


ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Contents

Foreword	5
2020 at a glance	7
Marine biodiversity	9
Fisheries & Aquaculture	11
Shipping	13
Renewable energy	15
Marine litter	17
Deep sea mining	19
Outline & Network	21
The team	23
Financial reporting	25



“Our vision is a world whose seas and ocean are abundant in marine life that is diverse, climate resilient and not threatened by human pressures”

Seas At Risk vision

FOREWORD



2020 was supposed to be the “super year for the ocean”, with many international key policy meetings that would shape ocean health. The Seas At Risk team was ready for it, kicking off the expected super year with our Ocean Action! Conference, a day full of discussions, workshops, exhibitions and performances in support of ocean health, and building on the Blue Manifesto, a roadmap to a healthy ocean by 2030 supported by over 100 organisations. This celebration of our 30th anniversary saw us trending on Twitter and started Ocean Week on a high, a week full of events culminating in a march for the ocean co-organised by the Fridays for Future youth movement, providing hope for the climate and the ocean.

Three weeks later, the pandemic struck and most of Europe went into lockdown. The contrast could not have been greater, with our work transformed in ways we never could have imagined. We moved to online platforms, which made it easier to participate in meetings and webinars and reduced our carbon footprint, but which also saw all important international processes for the ocean cancelled or delayed.

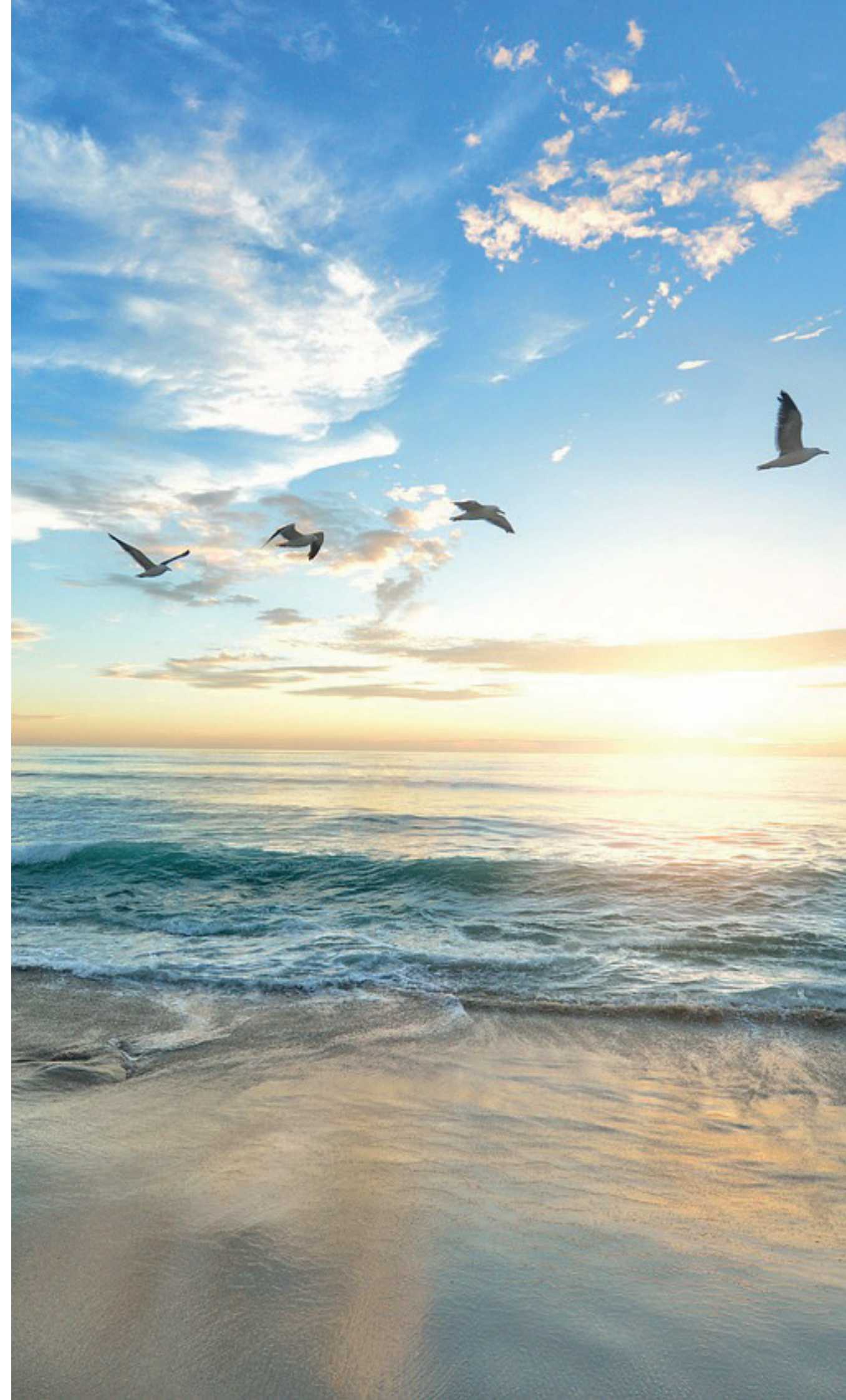
However, the pandemic fostered EU leaders’ recognition of the links between the health, climate and biodiversity crises, and the need for systemic change. This inspired an ambitious rollout of European Green Deal policies, to which we provided input based on the Blue Manifesto. The Circular Economy Action Plan II, the Biodiversity Strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy all contain specific commitments and promises that, if implemented effectively, will help ocean recovery.

