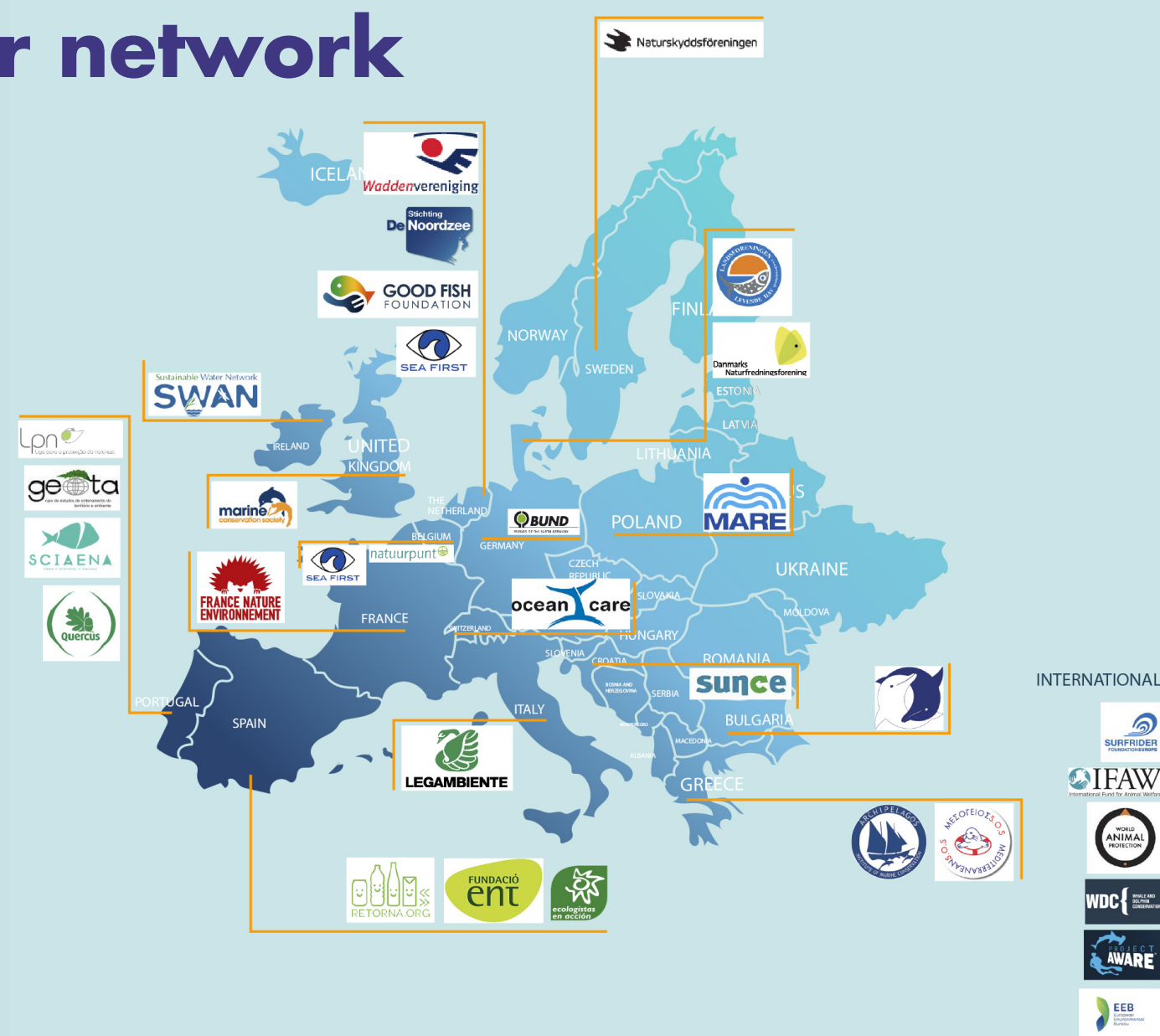
Seas At Risk is an umbrella organisation of environmental NGOs from across Europe that promotes ambitious policies for marine protection at European and international level. We have 32 member organisations in 17 countries, representing millions of EU citizens that care deeply about the ocean. Located in Brussels, we work to drive European and international marine and maritime policies in a sustainable direction. We participate in governance processes at international, regional and European level, while supporting our member organisations to do the same at national level.

Our vision is healthy marine ecosystems whose benefits can be enjoyed now and in the future. Our work is guided by four principles: sustainability, precautionary action, integration and democratisation.

We are governed by an Assembly, which consists of one delegate from each member organisation. The Assembly meets once a year to debate and agree the work programme of the organisation, along with the associated budget.

Our Management Committee is responsible for ensuring the work programme is implemented effectively and in line with the agreed budget. It consists of the Chairman of the Assembly, Treasurer, Secretary, and at most two other Assembly members. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation.

