Seas At Risk 2024 Impact Report



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Foreword

2024 was a turbulent year for Europe's seas. The European Parliament elections resulted in a harrowing shift to the right, and although the new Commission is still led by Ursula von der Leyen, the Green Deal has been pushed aside amid a refocusing on competitiveness and security.

This raises questions about the future of EU waters and ecosystems, but as climate change continues to ravage our landscapes, there is no doubt that bold action is needed to protect our planet and seas.

And yet, despite challenges, there have been real signs of hope. The EU's **Nature Restoration Law** narrowly passed, with big wins for marine ecosystems, and a proud moment for our team who worked tirelessly with our members to help make it happen, despite huge opposition driven by centre- and far-right European parliamentarians. Alongside that, resistance to **deep-sea mining** continues to grow. Norway's controversial goahead for exploration triggered outcry but countries including Greece and Denmark stood up, adding pressure to halt this irreversible threat to the ocean and its ecosystems.

It was also a stand-out year for **low-impact fisheries**. Together with our members, we released two major reports, with one exploring business models to help drive real change. Low-impact fisheries also had their time to shine during Ocean Week, as we welcomed newly elected officials to the European Parliament for our event Rethink Fisheries! For Thriving Seas and Communities, spotlighting sustainable and community-focused approaches.

For the new mandate of the parliament and commission, we released the updated **Blue Manifesto**, our vision for a clean and healthy ocean by 2030, created together with fellow 'blue' NGOs. Launched in the European Parliament during Ocean Week, it provides a clear and bullet-proof roadmap, backed by over 140 organisations, and calls on the new EU leaders to be bold and deliver an "ocean deal" and establish an "ocean fund" to drive lasting change.

And we were heard: one of the Commission's first promises was to release an **EU Ocean Pact**, their public commitment towards a healthy ocean and our first ask in the Blue Manifesto. Amid the current global chaos, threats and uncertainties, policy-makers need to set a clear vision that provides hope and a sustainable future. The Ocean Pact, and its newly announced **Ocean Act**, has the potential to be a beacon of light in the dark, but it currently lacks concrete meas to turn political promises of tackling destructive activities into bold and binding action - the kind of legislation that supports a regenerative blue economy, one that thrives with the ocean and not at its expense.

Dr. Monica Verbeek, Executive Director

2024 at a glance

Marine biodiversity

2024 marked the adoption of the painstakingly won EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL) – the first time in over 30 years that legally binding rules have been set to bring nature back to Europe. With our coordination and support, our members secured 20 new marine protected areas across the EU.

Low-impact fisheries

We continued to bridge the gap between the grassroots level and Brussels, by gathering fisher representatives, fishmongers, researchers and other stakeholders under a process named "Rethinking Fisheries" with the purpose to create a vision for low-impact fisheries.

Deep-sea mining

In just three years, deep-sea mining – once championed as a fast-track to a greener Europe – has been exposed as an ecological disaster waiting to happen. On the global stage, the moratorium movement has been sweeping across the globe and has brought the total number of countries calling for a stop on deep-sea mining to 32. Confident in the power of pan-European cooperation beyond the bloc, we advocated and saw the Nordic Council apply pressure on Norway for its rogue advances on deep-sea mining.



Decarbonising shipping

In 2024, Seas At Risk's focus has been on when and how it will happen. The talks haven't been easy - equity and a just transition have been front and centre in the fight to decarbonise shipping, with vulnerable nations calling for a 'polluters pay' fee, with revenues going towards climate mitigation and adaptation.



In 2024, EU Member States hiked up their offshore renewable energy targets, so Seas At Risk matched their energy, so to speak, by ramping up our own advocacy efforts. We continue to seek out the most innovative examples of nature-inclusive design and use concrete, best practices to make our vision for a climate resilient and biodiverse future come to life.

Blue Manifesto

We gathered more than 145 civil society supporters to back the Blue Manifesto, showing that the movement for ocean protection is growing stronger than ever. The timing of the Blue Manifesto, just after the EU elections, couldn't have been better, laying out the roadmap to achieve and exceed the European Union's climate, pollution, and biodiversity goals.

