

Annual Report

2021

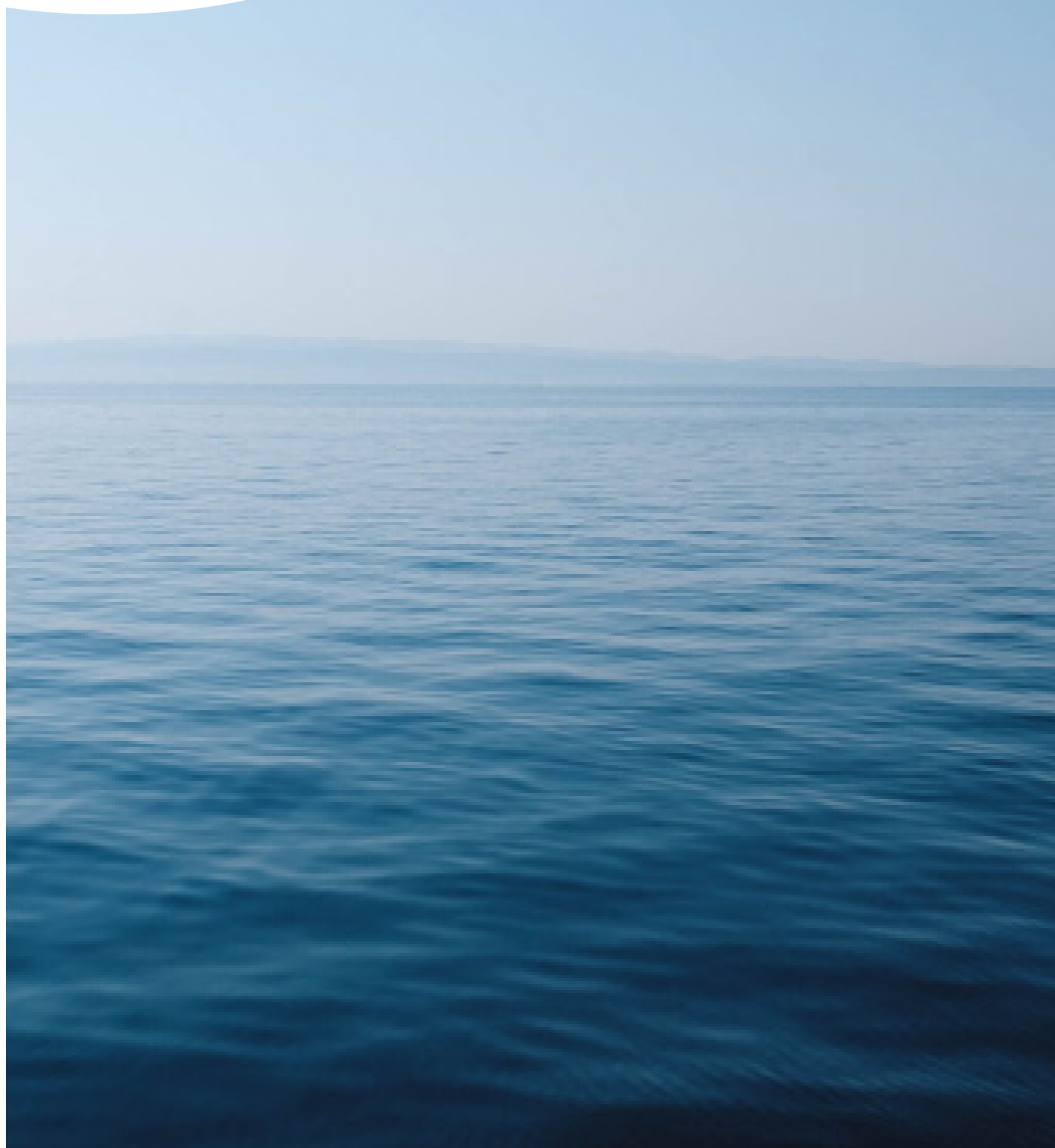


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ISLANDS OF HOPE IN A WORLD IN CRISIS

With the Ukraine war now raging, 2021 almost feels like a prelude of what was yet to come. In 2021 the Covid-19 pandemic still had a tight grip on the world, while climate calamities happened at an alarming pace and close to home. The planet is off balance, and as UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said: “nature is striking back with growing force and fury”.

In the EU, leaders and policy makers continued to recognise in their public narrative the links between the health, climate and biodiversity crises, and the need for a green recovery and systemic change. The European Green Deal remained a strong framework for EU policy. However, this narrative is not matched with the action that is so urgently needed, and the legislative proposals and measures adopted will not bring a net-zero and nature-positive society and economy.

