



2020 PROGRESS ASSESSMENT FULL REPORT

BLUE MANIFESTO

THE ROADMAP
TO A HEALTHY OCEAN
IN 2030

We need thriving marine and
coastal ecosystems to support
a climate-resilient future



BLUE MANIFESTO

2020 PROGRESS ASSESSMENT



This report was produced in May 2021 on behalf of the six Blue Manifesto lead NGOs Seas At Risk, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, ClientEarth, Oceana, Surfrider Europe and WWF by consultants Irene Kingma and Christine Absil from the Ocean Future Collective. The assessment is based on analysis of institutional texts and publications, NGO research and position papers as well as expert interviews and was reviewed twice by the lead NGOs. The final assessment represents a balance of opinions that does not necessarily represent in all aspects the internal positions of the lead NGOs, their members, or the Blue Manifesto's endorsers, but is supported by the lead NGOs in its conclusions.

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SUMMARY

This is the first annual review of the progress in achieving the milestones of the Blue Manifesto towards a healthy ocean in 2030.

The milestones are assessed based on expert interviews and policy documents, taking into account EU policies, positions and legislative processes that already exist or are scheduled.

Of the 11 milestones for 2020, only two are assessed to be fully achieved, five are partly achieved and three are considered not to be met. COVID-19 led to serious delays in the roll out of marine policy and legislation. This contributed to the fact that most milestones have not been concluded and one milestone didn't progress enough to give even an indicative score.

Overall it is clear that the adoption of the EU Green Deal has given a new incentive for the development of ambitious high level policy objectives. However, this ambition is not yet translated into clear targets that are enshrined in law.

INTRODUCTION

Clean, healthy and productive seas are an essential part of life on earth. The ocean improves our quality of life, provides livelihoods to thousands of Europeans and delivers essential ecosystem services. But the sea is not an endless source that can keep on giving without the need to receive anything in return.

Marine systems are increasingly threatened by cumulative pressures from multiple human activities. In addition, the growing impacts of climate change add additional stresses to life in the ocean. Unsustainable fishing, pollution and habitat destruction all impact the condition of Europe's seas and threaten to do irreversible damage to these ecosystems¹.












The past years have shown that the EU still has a chance of restoring its marine ecosystems if it acts urgently and decisively to better balance human impacts with the capacity of those systems. But good examples are few and far between. Until now the EU's ambition for nature protection and restoration has not been realised in EU policy. Targets to end overfishing by 2020 were not met, coverage of Marine Protected Areas is minimal and none of the targets for SDG14 have been achieved in Europe so far. The 2019 IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere² shows the severe impact climate change will have on marine systems and that urgent action is needed to prevent irreversible damage. The next decade will prove crucial in turning the tide on the degradation of marine systems and ensuring the European marine environment can prosper again in the future.

In response to the deterioration of European seas, last year Seas At Risk, Birdlife Europe & Central Asia, ClientEarth, Oceana, Surfrider Foundation Europe and WWF developed the Blue Manifesto – The Roadmap to a Healthy Ocean in 2030³ which is supported by more than 100 environmental organisations. The Manifesto provides a roadmap for policy makers and legislators on the choices that will need to be made to strengthen and improve the existing EU marine policy framework. It gives an operational timeline of the concrete steps that will need to be taken in the next decade for Europe's seas to thrive.

2020 MILESTONES IN THE BLUE MANIFESTO

For each year the Manifesto gives specific milestones that will have to be met to reach the goal of sustainable, healthy seas in Europe by 2030. The milestones were written in such a way that they can be scored to assess the progress each year and, where possible, link directly to policy and legislative processes already existing or scheduled in the EU.

For 2020 the manifesto lists 11 milestones, representing a wide variety of policy fields, both in an EU and international context. Each milestone has concrete deliverables (sub-targets) that together shape an ambitious marine conservation agenda.

No.	MILESTONE SUBJECT	MILESTONE GOALS WITH SUB-TARGETS	OVERALL SCORING
1	Biodiversity Strategy 2030	EU adopts a Biodiversity Strategy 2030 that protects marine sensitive species ¹ , habitats ² and fish stock recovery areas ³ , eliminates destructive fishing ⁴ and includes legally binding ocean restoration targets ⁵ .	
2	Farm to Fork Strategy	EU adopts a Farm to Fork Strategy that fully takes into account the ecological and climate impacts of fisheries and aquaculture ¹ and addresses responsible consumption ² and sustainably and traceable seafood ³ .	
3	Circular Economy Action Plan	EU adopts a new Circular Economy Action Plan that includes measures to reduce absolute resource use, including plastic ¹ , increase resource efficiency ² and prevent leakage of plastics and microplastics into the sea ³ .	
4	Chemicals Strategy & Zero Pollution Action Plan	EU adopts a Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability ¹ and a Zero-pollution strategy ² with clear goals to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals in air, soil and water (through the Water Quality Action Plan) to ensure a non-toxic environment for current and future generations.	
5	Offshore Wind Strategy	EU adopts an Offshore Wind Strategy which fully takes into account the impacts on marine ecosystems of the development of offshore wind energy production plants.	
6	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund	EU allocates at least 21 billion euros of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 to protect nature ¹ , with at least 50% of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund to restore the marine environment, collect data and control fisheries ² , and revises the State Aid guidelines for fisheries and aquaculture to prohibit granting of harmful subsidies ³ .	
7	Energy Taxation Directive	EU removes fuel tax exemptions for fishing vessels and shipping under the revised Energy Taxation Directive.	
8	CBD Global Biodiversity Framework	EU pushes for the adoption of a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity with protection ¹ and restoration ² targets for marine ecosystems globally.	
9	Sustainable shipping at IMO	EU pushes for the adoption of urgent short-term measures at the International Maritime Organization to ban Heavy Fuel Oils in the Arctic ¹ and reduce ship speed ² to decrease GHG emissions, noise levels and whale strikes.	
10	Global Ocean Treaty -BBNJ	EU pushes for the adoption of an ambitious Global Ocean Treaty to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction worldwide at the 4th session of the Intergovernmental Conference on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.	
11	Moratorium on Deep Seabed Mining	EU establishes a moratorium on deep seabed mining ¹ , stops financial support to research into deep seabed mining technology ² and, with EU countries, pushes for the adoption of a global moratorium in the International Seabed Authority ³ .	