Marine biodiversity

2024 marked the adoption of the painstakingly won EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL) – the first time in over 30 years that legally binding rules have been set to bring nature back to Europe.

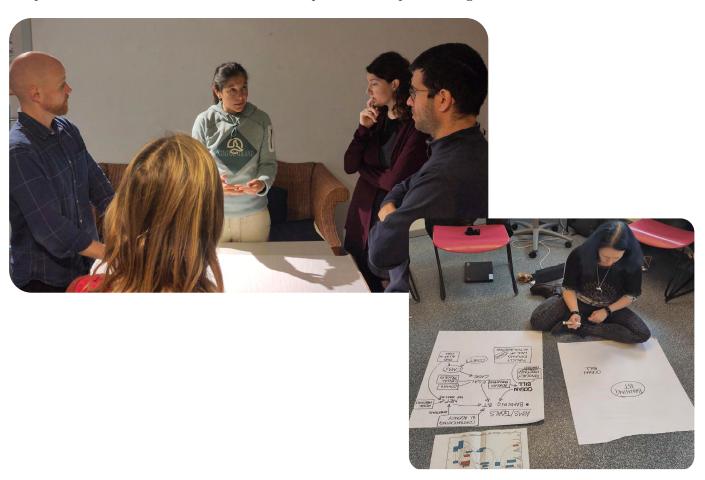
We began our #RestoreOcean campaign to get strong marine protection in the NRL way back in 2022, and as a result of the hard work of our members, our team, and our partners, we managed to get new rules that will mean EU countries have to adopt mature restoration plans and put in place restoration measures that cover up to at least 20% of sea areas by 2030, spelling a brighter future for fish and fauna alike.

To shine a light on the critical state of Europe's seas – the most trawled in the world – we launched a <u>report</u> and an <u>EU-wide campaign</u> to highlight the extent and impact of bottom trawling in EU marine protected areas (MPAs). This was supported by our <u>national polls</u>, which found that 73% of people would support the banning of bottom trawling in EU MPAs, and 9 out of 10 expect political leaders to prioritise the protection of marine biodiversity.



Our project on getting real protection of EU MPAs also made huge gains at national level thanks to the efforts of Seas At Risk members. By the end of 2024 we had secured 20 new MPAs across the EU, equal to an area of 422,533km2, as well as 45 fully protected MPAs (157,053 km2) and 30 MPAs (299,888 KM2) where bottom trawling has been banned.

Another significant achievement has been the launch of legal cases in project countries challenging bottom trawling in MPAs. Lawsuits have now been filed in Spain, <u>Germany</u>, and <u>the Netherlands</u>, with an administrative complaint also filed in Sweden, with court cases expected to take place throughout 2025.







Low-impact fisheries

Our narrative of a necessary just transition towards lowimpact and fair fisheries, with special attention paid to smallscale, coastal fisheries, communities and livelihoods, made some significant strides in 2024.

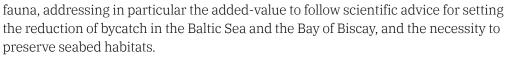
Our work on a just transition to low-impact fisheries was significantly enriched by two reports identifying <u>existing good practices</u> that can be reproduced or used as inspiration elsewhere in the EU regarding fair and low-impact fisheries management and businesses. We shone a spotlight on these inspiring seeds of change during our high-level "Rethink Fisheries" event, which took place just outside the European Parliament during Ocean Week 2024. It brought together low-impact fishers, Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the EU institutions, civil society and media.

We continued to bridge the gap between the grassroots level and Brussels, by gathering fisher representatives, fishmongers, researchers and other stakeholders under a process named "Rethinking Fisheries" with the purpose to create a vision for low-impact fisheries.

fisheries quotas,

Fisheries for a new era

These two fronts supported the continued collaborative work in the various European and national decision-making processes to raise awareness and encourage reduction of environmental impact on marine flora and



Our narrative of a necessary just transition towards low-impact and fair fisheries, with special attention paid to small-scale, coastal fisheries, communities and livelihoods, took a considerable spin in 2024. The new European Commissioner for Fisheries.





and Oceans, Costas Kadis, repeatedly underlined the need for environmental sustainability, restoration, and regeneration, especially in fisheries, and the crucial role of small-scale fishers in this context. Similarly, the idea of fairly distributing fishing opportunities and the importance of understanding the social and economic impact of fisheries management – from setting catch limits to managing quotas – gained more attention, not only with the Commissioner, but also in the European Parliament's Fisheries Committee, Advisory Councils, national public debates and more broadly in the news creating a fertile ground for a change.