That the EU must do better and more was also the conclusion of the Seas At Risk-led first assessment of the Blue Manifesto Roadmap to a Healthy Ocean, a manifesto that was supported by over 100 NGOs and is a framework for our work. Still, the assessment of eleven milestones showed that some progress was made towards a healthy ocean. Positive developments to which Seas At Risk contributed include the consideration of measures to phase out bottom trawling from marine protected areas, adoption of fisheries measures that will increase the protection of the critically endangered Baltic harbour porpoise, ambitious national



“
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- Antonio Guterres
UN Secretary General

legislation to reduce single use plastics in several EU member states, a strengthened regional and global policy framework around reducing the climate impact of international shipping, and a shift in the EU positioning on deep-sea mining which is no longer considered a blue economy priority sector but one that needs a more precautionary approach.

These positive developments are the result of our continued hard work, despite the challenges that virtual working brings, and of the good collaboration with our members, partner NGOs and the wider coalitions we work with. Seas At Risk got a shiny new website in 2021, we launched a multi-lingual interactive map on solutions for single use plastics, gathered over 150,000 signatures to end destructive bottom trawling in marine protected areas, and organised the second edition of Ocean Week. We also published reports and organised workshops and webinars, building capacity with our members

and beyond, developing joint positions with members and partners, and pressing our case at numerous official and unofficial meetings and events. The team grew and for a few months in between lock-downs we were able to make use of our new, spacious premises. All this was only possible because of the dedication, support, and resilience of our staff, our members, partners, funders and allies, and I want to thank all of you for that.

Looking ahead, we will continue to press decision-makers to properly address the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse, encouraging them to accept that there are limits to growth and that what we urgently need instead is a well-being ocean economy and good ocean governance. We will insert this in the many policy processes we work on to create islands of hope for a shift from destruction to regeneration of the ocean, our planet's life support system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'J. Verbeek' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Monica Verbeek
Executive Director
Seas At Risk

2021 AT A GLANCE

DECARBONISING SHIPPING

Our ongoing work on decarbonising shipping has **helped strengthen the International Maritime Organization (IMO) policy framework around reducing the climate impact of international shipping** and we were delighted to welcome the IMO's Resolution urging Member States to take national and (by implication) regional action on ship-source black carbon.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

Following a joint NGO campaign we launched in 2019 in close cooperation with our members Whale and Dolphin Conservation and France Nature Environnement, in 2021 **Baltic Member States finally agreed on fisheries mitigation measures that will increase the protection and likelihood of survival of the Baltic harbour porpoise.** The measures are expected to come into force at the beginning of 2022.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

While offshore renewable energy will help to mitigate climate change, the biodiversity concerns it raises need to be addressed. **In response to the EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy, we published, with input from our members, a report entitled 'Planning offshore renewable energy with nature in mind'.** It sets out some key principles that offshore renewable energy planning should adhere to in order to be in line with key EU objectives for biodiversity restoration and nature protection. One point made in the report is that wind parks should not be deployed in marine protected areas.

MARINE LITTER

Together with the Rethink Plastic alliance, we published an assessment of the implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive across all EU Member States and Norway. In parallel, **we launched our multilingual interactive map that showcases over 150 best practices and solutions from across Europe to reduce and phase out single-use plastics.** The second half of the year focused on microplastics with the publication of a study and brochure with recommendations for tackling microplastic in the marine environment. .

MARINE BIODIVERSITY

Ocean Day, 8 June 2021, saw the launch of our first annual assessment of the Blue Manifesto Roadmap to a Healthy Ocean. This comprehensive assessment of the 11 milestones on the road to a healthy ocean identified for 2020 concluded that, while some progress has been made, the EU must do more, and it must do better if we are to achieve a healthy ocean. To monitor progress and hold institutions accountable, this assessment will now be carried out **annually.**

DEEP-SEA MINING

Our report **'Breaking free from mining – A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining, on land and in the deep-sea'** generated much-needed attention and discussion on an alternative narrative for future demand for metals, with interest from the media and documentary-makers across Europe and further afield. The report looks at existing and emerging alternatives to shift towards a society that is based on needs rather than growth, on wellbeing, and on the use of resources within the limits of our planet. .

Marine Biodiversity

Marine biodiversity is under attack from all sides. Global warming, pollution, and destructive human activities risk the collapse of marine life. Taking action to rewild our seas and oceans is crucial. Seas At Risk works with its members to increase the number, size, and effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Europe and to push for integrated maritime policies and ecosystem-based marine spatial planning.

In 2021, we continued to work actively to reduce cumulative pressures on marine ecosystems and create the conditions for the rewilding of EU seas.