Our network



BELGIUM
Sea First Foundation
Natuurpunt
BULGARIA
Friends of the Black Sea
CROATIA
Sunce
DENMARK
Danmarks Naturfredningsforening
Levende Hav
FRANCE
France Nature Environnement

GERMANY
BUND – Bund für Umwelt- und Naturschutz Deutschland
GREECE
Mediterranean SOS network
Archipelagos
IRELAND
Sustainable Water Action Network (SWAN)
ITALY
Legambiente
THE NETHERLANDS
Good Fish Foundation
Stichting De Noordzee
Waddenvereniging

POLAND
MARE Foundation
PORTUGAL
Liga Para a Protecção da Natureza (LPN)
Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamentodo Território e Ambiente (GEOTA)
Sciaena
Quercus
SPAIN
ENT Foundation
Retorna
Ecologistas en Acción
SWEDEN
Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen
SWITZERLAND
OceanCare
UNITED KINGDOM
Marine Conservation Society

INTERNATIONAL
International Fund for Animal Welfare
European Environmental Bureau
Project Aware
World Animal Protection
Environmental Investigation Agency
Surfrider Foundation Europe
Whale and Dolphin Conservation

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Senior Policy Advisor
Senior Marine Policy Officer
Aquaculture Policy Officer
Senior Marine Litter Policy Officer
Fisheries Policy Officer
Marine Policy Intern
Communications Officer
Operations Manager
Admin and Member Liaison Officer
Finance and Administration Officer



Our Management Committee



Jennifer Lonsdale
(Environmental Investigation Agency)
Chair



Gonçalo Carvalho
(Sciaena)
Treasurer



Ana Dewar
(Retorna)
Secretary



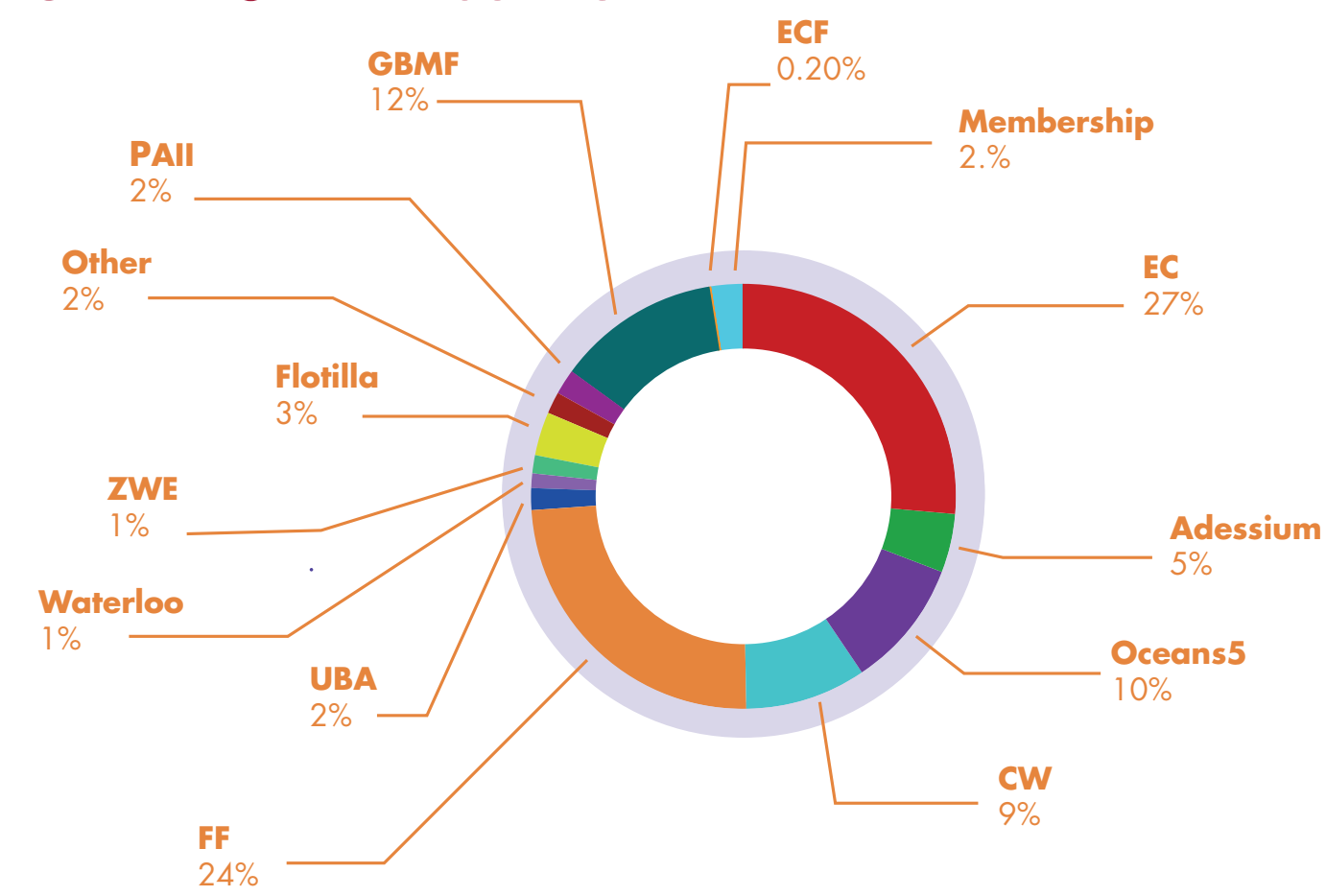
Patrick ten Brink
(The European Environmental Bureau)
Non-post Holder