At the same time, the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on public health and the economy became clear, and the EU agreed the largest stimulus package ever financed through the EU budget. In order to ensure a European recovery package that would support green recovery of the blue economy, we provided examples of investments in support of both jobs and ocean recovery. If the commitment of decision makers to use the EU’s green Recovery Package to “build back better” will materialise remains to be seen. The first signs suggest that vast amounts are being used to prop up large polluting companies and continue business as usual. This is despite the overarching lesson of the pandemic, that our current economic model

based on resource over-extraction, pollution and nature destruction, increases risks and weakens our resilience to crises. The disruption caused by the pandemic and the financial support for recovery provide an opportunity to heed the call for systemic change of a growing community. We must redefine our relationship with nature and protect the fundamentals that make life on Earth possible and enjoyable.

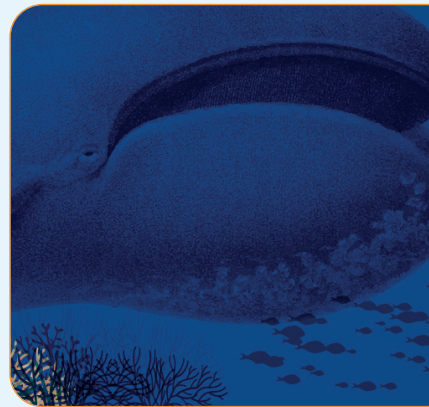
Many ocean pressures are created through the way our economies function and what we produce and consume. For thirty years, we at Seas At Risk have worked tirelessly to protect the ocean, but the threats still keep coming. To stop the destruction of the ocean - the planet’s life support system - we need to change the fundamentals and transition to a more resilient socioeconomic model, one that provides social well-being, secures green jobs and promotes the sustainable use of natural resources within planetary boundaries. That is why, in 2020, our members adopted a new Seas At Risk 5-year strategy that aims to address the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse, and contribute to policy makers’ acceptance of limits to growth. The strategy will shape our work to achieve the 2030 vision outlined in the Blue Manifesto of a healthy ocean with abundant, diverse and climate-resilient marine life to support life on earth. We have less than a decade left to turn the tide.

Dr. Monica Verbeek
Executive Director
Seas At Risk



2020 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 six key moments from 2020:



Our roadmap to achieve a healthy ocean in Europe by 2030 – the Blue Manifesto - was a **consistent narrative on ocean health**, supported by over 100 organisations and well-received by many policymakers, with several of its key asks incorporated in important EU policy documents.

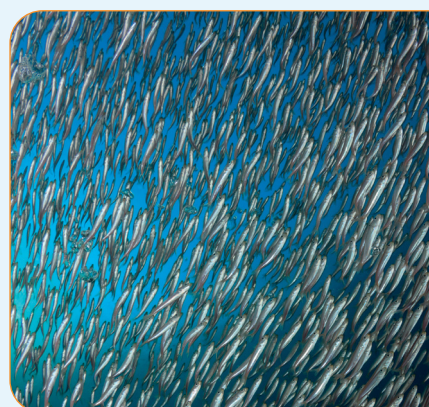
One year after the adoption of the Single-Use Plastics Directive, we have collected and promoted over **160 best practices from all 27 Member States to reduce and phase out single-use plastic products** across Europe. These best practices are already implemented, replicable, measurable and effective initiatives and projects across Europe and will help national and local authorities to work towards implementation of the Directive in 2021.



The Blue Manifesto was the heart of our **Ocean Action! Conference** on 5 February. Attended by 225 policymakers, scientists and activists, the day-long event mixed panel discussions and workshops with exhibitions, pitches, and a poetry performance, before ending with a celebration of our 30th anniversary. Ocean Action! opened Ocean Week 2020, a celebration of all things marine, jointly organised by Brussels-based ocean NGOs.



Our campaigns saw the European Commission declare certain proposed Member State measures insufficient to manage and protect offshore marine protected areas, as well as launching **infringement procedures against Sweden, France and Spain for failing to protect dolphins and porpoises from being caught and killed in fishing nets**.



Close collaboration and support of our members resulted in the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation to successfully influence the Swedish authority on a **proposal for a possible general ban on bottom-trawling in Marine Protected Areas**. This is an important step towards achieving the Blue Manifesto objective of banning bottom-trawling in all EU Marine Protected Areas.

We put the need for ambitious urgent action on ships' climate pollution front and centre at the UN's International Maritime Organisation. We kept the pressure on regulators designing measures to address emissions of CO2 and black carbon and helped to ensure that **the special fragility of the Arctic climate was not forgotten by regulators accustomed to thinking only about shipping**.



OCEAN WEEK:

3,000 social media engagements

3,000 participants

#OceanAction trending on Twitter Belgium

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 (MPAs) can be an important part of the solution, if they are properly managed (and not just paper parks).

The [Blue Manifesto – a Roadmap for Healthy Seas by 2030](#) is the blue response to the European Green Deal and was our central message to policymakers. Broadly supported by over 100 NGOs, it has contributed to an improved narrative on ocean health. **Several key asks of the Blue Manifesto are reflected in the Biodiversity Strategy 2030** and in the ‘Starfish’ report of the Mission for a Healthy Ocean, one of the five Missions of the European Commission for 2030.

