

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

we are reaching out to you on behalf of over 1.1 million EU citizens, who have signed the European Citizens' Initiative "Stop Finning – Stop the Trade" thereby requesting that the European Union bans the trade of all detached fins of sharks and rays. EU citizens have clearly stated that they urge the European Union to take action against the global threat of more than one third of all shark and ray species going extinct within the next decades [1] and the imminent risk created by many shark populations being pushed to the brink of collapse due to commercial fisheries [2].

The EU's "Fins Naturally Attached" regulation states that the fins shall not be removed from the body of the shark at sea. However, fins may be cut off after landing, and this makes it possible to trade and export detached fins.

In many other regions of the world, including the majority of the Atlantic, cutting of fins at sea is still allowed. In fact, finning is known to continue globally and in EU waters because the level of surveillance at sea is inadequate and offenses are difficult to detect and prosecute. It is evident that the fins of threatened and protected species, such as those listed on CMS App I and CITES App I or II, continue to be traded illegally on a regular basis, as it is nearly impossible to identify many thousands of tons of detached fins down to the species level.

To close these loopholes, new trade regulations must be introduced banning the export, import and transit of all detached fins of sharks and rays! The marine ecosystems need your voice and vote!

Why is this so important?

- Healthy oceans support a blue economy of **ocean-based tourism** [3], **fisheries** [4] and **food security** [5].
- The **oxygen** in every second breath we take **is derived from the oceans** [6].
- Sharks are vital for healthy marine ecosystems, and their extinction would have **far-reaching negative impacts** on marine ecosystems [7].
- **Resilient** marine ecosystems and biodiversity are essential carbon sinks and inevitable to combat climate change [8].
- Ocean health and stopping the loss of biodiversity are high priorities **of the EU Green Deal** [9] and **the EU Biodiversity Strategy** [10].
- More than **100 million sharks** are **killed every year**, mainly for their fins [11].
- Spain, Portugal, and France are among the **top 15 shark-fishing nations of the world** [12] and fishing operations are, in many cases, **subsidized with EU taxpayers' money** [13].
- Although the **EU is obliged under CITES** [14] and **CMS** [15] **to regulate the trade of listed species**, fins of these threatened/protected sharks and rays are still entering the market due to current inadequate legislation and controls by the EU [16].
- A legal market for shark fins creates a **loophole for illegal fins**, as origin and species are difficult to trace [17]. Detached shark fins can mostly only be identified with time-consuming and expensive DNA tests [18].

By prohibiting the trade of detached fins, the EU moves toward fulfilling its obligations for the conservation of sharks and rays, secures a sustainable blue economy [19] and safeguards food security. The EU must finally "Walk the Talk" and become part of the increasing number of nations [20] that take ocean and shark conservation seriously by putting trade regulations into action.

Please **support the demand** during the upcoming debate by speaking up for shark conservation and by **voting for a resolution that bans the trade of detached fins in the EU!**

1.1 million EU citizens and the civil society count on you.

Thank you so much for your valuable support.





- [1] Dulvy, et al., 2021
 [2] Pacoureau, Rigby, Kyne et al., 2021 und Dulvy et al., 2017
 [3] Torres et al., 2017
 [4] Hammerschlag, 2019
 [5] Pauly et al., 2017; FAO, several reports 2020
 [6] NOAA, 2021; NASA - Earth Observatory, 2017
 [7] Hammerschlag et al., 2017; Baum und Worm, 2009
 [8] Atwood, et al., 2015
 [9] European Commission, Website European Green Deal, accessed in August 2022; European Commission, KOM(2021) 240 final
 [10] <https://www.eea.europa.eu/policy-documents/eu-biodiversity-strategy-for-2030-1>
 [11] Worm et al., 2013.
 [12] Traffic, 2019
 [13] Regulation 2003/96/EG Council; Vorschlag der Europäischen Kommission für eine Richtlinie des Rates KOM(2021) 563 final, 2021/0213 (CNS)
 [14] Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Article I - III, Appendices I - III; <https://cites.org/eng/news/record-number-of-species-to-be-regulated-by-cites-after-cop19>
 [15] Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)
 [16] Felder et al., 2017; Giovos et al., 2019
 [17] Felder et al., 2017; Giovos et al., 2019
 [18] Feitosa, Martins, Giarrizzo et al., 2018; Sembiring, 2015.
 [19] <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2017/06/06/blue-economy>
 [20] Canada: Bill S-238 (Historical) | openparliament.ca; UK: <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3207>; Austria: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2022/PK1466/#, US: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/7776/text>