First annual assessment of the Blue Manifesto

Seas At Risk led the development of a [first annual assessment of the Blue Manifesto](#) Roadmap to a Healthy Ocean, publishing it symbolically on Ocean Day, 8 June 2021. The assessment of 11 diverse milestones concluded that, while some progress has been made, the EU must do better and more to achieve a healthy ocean. The assessment is proving to be a powerful tool for holding institutions accountable for the failure to reach Good Environmental Status, and will now be carried out annually to monitor progress.

Fisheries measures for offshore MPAs

In cooperation with a large coalition of environmental NGOs, Seas At Risk pushed for EU Member States to propose joint measures to reduce fisheries impacts in offshore MPAs. To speed up the process to get measures for the North Sea's Dogger Bank, we filed a legal compliant and engaged in sustained advocacy with key decision-makers. The approach paid off, as in February 2021, the UK proposed to ban bottom trawling from the entire UK Dogger Bank site as well as three additional sites, and

is discussing banning fishing activities from 40 sites.

Legal possibilities to enforce protection

We organised a workshop to empower NGOs and local campaigners to take action, by providing an overview of our [MPA Legal Toolkit](#) with factual and legal information as well as a series of case studies for practical guidance. The toolkit has already helped our members in Portugal, France, Ireland, Denmark, and the Netherlands to increase pressure for more and better MPAs at national level.

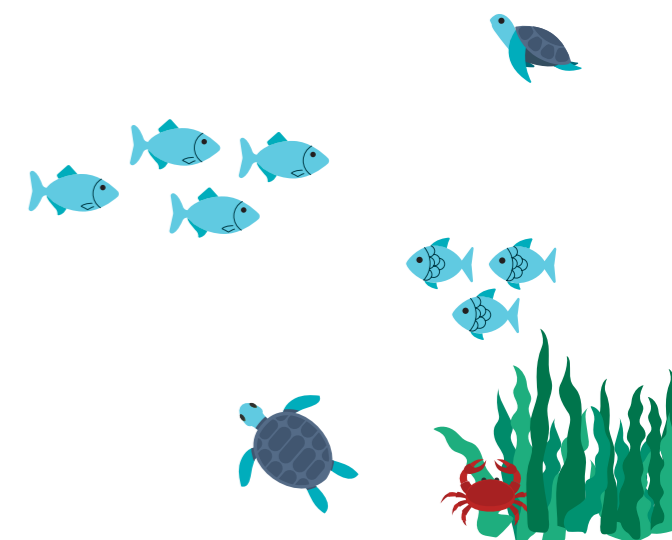
In an additional workshop with lawyers and scientists we considered how the latest scientific data from Global Fishing Watch can be used to better protect MPAs and to identify particularly badly affected sites where legal intervention may be necessary.

Revision and implementation of the MSFD with a focus on noise and seabed

The revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which started in 2021, was another priority, as this process will shape the legal framework for marine conservation in the years to come. As a leading partner in a broad marine NGO coalition, we continuously contributed to this process through stakeholder consultations, focus groups,

expert meetings and speaking contributions at conferences.

To enhance the implementation of the MSFD, SAR focused on developments on seabed integrity and underwater noise. A high level event "[Too loud for Good Environmental Status](#)", co-organised with the SEArca European Parliament intergroup, raised awareness on underwater noise with European decision makers.



Fisheries & Aquaculture

Fish is not only a food source for millions of people, it is also a vital part of marine ecosystems, crucial for ocean resilience. However, the marine environment is threatened by overfishing and destructive fishing practices. Seas At Risk works to ensure a shift towards fisheries with a low impact on the environment, and the restoration of fish populations to a level where sustainable fishing becomes possible.

In 2021, we worked towards increasing fish stocks to abundant levels and reducing environmental impacts of European fisheries and aquaculture.

'Turning the Tide for EU fisheries' campaign

In 2021, Seas At Risk launched a joint campaign with its members on fisheries, 'Turning the Tide for EU fisheries'. It focuses on eliminating bycatch of sensitive species, phasing out bottom trawling, and ending overfishing. After only one year, great results were achieved with our members across France (FNE), Spain (EeA) and Germany (BUND), the key target countries of this campaign. This included a commitment to ban bottom trawling in MPAs in the election programme of Germany's Green Party, successful awareness raising on bycatch of the common dolphin in the Bay of Biscay,

and enhanced advocacy on the new Spanish fisheries law.

Successful Baltic TACs Council

In addition to our work with our members in EU Member States, Seas At Risk continued its efforts at EU level. We worked to see an end to overfishing for most fish stocks, which due to Brexit was limited to EU-managed fish stocks only. Results were positive, with around two-thirds of the fishing limits following scientific advice for the North-East Atlantic. The Baltic TACs (total allowable catches) Council was an overall success, as politically difficult closures of targeted fisheries in the Western Baltic were finally put in place. The ministers also followed the ambitious proposal of the Commission to a large extent, which took ecosystem-based fisheries management considerations and buffers into account for the very first time.