The [Biodiversity Strategy](#) includes the aims for 2030 to effectively protect 30% of European Seas, to prevent bycatch of sensitive marine species, and to manage fisheries in a way that contributes to the restoration of marine ecosystems. To ensure these aims are achieved, we collaborated with other organisations on a joint position paper **‘Back to the Source: Saving Europe’s Biodiversity Starts in the Ocean’**, outlining 10 tangible and binding actions to be taken by decision makers. The paper was disseminated widely and shared with the Members of the European Parliament who are shaping the Parliament’s position on the Biodiversity Strategy.

To ensure that MPAs are properly managed and protected, we supported our members and built their capacity to carry out **effective national-level MPA campaigns**, with a focus on Portugal, France and Ireland. MPA support tools included a specific website, online workshops, and analyses of fishing effort within and outside specific MPAs. We also provided an updated legal toolkit, a step-by-step guide to challenging national or local authorities on the lack of management in marine Natura 2000 areas, with a focus on fisheries’ activities. This was particularly successfully applied by our members in Ireland and Sweden. In addition, we worked with other organisations to ensure that the Commission pushed for the adoption of fishing conservation measures in MPAs that comply with environmental legislation.

Together with 25 organisations, we developed a global version of the Blue Manifesto, [RISE UP – A Blue Call to Action](#), which lists the global actions needed from UN Member States to set the ocean on a course to recovery. Presented to UN Secretary General António Guterres, it sought to inspire ambition at the UN Ocean Conference, which had to be postponed to 2022 due to COVID-19.

KEY LEGAL MOMENTS:

Sweden: Swedish Society for Nature Conservation used the legal toolkit to ensure a more effective proposal of the Swedish marine authority for a future ban on bottom-trawling in all Swedish MPAs, in line with a key objective of the Blue Manifesto. The work continues, to ensure the Swedish government duly acts to implement a ban.

Ireland: Coastwatch Ireland induced a court decision forcing the Irish government to review its implementation of the EU Habitats Directive in marine areas.

European Commission opened three infringement procedures against France, Spain and Sweden for failing to avoid unsustainable bycatch of dolphin and porpoise species.



FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE

In 2020, we worked to get seafood production in balance with nature, focusing on ending overfishing and minimising environmental impacts. Within the EU, fish are still caught faster than they can reproduce, even though the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) stipulates that overfishing should end by 2020 at the latest.

Fishing limits are negotiated every year by EU Fisheries Ministers, and Seas at Risk weighed in on the negotiations, alongside other organisations. Improved cooperation between the environmental organisations and the European Commission contributed to the Commission taking a stronger stance for fishing limits in line with scientific advice. This resulted in a **significant reduction of overfishing in the Baltic**, but for the North-East Atlantic efforts were complicated by the dual problems of COVID-19 and Brexit. Negotiations were limited to stocks only fished by EU vessels, resulting in around one-third of stocks still being overfished. With most of the fish stocks fished by both the UK and the EU, negotiations will continue into 2021.