ASSESSMENT METHOD

A key requirement of this first assessment is the need to ensure the work is replicable in a neutral way in future iterations. This is a challenge, as the milestones cannot be viewed in a vacuum but are linked to conservation and policy work carried out over the past decades and have final deliverables that lie in the future. To address this the focus of the assessment is on the wording of the manifesto and how that compares to the associated policy document as the primary indicator of success or failure. This has been augmented with information provided by the Blue Manifesto's core NGOs on their interpretation of the outcomes.

The assessment of each milestone is twofold: One element is the scoring of the progress in the processes associated with the milestones. This is scored in percentage towards completion. The other element is the delivery of the sub-targets within the milestone. This is scored through a traffic light system, with red indicating that the targets have not been met, yellow that they are partly met, and green that they have been delivered.

For those milestones linked to new EU legislation or policy (milestones 1-7) the progress is dependent on the timeline of the legislative and policy processes. These processes follow a fixed path from inception to conclusion. This can be scored along a progress axis. A full legislative process takes longer than the adoption of "strategies or action plans" as there is no co-decision step involved in the latter (figure 1).

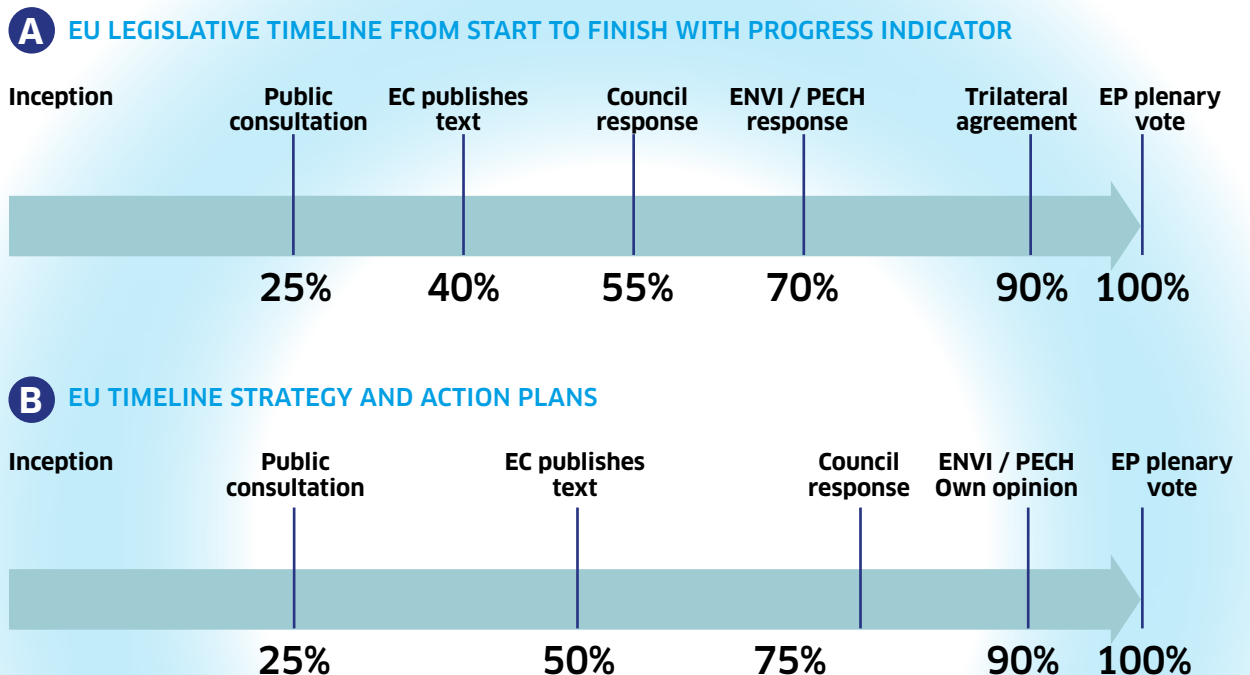


figure 1: Progress indicators for full EC/Council/EP legislative process (A), and the process for a strategy or action plan (B)

ASSESSMENT METHOD

The first 5 of the 11 milestones relate to new strategies or action plans. In these the overarching policy plans the European Commission proposes the initial plan and the Council of Ministers as well as the European Parliament give a response.