Ambitious European Parliament position on the EU Biodiversity Strategy

Together with partner NGOs, we successfully pressed for ambitious wording on banning bottom trawling in MPAs and coastal sensitive areas in the position of the Environment Committee on the EU Biodiversity Strategy. This sets the right basis for the publication of the European Commission's Action Plan in 2022.

We also delivered to the EU Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, a giant pop-up storybook on how bottom-trawling impacts our marine environment on behalf of more than 150,000 Europeans who signed a petition calling for the EU to phase out destructive fishing practices, starting with an immediate ban of bottom trawling in all Marine Protected Areas.

Good news for the Baltic Harbour Porpoise

Three years after we launched our joint NGO campaign with our members Whale and Dolphin Conservation and France Nature Environnement asking the European Commission to take emergency measures to protect the Baltic Harbour Porpoise, Baltic Member States finally agreed on new fisheries mitigation measures that will increase the protection and likelihood of survival of the Baltic Harbour Porpoise, a critically endangered population and the last whale living in the Baltic Sea. The measures are expected to come into force beginning of 2022 and include a ban on fisheries using static nets, as well as mandatory installation of acoustic deterrent devices ('pingers') on fishing nets in MPAs frequented by the harbour porpoise.



Decarbonising Shipping

Ship climate emissions are higher than those of Germany, the world's sixth biggest emitter by country, and are growing fast. A clear and unambiguous target consistent with the 1.5°C Paris Agreement's goal is essential to ensure that new rules and regulations are fit for purpose. Seas At Risk works to raise awareness of shipping's climate pollution and advocates urgent action to transform the sector.

Our work in 2021 has helped significantly strengthen the regional and global policy framework around reducing the climate impact of international shipping.

Global action on ship-source black carbon

Black carbon from shipping is responsible for 20% of shipping's climate impact and there were two significant regulatory developments in 2021. After a lengthy SAR campaign, our work on Arctic shipping paid off when the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the UN regulator of international shipping, adopted a ban on the use of the dirtiest heavy fuel oils (HFO) in Arctic waters, to come into force on 1 July 2024. Despite the inclusion of waivers and exemptions that will stop the ban applying to all ships until 2029, the switch to cleaner fuels will significantly reduce emissions of black carbon, a short-lived climate super-pollutant that accelerates melting when it settles onto snow and ice, and that contributes to global warming by absorbing the sun's radiation.

Later in 2021 the IMO followed-up on the HFO ban with a non-binding Resolution encouraging member states to commence addressing the threat to the Arctic from black carbon emissions, and calling on industry to voluntarily switch to cleaner fuels

when operating in or near the Arctic. This development is extraordinary in that it is a *de facto* endorsement of EU and other regional action on ship black carbon, and SAR will use it to push hard to ensure that a black carbon control measure for shipping is included in the EU's 'Fit for 55' package of climate measures in 2022.

IMO short-term GHG measures

Throughout 2021, Seas At Risk continued to push for greater ambition at IMO on ship climate action, in particular arguing for levels of ambition consistent with the Paris Agreements goal of keeping global heating below 1.5 degrees and trying to ensure that IMO short-term rules apply to all ships. Unfortunately, the short-term rules agreed in 2021 fall far short of what is needed to halve ship climate emissions by 2030 and keep open the possibility of avoiding dangerous global heating.



Renewable Energy

The seas and oceans have considerable potential for renewable energy production, with wind energy currently the best-known form. While offshore renewable energy is important to help mitigate climate change, large-scale infrastructure developments in European seas raise biodiversity concerns. Seas At Risk works to ensure that nature protection is firmly taken into account when planning marine wind energy.

In 2021, our work to raise awareness about the need to address biodiversity concerns in the pursuit of clean, renewable energy has continued with vigour.

Report on key principles for respectful offshore renewable energy planning

In May 2021, with the support of Seas At Risk members Sciaena, BUND, Stichting De Noordzee, Whale and Dolphin Conservation, Svenska Naturskyddsföreningen, Natuurpunt, OceanCare, and Ecologistas en Acción, we published a report entitled '[Planning offshore renewable energy with nature in mind](#)'.

This report, following the release of the EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy at the end of 2020, sets out some key principles that offshore renewable energy planning at regional and national levels should adhere to in order to be in line with key EU objectives for biodiversity restoration and nature protection.