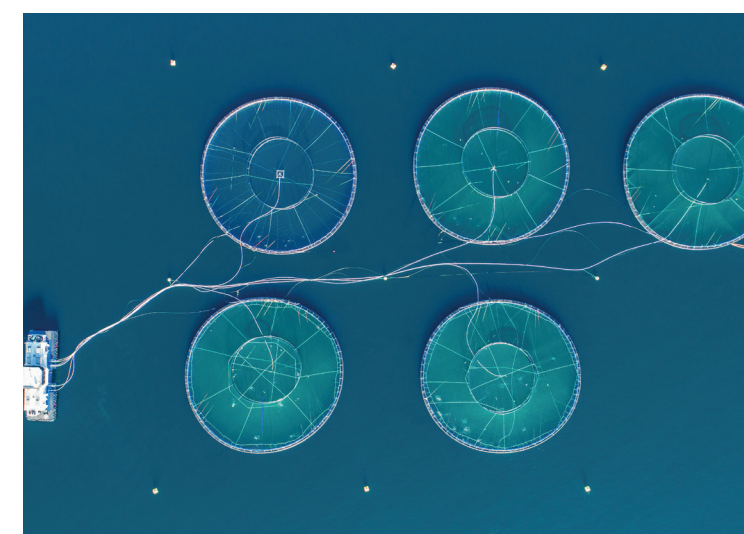
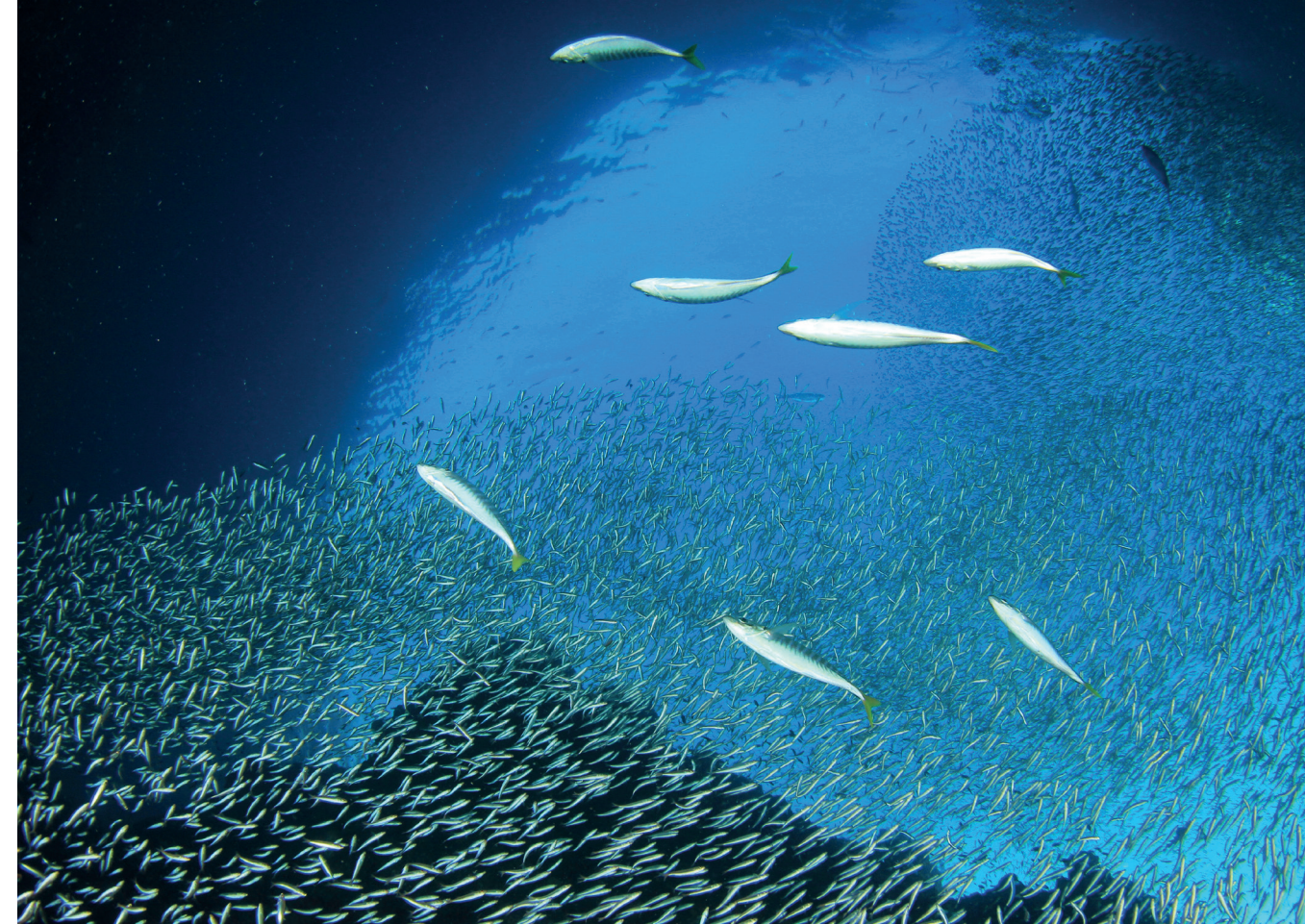
COVID-19 responses presented risks to fisheries and aquaculture sustainability, with industry demanding financial supports, including harmful subsidies and increased flexibility in fishing limits. This triggered a joint response of Seas At Risk and other organisations, laying down [10 principles for successful fisheries support policies in response to COVID-19](#) and, later, for the recovery plan for Europe, '[Turning the Tide on EU seas with a green recovery](#)'.

Looking at fisheries more broadly in the European Green Deal, we successfully countered (in collaboration with others) the initial worrying encouragement by the Commission to increase fish consumption as a carbon-poor alternative to meat, which was then excluded from the final Farm to Fork Strategy. By referring to fish as part of nature rather than food and to the crucial role of a healthy ocean with abundant fish populations in the fight against the climate crisis, **we contributed to a shift in the narrative** of policymakers.

Fisheries measures can only be effective if they are controlled and enforced. To get **better control of fisheries**, we joined with other organisations to launch a campaign on the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation, calling for on-board CCTV cameras, vessel monitoring systems and e-logbooks for EU fishing vessels, as well as better traceability and transparency generally. We organised several events, engaged with key policymakers and fishing industry representatives and produced numerous documents, videos and a [website](#), resulting in some strong control proposals that will help with our continued push for an ambitious control regulation.

We continued our joint campaign with several of our members to **protect bycatch of the common dolphin in the Bay of Biscay**, a deadly fate that awaits an estimated 10,000 dolphins every winter. Our activities included a social media campaign and a [petition](#) and sought to increase pressure on policymakers. However, in spite of heated negotiations, our request for temporary closure of the culpable French and Spanish fisheries was unsuccessful. We will continue our work to protect common dolphins next year.

About 20% of the seafood we eat in the EU is farmed - it is one of the world's fastest-growing food sectors. But the aquaculture sector has its own environmental problems, including reliance on wild fish for feed, and water pollution from nutrient build-up and plastics. We contributed to the development of the European Commission's **strategic guidelines for the sustainable development of EU aquaculture**, to ensure these environmental challenges are addressed.