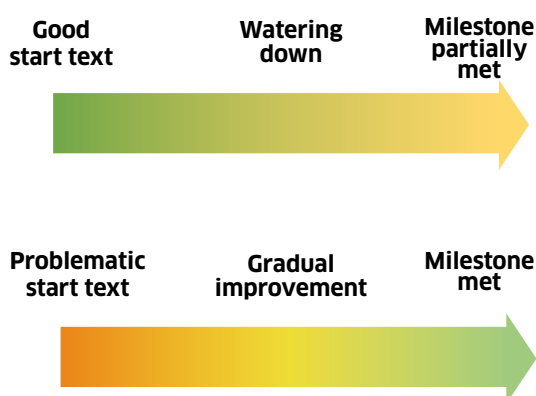
Legislative processes (**milestones 6 and 7**) have to go through a longer co-decision process.

Milestones 8 and 10 are directly linked to international agreements that depend on the conclusions of a single COP or conference adopting final conclusions. These processes have an internal timeline that we used to score progress.

For milestones 9 and 11 there is no direct link to a specific external policy process. For these we asked the professionals from the Blue Manifestos core NGOs that are involved in these files to give their expert opinion on the progress.

As to be expected, COVID-19 has caused a number of files to be delayed as well as international meetings to be postponed. Fortunately no files have been suspended and most milestones are on track to be concluded in the third or fourth quarter of 2021. For those that are delayed more than could be expected this is noted in the text.

FIGURE 2 / EXAMPLES OF COLOUR CODING FOR PROGRESS INDICATOR BARS



The second element in the assessment is the scoring of the targets for each of the milestones in a traffic light format with red indicating a target is not met, yellow that it is partially met and green indicating the objective has been achieved (figure 2).

Colour coding was based as much as possible on the exact wording of the manifesto which was compared to wording in the policy and legislative documents related to them. Sub-targets were scored down when

- 1) the sub-target was not reflected in the official text,
- 2) the wording was present but there was no associated action to ensure it was implemented,
- 3) no or little action has been taken by the Commission or Member States towards completing the milestone.

For milestones that are only just starting or those where there is little clarity on the direction the process is heading we did not assign a colour but left them in grey.

These two elements are combined in progress indicators for each sub-target within a milestone where a gradual change in colour represents the change towards achieving the target during the implementation process.

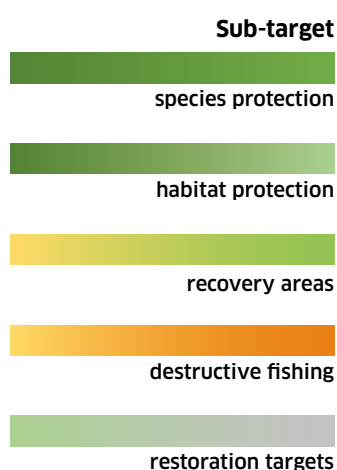
ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 1: BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2030

EU adopts a Biodiversity Strategy 2030 that protects marine sensitive species⁽¹⁾ and habitats⁽²⁾ and fish stock recovery areas⁽³⁾, eliminates destructive fishing⁽⁴⁾ and includes legally binding ocean restoration targets⁽⁵⁾.

1 • BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2030

95%



The new 2030 EU Biodiversity Strategy is an overarching framework meant to tackle key drivers of biodiversity loss, such as unsustainable use, overexploitation of natural resources and pollution. It aims to make biodiversity considerations an integral part of all EU's strategies and legislation.

In May 2020 the European Commission presented its 2030 Biodiversity Strategy⁴, which was endorsed by the European Council of Ministers⁵ in October 2020. The European Parliament is working on its own initiative report on the strategy. The vote on this file took place in the Parliament's ENVI committee at the end of May 2021, and the plenary vote will happen in early June 2021.

As the Biodiversity strategy underpins important environmental legislation for the coming decade, it was a key milestone for the Blue Manifesto. The first two sub-targets (protection of marine sensitive species and habitats) are strongly worded in the text adopted by the Commission, but a lot will depend on implementation of existing or future legislation. Even though fish stock recovery areas (target 3) were not specifically mentioned in the Commission text, the Strategy does have a commitment to strictly protect 10% of Europe's land and seas. On destructive fishing (target 4), an element currently poorly addressed by any legislation (particularly regarding the seabed), the Commission text is quite open: **"Where necessary, measures will be introduced to limit the use of fishing gear most harmful to biodiversity, including on the seabed. It will also look at how to reconcile the use of bottom-contacting fishing gear with biodiversity goals, given it is now the most damaging activity to the seabed. This must be done in a fair and just way for all."** This target is considered not to be on track to be met as the ambition in the documents available at this time is too low for the target to be achieved.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 1:

BIODIVERSITY
STRATEGY 2030

The Biodiversity Strategy will be further expanded on in an Action Plan to Conserve Fisheries Resources and Protect Marine Ecosystems, for which the public consultation on the roadmap⁶ concluded in May 2021. The success of sub-targets 1-4 of this milestone will depend in a large part on the ambition set out in the Action Plan, which will be reviewed in the Blue Manifesto Assessment for 2021.