Our main message is that regional maritime spatial planning and monitoring should include strategies for renewable energy and cross-border cooperation between countries. These should be aligned with the EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy, take an ecosystem-based approach, and reflect ecological targets. This also means that wind parks should not be planned in marine protected areas.

Marine spatial plans of eight countries analysed with regard to offshore wind energy

With countries taking very different approaches to marine spatial planning, we decided to carry out a detailed analysis of the national marine spatial plans of eight EU countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia).

The goal of the analysis, undertaken with the support and input of Seas At Risk members, is to better understand and demonstrate how Member State governments incorporate environmental targets and/or strategies in their maritime spatial plans by looking at offshore renewable energy at sea. The report will be finalised and published in 2022.





Marine Litter

Plastic pollution is everywhere, from the deepest marine trenches to the Arctic. The only viable solution is to tackle the plastic and microplastic challenge at source. Seas At Risk works to phase out single-use plastic, drastically reduce the release of microplastics into the environment, hold producers accountable, promote production of sustainable alternatives, and encourage changes to consumption habits.

2021 saw remarkable progress on both the single-use plastic and microplastic agendas.

‘Moving on from single-use plastics: how is Europe doing?’

EU Member States pressed ahead with the transposition of the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive in 2021, with some countries including France, Ireland, Greece, Sweden, Estonia, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Austria showing more ambition, and others like Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy going for a more basic transposition of EU rules.

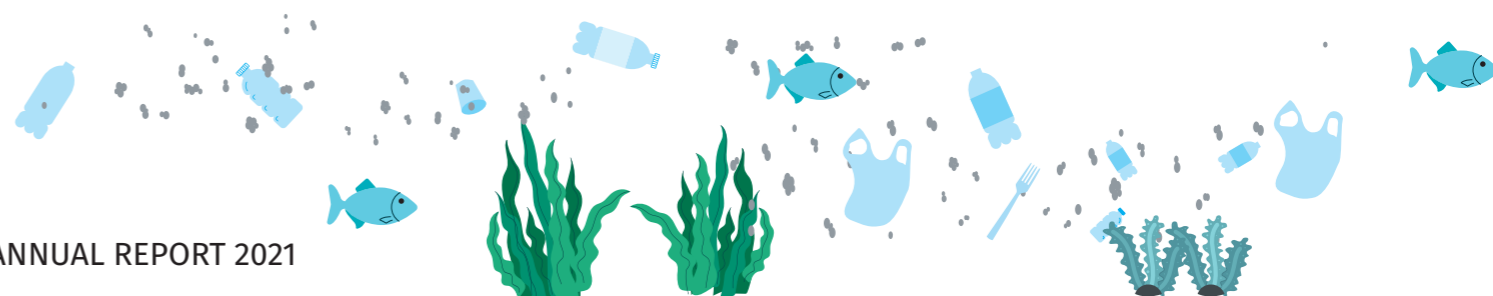
In time for the official 3 July transposition deadline, we published an assessment of the implementation across all EU Member States and Norway, entitled [‘Moving on from single-use plastics: how is Europe doing?’](#). This joint report, developed for the Rethink Plastic Alliance (RPa) together with Zero Waste Europe and Surfrider Europe, involved a six-month data collection exercise, followed by a critical analysis of national legislative developments to implement the Directive. Gaining a clear view of the progress allowed us to address national policy challenges and call for ambitious measures through social media campaigns and joint letters to policymakers.

In parallel, we launched our multilingual interactive map that showcases over 150 best practices and solutions from across Europe. By joining forces with our members, RPa and the Break Free From Plastic movement (BFFP) we were able to mobilise our communications channels to push laggard countries into action, while also recognising and celebrating ambitious legislations and national strategies.

‘Microplastics in the marine environment: Sources, Impacts & Recommendations’

To feed into the European Commission’s new initiatives on microplastics, and gather further evidence for EU decision-makers, we published in May a comprehensive study on sources, pathways, and the scale and impacts of microplastic pollution in the marine environment. The study, [‘Microplastics in the marine environment: Sources, Impacts & Recommendations’](#), was carried out by the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) and includes policy recommendations across sectors, calling for all identified sources of microplastics to be tackled at the source. We disseminated the study to relevant experts and policy makers.

Based on the report, we developed policy recommendations and a clear and user-friendly brochure to support our advocacy work.





Deep-sea mining

The deep sea drives ocean currents that regulate the climate, hosts unique ecosystems, is an important part of the food web and is the origin of all life on earth. And yet the surging demand for metals is now driving the mining industry into our planet's last frontier. Seas At Risk works to reduce EU and international support for deep-sea mining by advocating sustainable consumption and production alternatives.

In 2021, we took significant steps towards our long-term goal of saving the deep sea from mining by changing the narrative about growth.