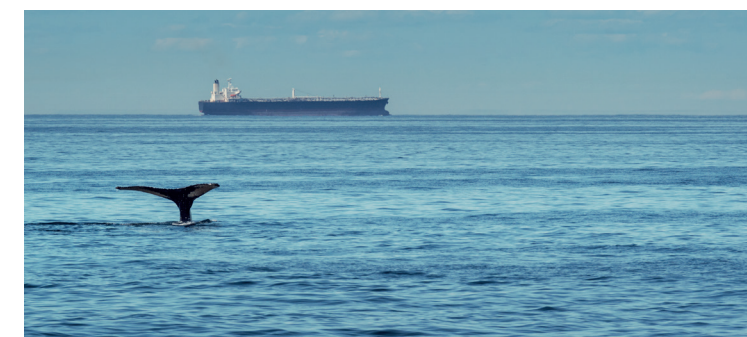
SHIPPING

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has committed to decarbonise the shipping sector on a trajectory consistent with the Paris Agreement, but its actions to date lack the required urgency and are nowhere near ambitious enough to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

Our work at the IMO has focused on the urgent need for ambitious **short-term measures that will quickly reduce the climate impact of international shipping**. Without this it will be impossible to avoid the worst effects of climate change, including the loss of Arctic summer sea ice. We have targeted emissions of both CO₂, and black carbon, a short-lived climate super-pollutant that is especially harmful when emitted at high latitudes and near snow and ice. At EU-level, we have supported this work by pushing to ensure that EU Member States provide a vigorous and ambitious counter-balance to the less progressive positions routinely encountered at the IMO.

The push on CO₂ centred on IMO considerations of a first short-term greenhouse gas measure, and included the promotion of our own ambitious measure aimed at cutting emissions in line with 1.5°C via reduced ship speeds. This was rejected by IMO member states and the draft short-term measure currently on the table at IMO and set to adopted in 2021 is likely too weak to reduce emissions to any significant extent before 2023.

With three-quarters of Arctic summer sea ice disappearing since the 1970s and growing interest in the use of Arctic shipping routes, the reduction of ship black carbon emissions is another urgent short-term action that the IMO can take to reduce shipping's climate impact. Cleaner fuels - which are also easier to clean up in the event of spill - are an important first step and can reduce black carbon by 40%. Seas At Risk is a founding member of the Clean Arctic Alliance and manages its campaign on a ban on heavy fuel oil in the Arctic. In 2020, this resulted in **the approval of an IMO ban on the use of heavy fuel oil in the Arctic**, but loopholes mean that much work remains to be done to protect the Arctic from ship black carbon emissions.



RENEWABLE ENERGY

The seas and oceans have considerable potential for renewable energy production which will be crucial for the European Green Deal objective of a climate neutral Europe by 2050. Wind energy is the best known form, but the development of other types of marine renewable energy is also being promoted, including innovative technologies to exploit the potential of tides and waves, and differences in temperature and salinity.

We strongly believe that marine renewable energy must develop in harmony with nature. This can cause dilemmas as large scale wind farms are sometimes planned in marine protected areas due to lack of space. We therefore developed a joint position with our members, with guiding principles on planning offshore renewable energy with nature in mind, linking to EU legislation and setting out a **position on marine protected areas and offshore renewable energy**.

We engaged closely with the development of the **EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy** under the European Green Deal, working with climate and ocean organisations to ensure a common approach. While an earlier draft had little consideration for the impacts on marine life, the final Strategy, targeting a 25-fold increase in offshore wind, sets out a vision to ensure that the planning of offshore renewable energy is compatible with biodiversity protection and is done in a holistic and regionally coordinated manner.



MARINE LITTER

With public awareness about plastic pollution in the sea at an all-time high, and strong EU legislation on single-use plastic secured, 2020 was the time to focus on proper and ambitious implementation of the Single-Use Plastic Directive.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, threatened recent progress in **reducing single-use plastic**. Industry lobbies used health concerns to try and renew the public image of single-use plastics and delay or water down the Single-Use Plastic Directive. Strong joint NGO-led communication activities were crucial to maintain recent achievements.

We coordinated and supported our members to obtain strong national legislation on single-use plastics based on the EU Directive. Our mid-term assessment of the transposition of the Directive into national law (in collaboration with the Rethink Plastic Alliance and Break Free From Plastic Europe) focused on high-performing countries, exerting pressure on the least advanced countries to increase their efforts. In addition, we collected best practices in reducing and phasing out single-use plastics across Europe. These will help national and local authorities to work towards implementation of the Directive in 2021.

We managed to gain policymakers' attention for **microplastic pollution** and the need to tackle it at source, with the Parliament asking for mandatory measures to tackle all microplastic sources and a Commission proposal for dedicated regulations already in the works. In addition, we worked at the regional level of the North-East Atlantic (with OSPAR) to address microplastic pollution through loss of pellets (small plastic particles used for production of plastic objects). Adoption of an OSPAR recommendation on pellets that includes our key points is expected in 2021, after postponement of the ministerial meeting in 2020 due to COVID-19.