The restoration sub-target (target 5) cannot be scored yet as the European Commission only just concluded the public consultation on the restoration law. A legislative proposal is expected to be published by the end of 2021. The inception document outlines the need for legally binding objectives, and possibly for specific marine targets (e.g. carbon-rich habitats) as well as the need for Member States to develop national restoration plans.

MILESTONE 2: FARM TO FORK STRATEGY

EU adopts a Farm to Fork strategy that fully takes into account the ecological and climate impacts of fisheries and aquaculture⁽¹⁾ and addresses responsible consumption⁽²⁾ and sustainable and traceable seafood.⁽³⁾

2 • FARM TO FORK STRATEGY 2030

90%

Sub-target
accounts for ecological and climate impacts
addresses responsible consumption
sustainable and traceable seafood

As part of the Green Deal, the European Commission published the Farm to Fork Strategy⁷ in 2020, which is a comprehensive approach to food sustainability. Unfortunately, the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy ignores seafood production almost completely, although it states that “wild caught fisheries and aquaculture are key drivers of global biodiversity loss”. The F2F Strategy also lacks reference to ways to reduce fisheries impact, such as a transition towards low impact fisheries. A commitment to not reintroducing harmful subsidies in European Maritime and Fisheries Funds is also missing.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 2: **FARM TO FORK STRATEGY**

To implement the F2F Strategy, the Commission indicates it will step up efforts to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels via the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) where implementation gaps remain (e.g. by reducing wasteful discarding). By 2022, they will re-assess how the CFP addresses the risks triggered by climate change, and the Commission commits to adopting initiatives to **“ensure sustainability of seafood and consumer access to a low carbon footprint protein source”**. The revised strategy for EU aquaculture⁸ aims to encourage the production and consumption of more diversified EU seafood products and foster even higher standards of environmental protection and animal welfare. Furthermore, the EU intends to unlock the full potential of sustainable algae-based food and alternative feed sources for which there is growing demand.

Council conclusions⁹ were adopted in December 2020 and the European Parliament’s ENVI committee will vote on their own-initiative report on the Strategy in June 2021.

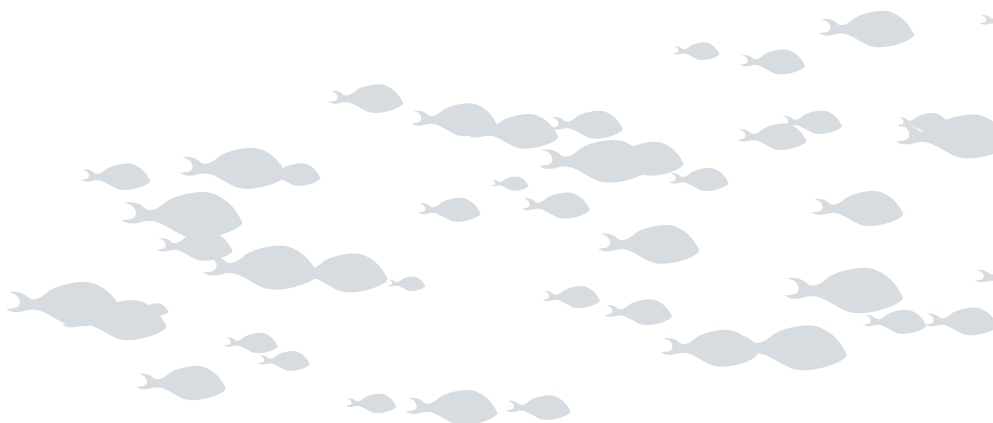
The Commission concluded that to implement the above ambitions, the current Marketing Standards for Fisheries and Aquaculture products (CMO regulation¹⁰) are not fit for purpose. The possible incorporation of sustainability information under the Marketing Standards in the CMO regulation actually offers interesting opportunities for improving the sustainability and traceability of seafood products through legislation, based on STECF advice¹¹.

Sub-target 1:

This would involve strengthening the environmental aspects of the CFP. It is still to be seen how that will evolve. Ecological and climate impacts will be part of the product information system to be introduced, and implementation is set for the coming years.

Sub-targets 2 and 3:

The Commission’s Strategy plans to introduce sustainability information on a product in a transparent and ambitious way to address responsible consumption and traceability, and as a prerequisite for a product information system.



ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 3:

CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACTION PLAN

EU adopts a new Circular Economy Action Plan that includes measures to reduce absolute resource use, including plastic⁽¹⁾, increase resource efficiency⁽²⁾ and prevent leakage of plastics and microplastics into the sea.

3 • CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACTION PLAN

100%

Sub-target



reduce resource use



increase resource efficiency



prevent plastic in ocean

This Action Plan¹² functions to revise legislation on waste management to stimulate Europe's transition towards a circular economy. Measures in the plan cover the whole production cycle: from production and consumption to waste management and the market for secondary raw materials.

The Council approved¹³ the conclusions of the Action Plan in December 2020 and the European Parliament adopted a resolution¹⁴ in support of this plan in February 2021 which concluded this milestone.