Increasing calls for a moratorium on deep-sea mining

Our deep-sea mining work contributed to a further increase in calls for a moratorium on deep-sea mining, including from the EU fisheries advisory councils, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and hundreds of NGOs and scientists around the world.

Together, we contributed to a shift in the EU positioning on deep-sea mining. The new Blue Economy Strategy no longer profiles deep-sea mining as a priority sector, and takes a much more precautionary approach than in previous years.

Two important advocacy reports

Over the course of the year, we published two important reports related to deep-sea mining.

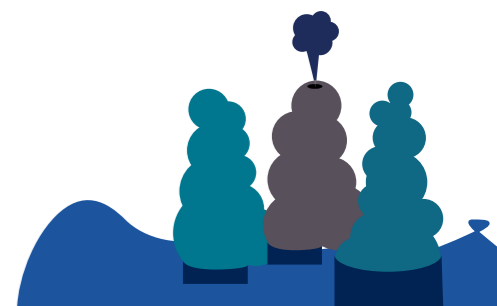
The first report, [‘At a crossroads: Europe’s role in deep-sea mining’](#) exposes the role played by the EU, its Member States, the United Kingdom and Norway in this final mining frontier. This report, published in May 2021, puts forward 10 steps for Europe to support deep-sea protection – from setting binding

targets for the reduction of the EU’s material footprint and prohibiting deep-sea mining in EU and international waters, to reforming the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

The second report, [‘Breaking free from mining – A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining, on land and in the deep-sea’](#), discusses existing and emerging alternatives to shift towards a society that is based on needs rather than growth, on wellbeing, and on the use of resources within the limits of our planet. This report, published in June 2021, supports our goal to spread a new narrative, and was used in several workshops in which local communities reflected on system change and alternative futures.

And our voice is being heard. In a joint response to the reports, the Directors-General of DG MARE, DG GROW and DG ENV emphasised they would adhere to the precautionary principle on deep-sea mining and that the Commission will “advocate that marine minerals cannot be exploited before the effects of deep-sea mining on the marine environment, biodiversity and human activities have been sufficiently researched, the risks understood and the technologies and operational practices able to demonstrate no serious harm to the environment”.

These two papers will be crucial tools for our continued advocacy and NGO capacity-building in 2022 and beyond.



ABOUT SEAS AT RISK

Seas At Risk is an association of environmental organisations from across Europe, working together to ensure that life in our seas and oceans is abundant, diverse, climate resilient, and not threatened by human activities. Its mission is to promote ambitious policies for marine protection at European and international level. With over 30 members representing the majority of European countries, Seas At Risk speaks for millions of citizens that care deeply about the health and well-being of seas and oceans.

Headquartered in Brussels, Seas At Risk has strong connections with the European institutions and with the UN and regional bodies responsible for seas and oceans, as well as with other like-minded organisations in Europe and around the world. This, together with our expertise and solid membership base, makes Seas At Risk a powerful voice, championing the cause of healthy seas and oceans for over 30 years.

MEET THE TEAM



Monica Verbeek
Executive Director



Tobias Troll
Marine Policy
Director



Xiaowei Liu
Operations Director



Ann Dom
Senior Policy
Advisor



John Maggs
Senior Policy
Advisor



Lucy Gilliam
Senior Shipping
Policy Officer



Frederique Mongodin
Senior
Marine Litter
Policy Officer



Christine Adams
Fisheries Policy
Officer



Andrea Ripol
Fisheries Policy
Officer



Marc-Philip Buckhout
Marine Policy
Officer



Sara Tironi
Communications
Officer



Chiara Durano
Junior
Communications
Officer



Mislav Bitanga
Communications
Intern



Louisa Gray
Membership &
Internal Comms
Officer



Renske Cox
Operations
Officer



David Brown
Finance Officer

OUR MEMBERS



| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ARCHIPELAGOS (GR) | MARINE CONSERVATION SOCIETY (UK) |
| BUND (DE) | NATUURPUNT (BE) |
| DANMARKS NATURFREDNINGSFORENING (DK) | OCEANCARE (CH) |
| DE WADDENVERENIGING (NL) | PADI AWARE (INT) |
| DEUTSCHE STIFTUNG MEERESSCHUTZ (DE) | RETORNA (ES) |
| ECO-UNION (ES) | SCIAENA (PT) |
| ECOLOGISTAS EN ACCION (ES) | SEA FIRST FOUNDATION (NL) |
| FUNDACIÓ ENT (ES) | STICHTING DE NOORDZEE (NL) |
| EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU (INT) | SUNCE (HR) |
| FRANCE NATURE ENVIRONNEMENT (FR) | SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE (INT) |
| GEOTA (PT) | SWAN (IE) |
| GOOD FISH (NL) | SWEDISH SOCIETY FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SE) |
| IFAW (INT) | WHALE AND DOLPHIN CONSERVATION (INT) |
| IRISH WILDLIFE TRUST (IE) | |
| LEGAMBIENTE (IT) | |