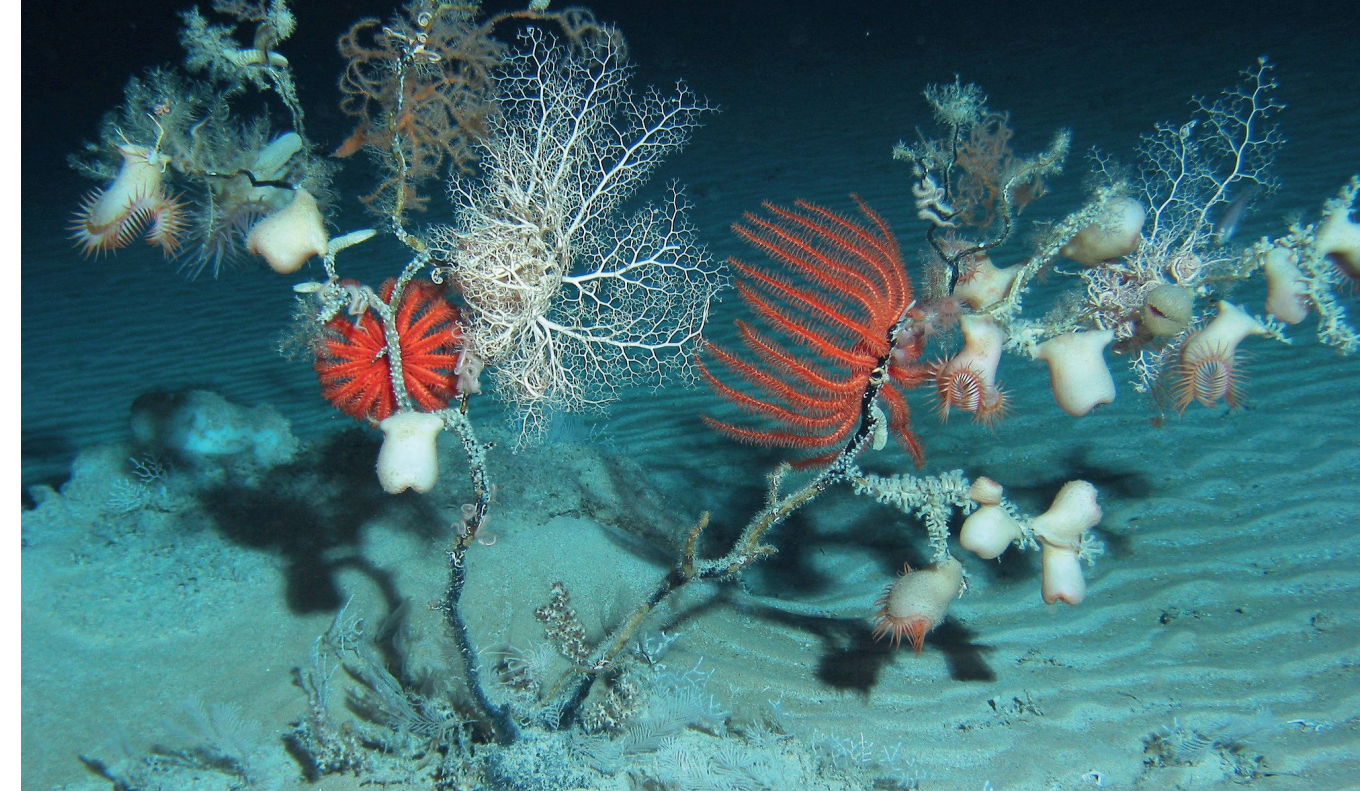
DEEP-SEA MINING

We are challenging a well-oiled narrative: that urbanisation and the transition to renewable energy will require more mining, making deep-sea mining a necessity. Scientists warn that deep-sea mining could have devastating effects on the deep sea, which functions as the regulatory body of the entire planet and is essential to life on Earth. We can protect our oceans if we transition to a circular and sharing economy that focuses on sustainable consumption and production, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 12. This alternative narrative is core to our work on deep-sea mining.

We collaborated with marine organisations and also with organisations working on terrestrial mining, circular economy and renewables in our growing “Keepitintheseabed” network. This platform plays an important role in convincing more organisations to work on deep-sea mining and to reach out to their governments. In addition, we supported the work of several national NGO coalitions.

Our work contributed to **increasing calls for a moratorium on deep-sea mining**, including from all EU fisheries advisory councils.

Through our work on policies developed under the European Green Deal, including the Blue Economy Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy, we contributed to a shift in the EU positioning on deep-sea mining, with the inclusion of a moratorium call in both strategies.



ABOUT 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 31 member organisations in 15 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 a world whose seas and ocean are abundant in marine life that is diverse, climate resilient, and not threatened by human pressures. 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 six other Assembly members. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation.



BELGIUM

NATUURPUNT

BULGARIA

FRIENDS OF THE
BLACK SEA

CROATIA

SUNCE

DENMARK

DANMARKS
NATURFREDNINGSFORENING
LEVENDA HAV

FRANCE

FRANCE NATURE
ENVIRONNEMENT

GERMANY

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH -
BUND

GREECE

ARCHIPELAGOS
MEDSOS

IRELAND

SWAN
IRISH WILDLIFE TRUST

ITALY

LEGAMBIENTE

THE NETHERLANDS

STITCHING DE NOORDZEE
SEA FIRST
GOOD FISH
FOUNDATION
WADDENVERENIGING

PORTUGAL

GEOTA
SCIAENA
LIGA PARA A PROTECCAO
DA NATUREZA

SPAIN

RETORNA
FUNDACCIO ENT
ECOLOGISTAS EN ACCION

SWEDEN

SWEDISH SOCIETY FOR NATURE CONSERVANCY
(SSNC)

SWITZERLAND

OCEANCARE

UNITED KINGDOM

MARINE CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

INTERNATIONAL

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION
EUROPE
INTERNATIONAL FUND
FOR ANIMAL WELFARE
EUROPEAN
ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU
PROJECT AWARE
WHALES AND DOLPHIN
CONSERVATION

FIND AND FOLLOW US:



THE TEAM

Even though everybody worked from home for the most of 2020, Seas At Risk moved to a brand new office and we are looking forward to the day that we can work together again under one roof – hopefully sometime soon.