The first two sub targets of this milestone, related to resource use (including plastic) and resource efficiency, were reflected in the final text but without clear targets and not stipulating all materials that are to be covered. For example, plastics are mentioned but not heavy metals and other pollutants. Results will depend on the implementation throughout the European Union of legislation that is to be developed in relation to the Action Plan. The third sub-target (prevention of plastics and microplastics leakage into the sea) cannot be scored yet as the Commission has announced it will draft a separate strategy for this, which is to be published in 2022.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 4:

CHEMICALS STRATEGY & ZERO-POLLUTION ACTION PLAN

EU adopts a Chemicals strategy for sustainability and a Zero-pollution strategy with clear goals to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals in air, soil and water (through the Water Quality Action Plan) to ensure a non-toxic environment for current and future generations.

4a • CHEMICALS STRATEGY

100%



4b • ZERO POLLUTION ACTION PLAN



40%

The Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability is one of the initiatives under the Green Deal and aims to simplify and strengthen the regulatory framework on chemicals to further increase the level of protection of human health and the environment.

The Strategy was published by the Commission in May 2020¹⁵ and fully endorsed by the Council of ministers in March 2021¹⁶.

The strategy sets a framework for reducing harmful chemicals in the environment and ensuring a future non-toxic environment including clear goals, so in this sense the target is met. However, the implementation of the strategy will depend on legislative changes that have yet to take place.

The Zero Pollution Action Plan for Air, Water and Soil will provide the concrete next steps towards a toxic-free environment. The roadmap setting out the objectives for the Action Plan was published in October 2020 and the public consultation on the subject concluded in February 2021. The Commission published the Action Plan¹⁷ in May 2021. Although the roadmap sets out a high ambition for the Action Plan, the plan only recaps existing tools and fails to address all sources of ocean pollution such as underwater noise and microplastics, postponing action on these for another year or more. Pollution of air, water and soil is also one of the five main drivers of biodiversity loss which contributes largely to the current 6th mass extinction but there is little legislative ambition to curb this.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 5: OFFSHORE WIND STRATEGY

EU adopts an Offshore Wind Strategy which fully takes into account the impacts on marine ecosystems of the development of offshore wind energy production plants.

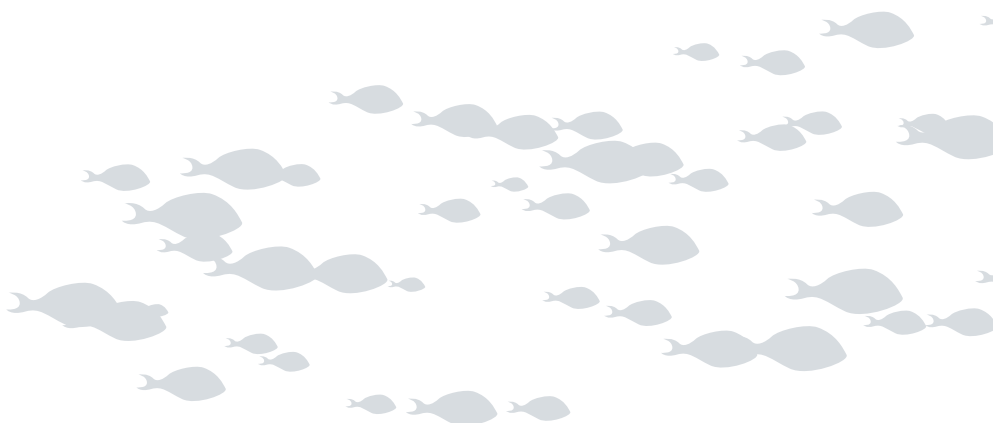
5 • OFFSHORE WIND STRATEGY



Announced as part of the EU Green Deal, the Strategy on Offshore Renewable Energy aims to increase the EU's production of electricity from offshore renewable energy sources from 12 gigawatts (GW) at the present time to over 60GW by 2030 and 300GW by 2050.

The Strategy ¹⁸ was published by the Commission in November 2020. In December 2020 the Council adopted conclusions on the Strategy. In the European Parliament the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) is preparing an own initiative report.

The Strategy sets out a vision to ensure that the planning of offshore renewable energy is compatible with biodiversity protection but then says this needs to be achieved within the existing legal framework (e.g. Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Habitats and Birds Directives, Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive). To date these directives have not been effectively implemented so unless more effort is given to the existing environmental legislative framework this milestone will not be met.



ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 6:

EUROPEAN MARITIME FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE FUND

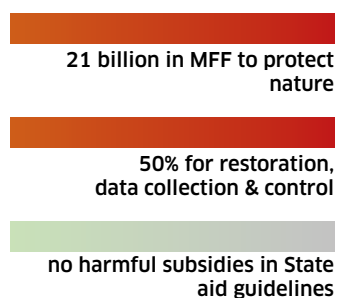
EU allocates at least 21 billion euro of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 to protect nature⁽¹⁾, with at least 50% of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund to restore the marine environment, collect data and control fisheries⁽²⁾, and revises the State Aid guidelines for fisheries and aquaculture to prohibit granting of harmful subsidies⁽³⁾.

6 • MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK & EUROPEAN MARITIME EUROPEAN MARITIME FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE FUND

95%



Sub-target



As part of the long-term EU budget for 2021-2027, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Commission proposed a renewed funding stream to support the CFP objectives, the EU's maritime policy and the EU's international commitments in the field of ocean governance. The name of the fund (formerly EMFF) was updated to include Aquaculture and is now the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF).