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



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Chair



Patrick ten Brink
Treasurer



Ana Gutierrez Dewar
Secretary



Miquel Ortega
Non-post holder



Jean-Luc Solandt
Non-post holder



Nadja Ziebarth
Non-post holder



Johanna Fox
Non-post holder



Catherine Pedersen Schirmer
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OUR DONORS

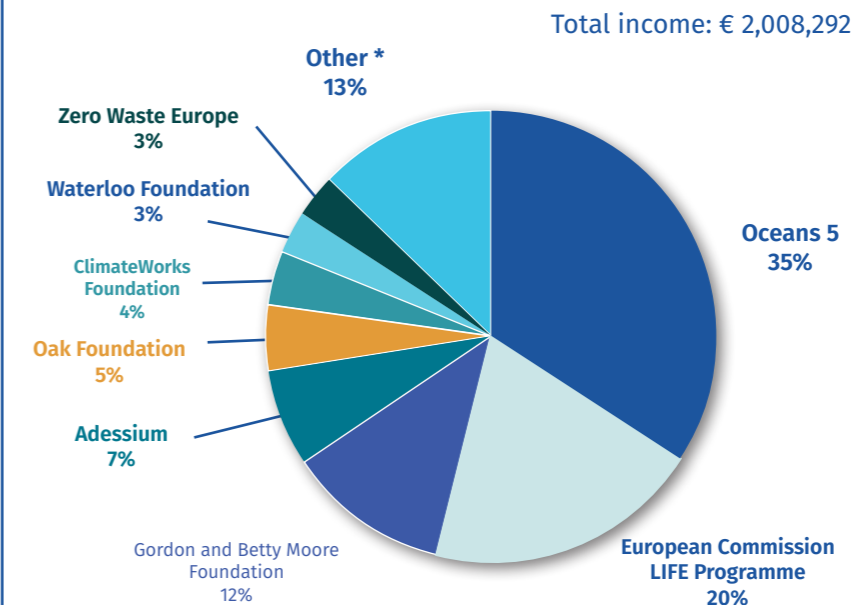
Thank you!