Decarbonising shipping

In 2023, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) decided upon a greenhouse gas reduction strategy. Since then, our focus for 2024 has been on when and how it will happen.

The talks have not been easy – equity and a just transition have been front and centre in the fight to decarbonise shipping, with vulnerable nations calling for a "polluters pay" fee, with revenues going towards climate mitigation and adaptation.

Prior to key talks with IMO member states, we submitted critical papers on how to tackle shipping emissions. These helped broaden the conversation, allowing for a greater understanding of shipping in the context of climate issues and planetary boundaries. Our ideas quickly gained traction, even being mentioned in interventions from member states at the IMO – nudging the room closer to higher ambition. While decisions have yet to be made, momentum is building.

We also laid out a clear order of priority to reach zero emissions:

- Energy efficiency through better design and operation of shipping vessels.
- · Using wind propulsion to reduce fuel consumption and make vessels more efficient.
- Using e-fuels only when needed (and carefully none of them are perfect).



Our transport ads during IMO week all over central London.

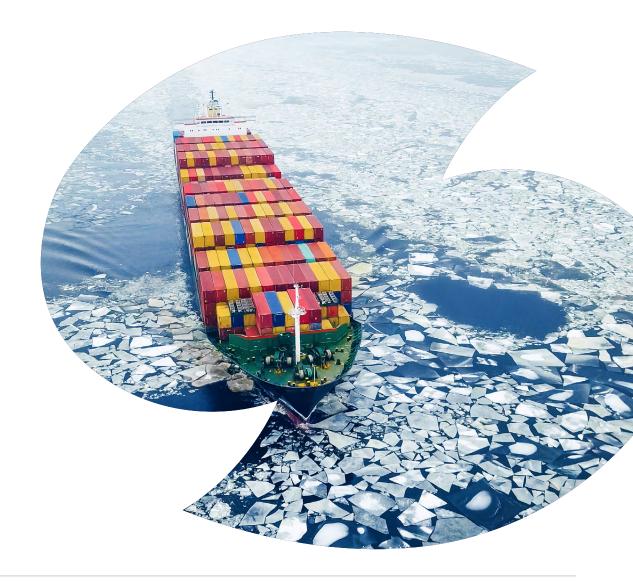
One Planet Shipping: pushing for a change

One Planet Shipping continues to be a fundamental part of our shipping work. In September, we launched our new narrative: One Planet Shipping: Navigating the Waves of Climate Change and Consumption. With the aim of steering shipping down the path of sustainability, within the limits of our planet, the One Planet Shipping crew spread its messages far and wide - across members, other organisations representing civil society organisations, and even at the Paris Olympics with Olympic sailor for Great Britain, Fynn Sterritt, endorsing the OPS message.



Stronger together

Seas At Risk would not be able to make such an impact without the help of our coalition partners. The <u>Clean Arctic Alliance</u> and <u>Clean Shipping Coalition</u> continue to work hard to amplify our collective voice. Together, we are pushing for global action that is fair, fast, and leads to a cleaner future for all.



Offshore renewable energy

Renewable energy plays a star role in achieving climate ambitions and reducing the adverse, imminent effects of climate change on nature. To ensure a truly nature-inclusive energy transition, offshore renewable energy development must align with biodiversity objects that centre people, nature, and communities.

In 2024, EU Member States hiked up their offshore renewable energy targets, so Seas At Risk matched their energy, so to speak, ramping up our own advocacy efforts by onboarding a new policy officer and publishing an updated position paper: Powering the future, prenewables. Continued collaboration with our members across Europe allowed us to engage with EU, regional and national policy-makers to highlight challenges and solutions

to deploy nature-inclusive offshore renewable energy. Regularly gaining new and inspiring insights from our members across Europe, we were able to deepen our expertise and embolden our asks to put nature and people first. The European Commission's new guidance documents on offshore renewables were an opportunity to put that knowledge to good use.