The inter-institutional negotiations on the file have been concluded and it will come into force after the final vote in the European Parliament.

The process for the revision of the EMFF started in 2018 when the Commission published its draft regulation¹⁹, followed by a lengthy Member State consultation period resulting in a Council agreeing to a partial general approach in June 2019. The European Parliament's PECH committee adopted its position in November 2019 and trilogue negotiations were concluded in December 2020. The PECH committee adopted the compromise text²⁰ in February 2021, and the plenary vote is expected for July 2021.

Of the three sub-targets for this milestone, the first relates to the MFF which should have 21 billion euro exclusively earmarked for nature protection. Even though the MFF contains wording on environmental and climate considerations there are no funds exclusively for nature protection incorporated in the final text.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 6: **EUROPEAN MARITIME FISHERIES** **AND AQUACULTURE FUND**

The second sub-target was not considered to be met either. Legislators chose to earmark 15% of the EMFAF budget for data collection, which was exactly the same level as in the 2014 EMFF and there is no budget exclusively for environmental restoration or control. Each Member State is to decide independently what amount of their national budget will go to nature protection and restoration. In addition, the EMFAF as it stands now reintroduces subsidies for, amongst other things, the purchase of new vessels, temporary cessation of fishing activities and engine replacement. These are all deemed harmful subsidies that have in the past led to increased levels of overfishing. This is why the NGOs involved in the file are now calling for the final agreement to be rejected.

The third sub-target relates to the revision of State Aid guidelines, which is still ongoing. The inception document refers to the Green Deal objectives and the need for environmental protection. The public consultation on the file concluded in February 2021 and the Commission is expected to publish the guidelines in the fourth quarter of 2021.

MILESTONE 7: **ENERGY TAXATION DIRECTIVE**

EU removes fuel tax exemptions for fishing vessels and shipping under the revised Energy Taxation Directive.

7 • ENERGY TAXATION DIRECTIVE



Revising the Energy Taxation Directive forms part of a group of policy reforms linked to the European Green Deal and the ambition to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050.

The Commission is expected to publish the revised directive in June 2021, with the public consultation having been concluded in April 2021. As the inception document²¹ is structured around the deliverables of the Green Deal, it has a strong emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions but it is too early to say if this ambition will result in concrete progress towards this milestone.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 8:

CBD GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

EU pushes for the adoption of a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity with protection⁽¹⁾ and restoration⁽²⁾ targets for marine ecosystems globally.

8 • CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

75%

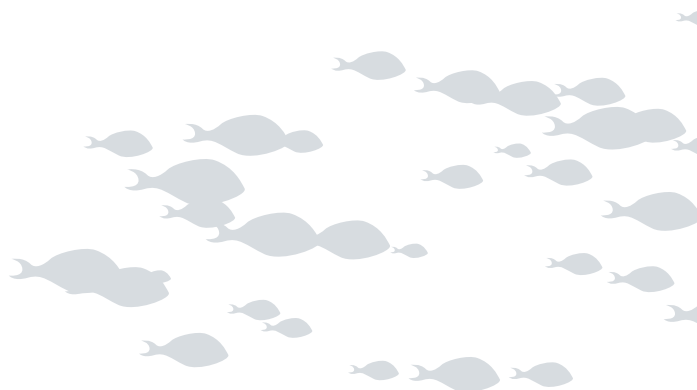


The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the international framework for the protection of worldwide biodiversity. The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) is scheduled to adopt a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. It will outline what signatories need to do, individually and collectively, to chart the course for achieving the CBD's overall vision of living in harmony with nature by 2050.

COP15 was originally meant to take place in October 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. It is now scheduled for October 2021, to be held in Kunming, China²².

The EU has committed to showing a strong ambition for COP15 in the Biodiversity Strategy stating that **“the EU is ready to show ambition to reverse biodiversity loss, lead the world by example and by action”**. This ambition was built on by the European Parliament's position²³ adopted in January 2020 which called for legally binding protection and restoration targets as part of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Zero Draft²⁴ of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework produced by the CBD Working Groups contains proposals for targets on protection and restoration, which the EU supports, and advocates to be legally-binding.



ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 9: SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING AT IMO

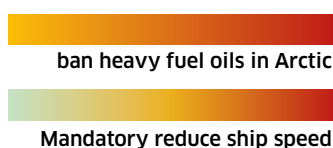
EU pushes for the adoption of urgent short-term measures at the International Maritime Organization to ban Heavy Fuel Oils in the Arctic⁽¹⁾ and reduce ship speed⁽²⁾ to decrease GHG emissions, noise levels and whale strikes.

9 • SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING AT INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

75%



Sub-target



In 2018 the European Parliament adopted an Agenda for the future of our oceans in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals²⁵. As part of this agenda, it called for an integrated European Union policy on the Arctic and for the Commission and the Member States to “**work actively towards rapid finalisation of the protracted IMO work plan on reducing black carbon (BC) emissions from ships sailing in the Arctic with a view to slowing down rapid temperature increases in the polar regions**”. It also called on the Commission, by 2020 at the latest and in the absence of adequate international measures, to put forward proposals on rules for vessels calling at EU ports prior to journeys through Arctic waters, with a view to prohibiting the use and carriage of heavy fuel oil (HFO).