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

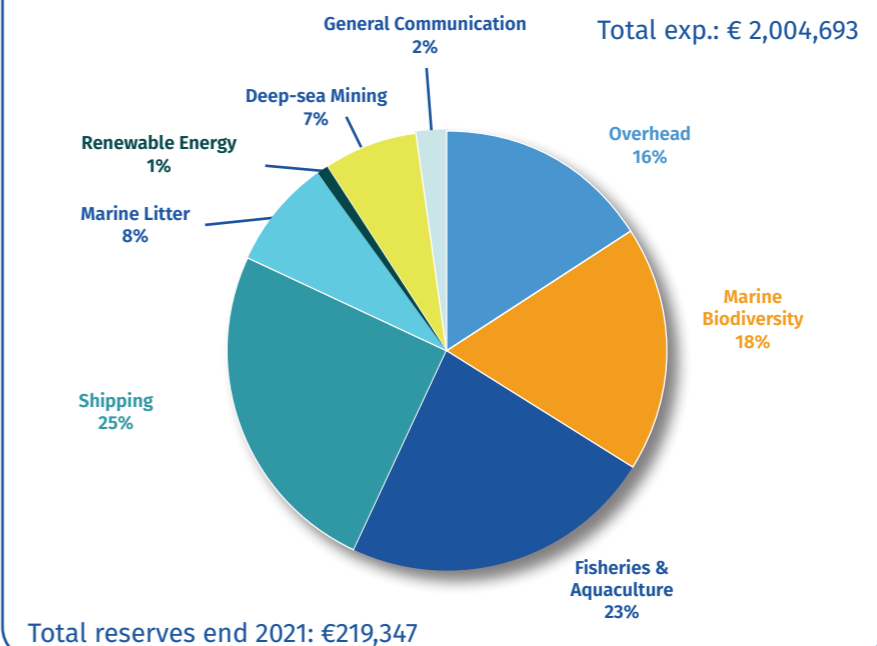


FINANCIAL REPORTING

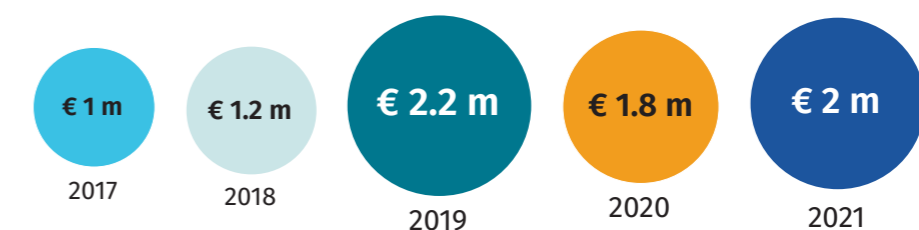
TOTAL 2021 INCOME



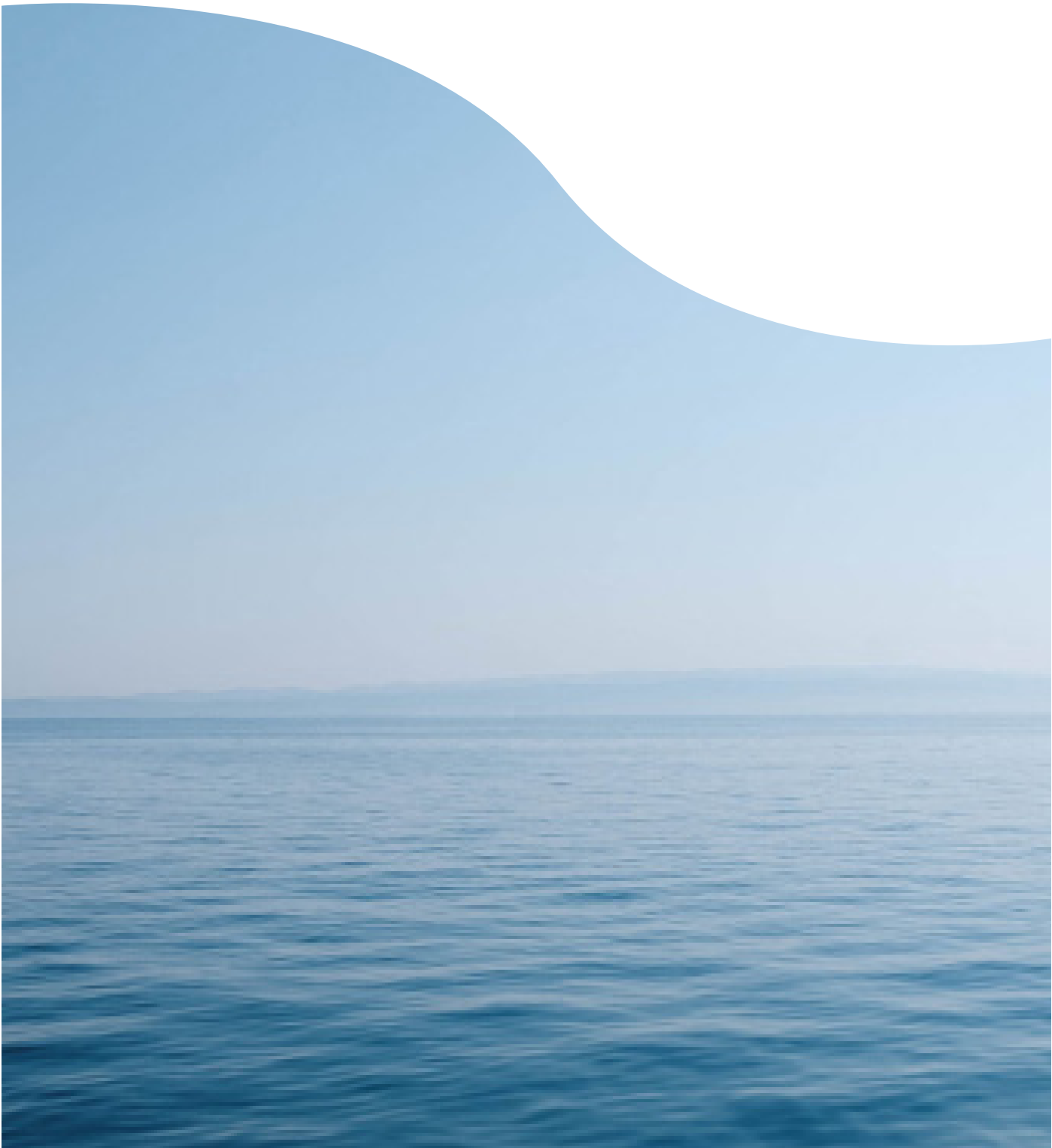
TOTAL 2021 EXPENDITURE



TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME 2017 - 2021



* Funders with contributions of less than 2% of the total income can be found in the "other" category



Seas At Risk
Rue de la Charite 22
1210 Brussels
www.seas-at-risk.org
+32 02 329 01 18

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