The place to be when it comes to offshore renewable development has been the North Sea, so we have leaned into efforts to increase international cooperation around this sea basin, such as the new Greater North Sea Basin Initiative and the Convention for the Protection of Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR A cornerstone of our vision for renewable energy is enhanced transnational collaboration, an objective underscored in our coordination work at the OSPAR task group on offshore renewable



energy development. In fora like these, and beyond, we collaborate to navigate the complexities of offshore renewables with topics including marine protected areas, maritime spatial planning, cross-border cooperation, non-price criteria, and multi-use, which each have their own social and economic implications. Our engagement in the North Sea allowed us to gather knowledge and experience that can feed into regional processes on offshore renewable energy elsewhere.

We continue to seek out the most innovative examples of nature-inclusive design and use these concrete, best practices to bring our vision for a climate-resilient and biodiverse future to life.





Deep-sea mining

In just three years, deep-sea mining – once championed as a fast-track to a greener Europe – has been exposed as an ecological disaster waiting to happen. In 2021, not a single country in Europe defended a moratorium, precautionary pause, or ban on deep-sea mining. Today, thanks to diligent work from the Seas At Risk network and partners, 14 European countries stand together against the looming industry.

Europe is moving in the right direction. And it's leading the way. We mapped how the European deep-sea mining landscape has evolved in a new report (The changing seascape of deep-sea mining in Europe) where we outlined the changes in international sentiments, broke down the quickly evolving positions of several European countries, and made seven policy recommendations. The moratorium movement has been sweeping across the globe and has brought the total number of countries calling for a ban on deep-sea mining to 32. Confident in the power of pan-European cooperation beyond the bloc, we advocated in Iceland and Norway and saw Nordic countries via the Nordic Council speak collectively and pile on the pressure to abandon the unneeded, unwanted practice.

During EU Ocean Week, we coordinated and moderated a panel discussion: "Criminalising Ecocide to Save the Ocean," where deep-sea mining took centre stage. We welcomed nearly 90 attendees to the European Parliament and created space for legal experts, policy-makers, and activists to talk about an emerging brand of environmental law.



Considering the widespread damage deep-sea mining may entail, the opportunity was ripe to widen deep-sea mining debate with the movement to recognise such widespread ecological havoc as a crime. We only scratched the surface, but the event was a successful first dive into the synergies between the topics.

Simultaneously we continue working on the ground in the EU to amplify the need to rethink and, ultimately, reduce mineral demand. In the face of the fiery <u>Draghi report</u>, which tried to tout destructive deep-sea mining to keep Europe competitive, the <u>European Commission doubled down on its 2022 position</u>. This win was a boost to our campaigning efforts and a reminder that advocacy works.







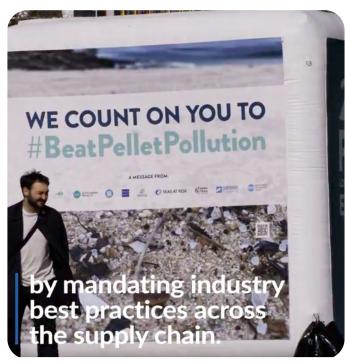


Marine litter

As European policy moves from one source of plastic pollution to another, Seas At Risk remained steadfast in the fight to keep all plastics from polluting the ocean's ecosystems. Whether macro, micro or nano, plastics can harm marine life and human health the moment they enter the open environment.