Monica Verbeek

Xiaowei Liu

Ann Dom

John Maggs

Alice Belin

Marc-Philip Buckhout

Frédérique Mongodin

Andrea Ripol

Christine Adams

Louisa Gray

Renske Cox

Sara Tironi

Chiara Durano

Executive Director

Operations Director

Senior Policy Advisor

Senior Policy Advisor

Senior Marine Policy Officer

Aquaculture Policy Officer

Senior Marine Litter Policy Officer

Fisheries Policy Officer

Junior Fisheries Policy Officer

Admin and Member Liaison Officer

Admin and Finance Officer

Communications Officer

Junior Communications Officer

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Gonçalo Carvalho
(Sciaena)
Chair



Patrick ten Brink
(EEB)
Treasurer



Ana Dewar
(Retorna)
Secretary



Johanna Fox
(SSNC)
Non-post holder



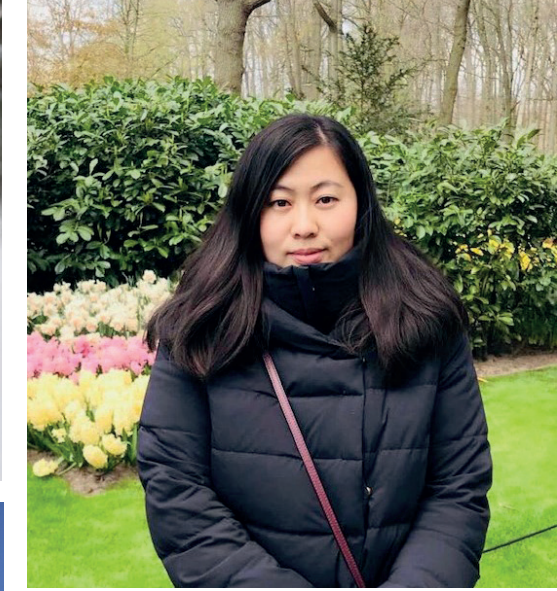
Miguel Ortega
(Fundacio ENT)
Non-post holder



Jean-Luc Solandt
(MCS)
Non-post holder



Nadja Ziebarth
(BUND)
Non-post holder



FINANCIAL REPORTING

Thank you!

Our work would not be possible without the generous funding support by:



European Commission
(DG Environment Life Programme)



The Flotilla Charitable Foundation



Adessium Foundation



Prince Albert II of Monaco
Foundation



Oceans5



Pisces Foundation



OceanCare



Zero Waste Europe



Climate Works Foundation



Oak Foundation



Funding Fish



Gordon and Betty Moore
Foundation



German Ministry of Environment
(UBA)



TNC (The nature Conservancy)