Furthermore, it called on the Commission and the Member States “**to assess and promote the application of speed restrictions to ships at IMO level in order to reduce emissions, taking into account the Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) and the Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan (SEEMP), and the fact that in the road and rail sectors speed limits are commonplace; underlines that the internal and external economic benefit of lower ship speeds outweigh the costs; notes that slow steaming is comparatively easy to monitor and enforce, resulting in a low administrative burden on stakeholders.**”

In 2019, Council conclusions on Oceans and Seas²⁶ reiterated the necessary work at IMO level.

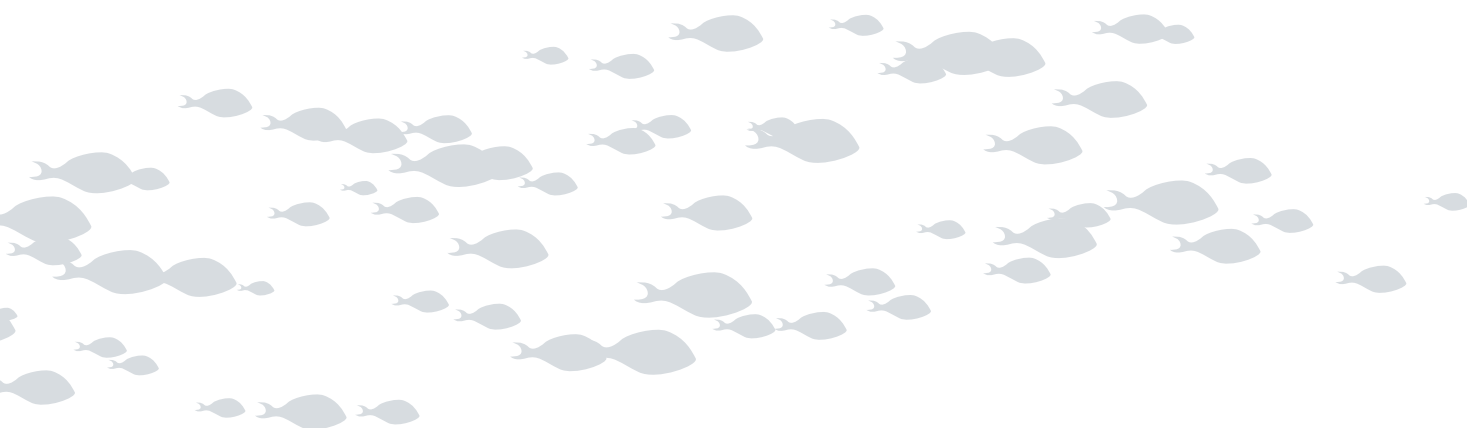
ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 9: **SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING AT IMO**

However, little progress has been made with the Arctic HFO ban, nor with short-term measures to reduce shipping's CO2 emissions.

With the support of EU Member States the IMO has approved a draft Arctic HFO ban that will not enter into force until 2024. The draft ban contains exemptions (for vessels with protected bunker tanks) and the potential for Arctic state waivers, which means it will not have a significant impact on the carriage or use of HFO, nor emissions of black carbon until 2029. Civil society strongly resisted taking this draft agreement forward as it gives the impression of IMO action when in fact it represents too little action, too late. The EU did not do enough to block this flawed regulation. Final adoption is due in June 2021. This weak IMO outcome makes a strong case for regional EU action to tackle HFO use and ship black carbon emissions in the Arctic, but there is no evidence at present to suggest that the EU will ensure this happens.

The reduction of ship speed was at the centre of civil society proposals to the IMO for an urgent and ambitious short-term measure to cut ship GHG emissions. These proposals did not progress in part because of insufficient support from the EU, resulting in weaker, technically flawed measures that will be difficult to enforce going forward. The EU's poor tactics and willingness to prematurely abandon their more progressive positions have seriously undermined the IMO outcomes on climate.



ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 10: GLOBAL OCEAN TREATY

EU pushes for the adoption of an ambitious Global Ocean Treaty to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction worldwide at the 4th session of the Intergovernmental Conference on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction.

10 • GLOBAL OCEAN TREATY ON BIODIVERSITY BEYOND NATIONAL JURISDICTION

75%

Sub-target

EU pushes for ambitious
text in treaty

Governments at the United Nations are negotiating an international legally binding instrument under the UN Convention on the Law of Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). This treaty must be ambitious enough to ensure a comprehensive global regime for the conservation and sustainable use of marine life in the high seas, filling existing gaps in governance for designating high seas marine protected areas, and to ensure robust environmental impact assessments.

The forth and final scheduled session of the Intergovernmental Conference negotiating the BBNJ text was meant to take place in March 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. It is now scheduled for August 2021²⁷ but it is likely that it will be delayed even further to the first quarter of 2022.

The European Commission has made overarching statements on the need for an ambitious treaty and has taken an active role in the process. Council mandated²⁸ the European Commission to conduct negotiations in January 2018, but the negotiating position is not public. A parliamentary question²⁹ on this from September 2020 remained unanswered.