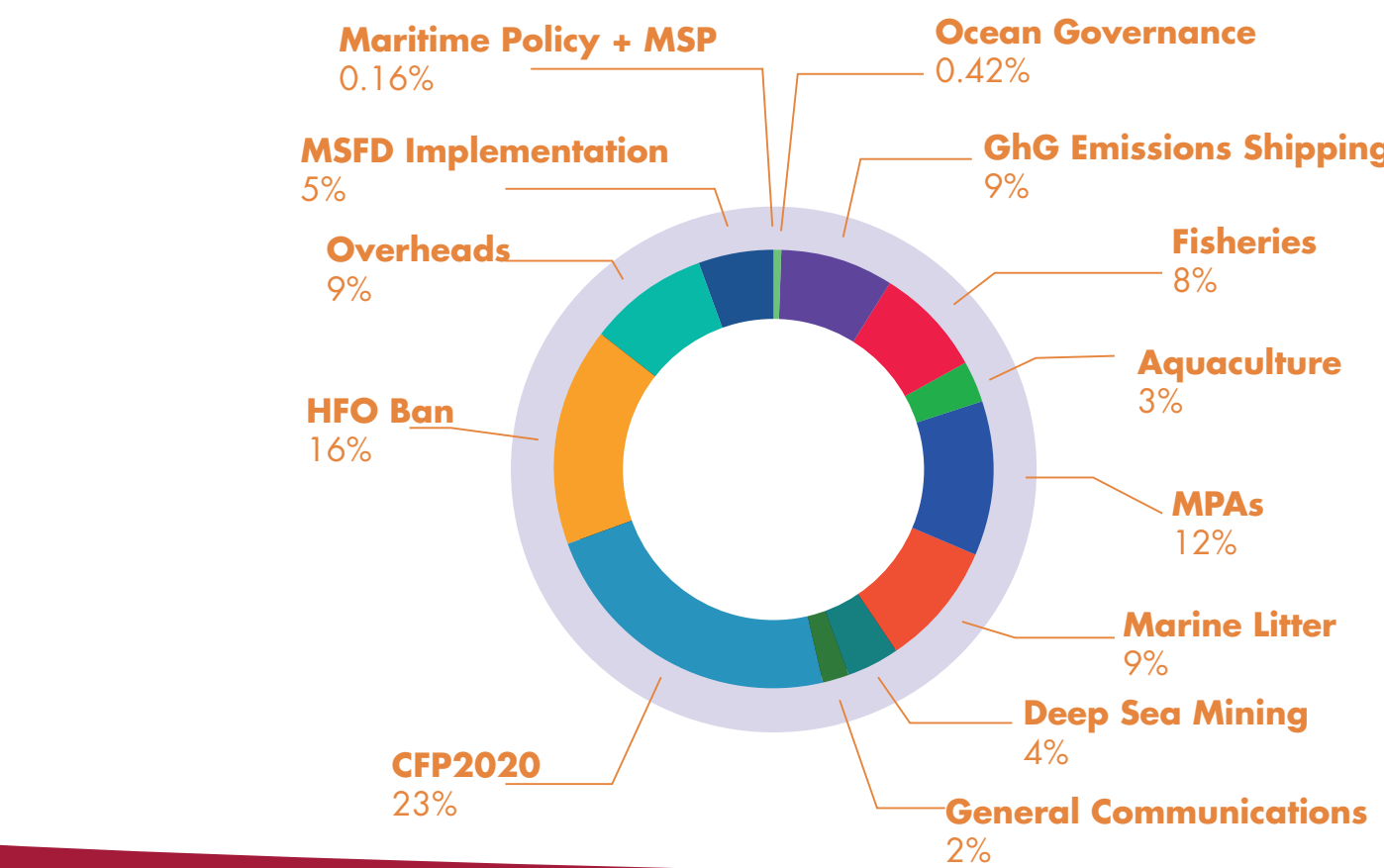
Jean-Luc Solandt
(Marine Conservation Society)
Non-post Holder

Financial Overview

SAR 2019 Income



SAR 2019 Expenditure



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Oceans5



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The Waterloo Foundation



Zero Waste Europe (ZWE)



The Flotilla Charitable Foundation



Prince Albert II Of Monaco Foundation (PAIL)



Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF)



European Climate Foundation (ECF)

Accounts 2019

Total SAR Income (Without On-grants)	€1,516,043
Total SAR Expenditure (Without On-grants)	€1,480,935
Results	€35,108



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