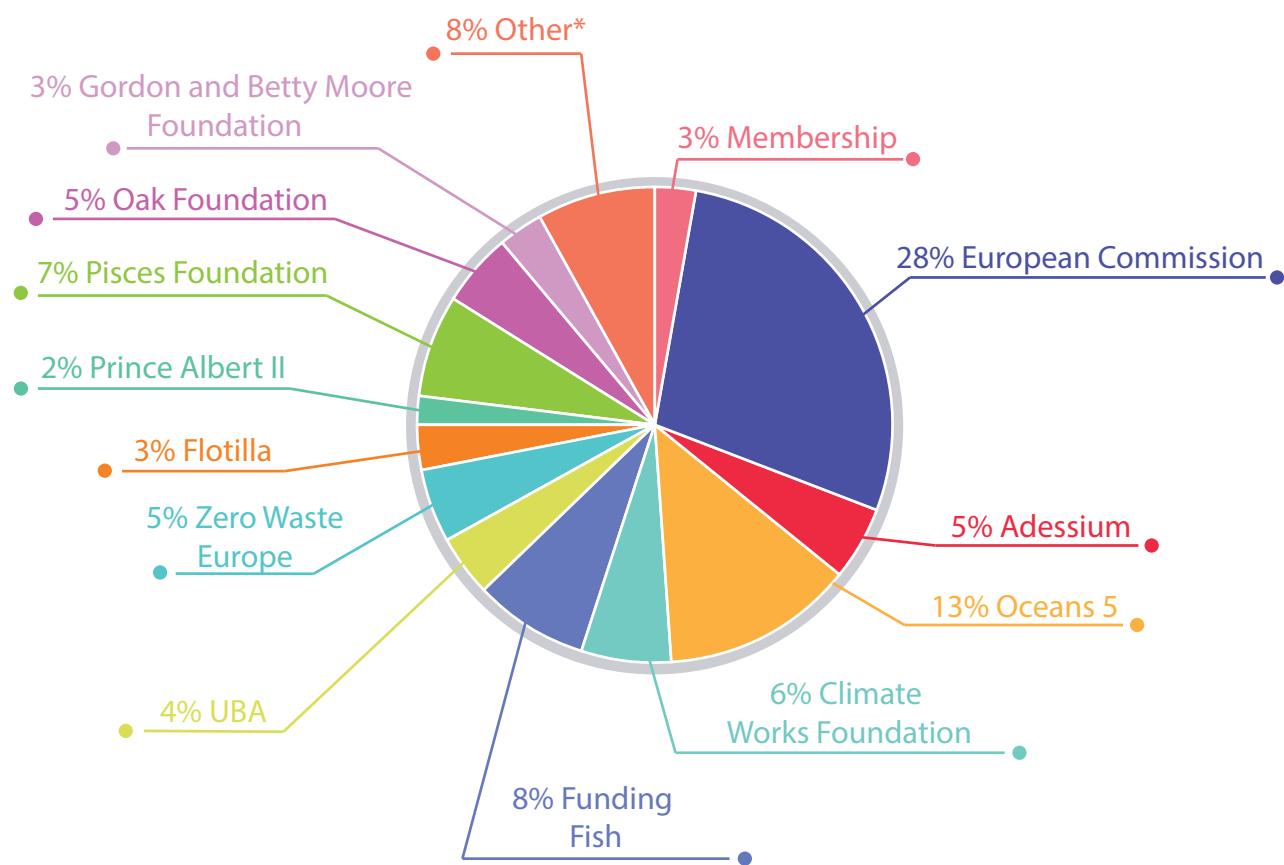


The Waterloo Foundation

2020 ACCOUNTS

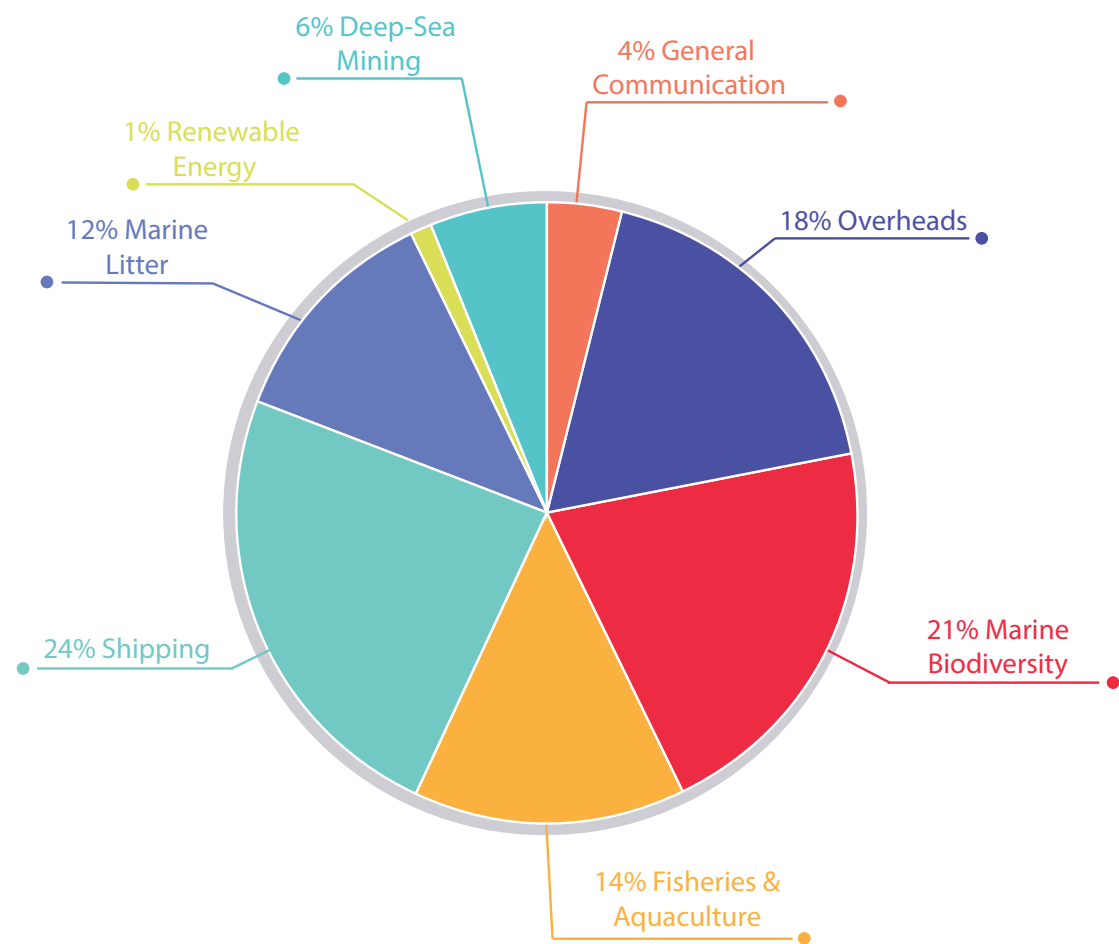
Total SAR income (without on-grants)	€ 1,433,007
Total SAR Expenditure (without on-grants)	€ 1,431,801

2020 TOTAL INCOME



*Funders with less than 2% contribution can be found in the “other” category

2020 TOTAL EXPENDITURE





www.seas-at-risk.org

Rue de la Charité, 22
1210 Brussels
+32 02 343 09 83



Seas At Risk gratefully acknowledges EU funding support. The content of this report is the sole responsibility of Seas At Risk. It should not be regarded as reflecting the position of the funders.