The current draft text has the Ecosystem Based Approach to Fisheries as a basis for management as well as the ambition to establish high seas MPAs, but many of the details remain undefined and in brackets. For this milestone to succeed the treaty text will need to be clarified and updated with more binding wording, as ambitions could be weakened in the final text.

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 11:

MORATORIUM ON DEEP SEABED MINING

EU establishes a moratorium on deep seabed mining⁽¹⁾, stops financial support to research into deep seabed mining technology⁽²⁾ and, with EU countries, pushes for the adoption of a global moratorium in the International Seabed Authority⁽³⁾.

11 • MORATORIUM ON DEEP SEABED MINING



Sub-target

Moratorium on deep seabed mining

Stop support for research in DSM

Push for global moratorium

For a long time, the position of the EU on Deep Seabed Mining (DSM) was ambiguous. Until recently, the EU has been rather silent on its position, while at the same time heavily funding research into development of technologies. Research into environmental effects received less attention. Many European countries, and also the EU, seem to hold the position that economic and biodiversity policy objectives are incompatible. On the one hand the ambition is to halt biodiversity loss, but on the other hand the implementation of the Green Deal would cause an increased demand for raw materials, as these are considered vital to the objectives of decarbonisation and digitalisation. However, the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy⁴ states:

“In international negotiations, the EU should advocate that marine minerals in the international seabed area cannot be exploited before the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities have been sufficiently researched, the risks are understood and the technologies and operational practices are able to demonstrate no serious harm to the environment, in line with the precautionary principle and taking into account the call of the European Parliament. In parallel, the EU will continue to fund research on the impact of deep-sea mining activities and on environmentally friendly technologies. The EU should also advocate for more transparency in international bodies, such as the International Seabed Authority.”

ASSESSMENT

MILESTONE 11: **MORATORIUM ON DEEP** **SEABED MINING**

This text implies that the EU will work on a conditional moratorium, although it has not yet been translated into concrete action. However, the Commission intends to continue funding research into the development of mining technologies.

To secure future access to raw materials, the Raw Materials Action Plan³⁰ was published in September 2020. However, the focus is on making the EU less dependent on other parts of the world for raw material supply. Targets for reducing the EU's material footprint are lacking. Also Green Deal strategies for a circular economy lack targets. The EU policies promoting digitalisation, renewable energy infrastructure and the shift to electric vehicles are not aligned with binding targets for the demand for primary metals.

A positive signal is the fact that the Blue Growth Strategy has been reshaped as the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy, suggesting re-focus from a single sector strategy to better coordination and integration of maritime interests. Resource efficiency is essential, as also suggested by the European Environment Agency³¹.

In April 2021, Seas At Risk published a report³² pinpointing the crucial position the EU and its Member States are in now.

Sub-target 1

EU establishes a moratorium on deep seabed mining: The 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy implicitly calls for a moratorium on DSM, a message similarly repeated in the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy. This builds on a resolution on DSM adopted by the European Parliament in 2018. However, these strong words have not resulted in any concrete actions from the EU or its Member States in preventing seabed mining exploration from moving forward.

Sub-target 2

Stops financial support to research into deep seabed mining technology.

This is difficult to assess as any research into environmental effects can also have an element of technology research. If the ambition of the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy is to be implemented, more EU funding will need to be directed at environmental effects.

Sub-target 3

EU Member States to push for a global moratorium in the International Seabed Authority (ISA): The 2020 ISA meeting has been cancelled, and the 2021 meeting postponed to October 2021. No initiative relating to a moratorium is on the draft agenda. It is expected that the EU will only push for a global moratorium once it has set its own



CONCLUSION

The Blue Manifesto set out a clear path and an urgent timeline for ocean protection that would need to be met to ensure a healthy future for Europe's seas. The conclusion of this first assessment of the Manifesto's milestones is that this ambition is only partly met and "lacking progress" in crucial areas. There is a clear willingness to adopt progressive language in high level strategies but when it comes to actual implementation through legislation that will change management below water, ambition is distinctly lower.

With the launch of the Green Deal the EU brought new energy to the field of environmental protection and marine conservation. This is translated into assertive wording in new strategies that have been launched in the past year. The 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, Circular Economy Plan, Farm to Fork Strategy and Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability have high ambition when it comes to overarching objectives. The coming years will show if these are translated into effective legislation, which often lacks the same level of determination. The proposal of the European Maritime Fund for Aquaculture and Fisheries (EMFAF) is a particularly clear example of a poor result as this bill could have made considerable difference if sustainability requirements were incorporated in the most important funding instrument for fishing in Europe. However, the result of the final trilogue is a weak document in which unsustainable practices from the past are reinstated.

The global COVID pandemic caused serious delays in the roll out of many of the European policy processes associated with the milestones and all international meetings were postponed. For most milestones there are now clear timelines towards their conclusion and those files associated with the 2021 milestones of the Blue Manifesto are starting to emerge. The 2021 assessments will also include milestones where the process only just started and where it was not possible to provide a colour coding in the current assessment.

FOOTNOTES

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Find the BLUE MANIFESTO
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**[https://seas-at-risk.org/
blue-manifesto](https://seas-at-risk.org/blue-manifesto)**

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