Bringing microplastics from the beach to the Brussels bubble

Plastic production pellets — the building blocks of all plastic products — may be small in size, but they wreak massive environmental harm. We saw this firsthand in the beginning of 2024, as plastic pellets started washing up on the Galician coast. Activated by the need to raise awareness and deliver real political results at the plenary vote on pellet loss, we launched a pre-Earth Day pellet hunt where citizens and members of the Seas At Risk, Fidra UK and Rethink Plastic networks scoured shores and riverbanks for the tiny plastic pellets. To turn data into impact, we brought policy-makers to see the plastic pellet pollution issue firsthand: first, on a field trip to the Ecaussinnes petrochemical plant and a second time, with an unmissable installation right on the Parliament's doorstep. These efforts led to the EU taking a historic stance on a brand-new plastic pellet regulation: the EU collaborated and raised the bar to reduce spillage through operational standards for all actors in the supply chain, such as producers and transporters (including maritime transport). This first-in-the-world regulation will target pellet pollution at its many sources, drastically reducing this major source of microplastic pollution.



Bursting the Brussels bubble: Seas At Risk and partners sent a clear message to MEPs with an inflatable pellet pop-up stationed outside of the European Parliament.



Field trip: Seas At Risk, Surfrider Europe and others showed MEPs the extent of plastic pellet pollution in a pollution hotspot in Ecaussinnes, Belgium.



We joined Sunce at their "Marine Litter-Free Tides of Change" Conference in Split, Croatia.

We carried momentum on microplastics through the summer into Ocean Week, where we packed into a local cinema and screened X Trillion. With more than 90 of you in the theatre's bright red seats we journeyed to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and learned about the scale of microplastic pollution at sea. Then we engaged in an inspiring expert discussion where we explored multiple facets of tackling microplastic pollution: from art and filmmaking, to science, to policy.

Our work on pellets and other microplastics laid down the ground work for continued efforts on synthetic textiles and their microplastic footprint. We will work closely with the European Commission, where we'll push for innovation and better product standards to inform its ecodesign strategy and to address key sources of microplastic pollution—including textiles, tyres, and paints—right at the design stage.

Status update on the Single-Use Plastics Directive

2024 marked six years of putting the Single-Use Plastics Directive into action. Together with the Rethink Plastic alliance, informed by the regional expertise of our members, we assessed the effectiveness of the directive in our Evaluation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive. We identified leaders and laggards on the phaseout of throwaway plastics and delivered it to the European Commission ahead of their own assessment.

Why evaluate an already-in-force directive? At Seas At Risk, we welcome legislation that protects the ocean, but we know that implementation of strong, existing tools is the fastest – and most effective – way to solve Europe's plastic problem.

We also continued co-leading the single-use plastics task group within OSPAR, gathering intel on national measures and developing beach and river litter analyses to inform additional action on single-use plastics in the region.



Blue Manifesto

With climate change hitting the ocean hard, bold and actionable steps are needed to protect marine life, public health and support livelihoods that depend on a healthy sea. The launch of the updated Blue Manifesto brought soughtafter asks that are badly needed to secure the future of the ocean and its health, and ensure that the transition is just, equitable and leaves no community behind.

Seas At Risk, along with five Brussels-based NGOS, worked tirelessly to update the Blue Manifesto – giving it a fresh, new look with updated asks, relevant to the here and now. The new website makes it simple to explore the roadmap to find out what needs to happen next. We gathered more than 145 civil society supporters to back the Blue Manifesto, showing that the movement for ocean protection is growing stronger than ever.

2024 brought a big shift to the European Parliament with a stronger rise in the right and lots of new faces. The timing of the Blue Manifesto couldn't have been better, laying out the roadmap to achieve and exceed the European Union's climate, pollution, and biodiversity goals.



A (small) few of the faces that helped make the Blue Manifesto launch at Ocean Week a success!



The first big win of the Blue Manifesto was the launch at the European Parliament during Ocean Week. Bringing together a panel of experts to discuss the state of the ocean and what can be done about it, it sparked real conversation, and hammered home one key message: implementation, implementation, implementation. And we are already seeing results with the announcement of an Ocean Pact, revealed during the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice. (It started with our call for an EU Ocean Deal).

Now it is time for decision-makers to walk the talk and make sure that "blue" is part of the EU's green transition for a clean ocean, teeming with life, for now and generations to





Communications

Year after year, the Communications Team works diligently to raise the profile of Seas At Risk's work, connect with members across Europe, and spread our urgent messages to protect the ocean.

2024 was an unpredictable year online. Once-promising social media channels disappeared and were replaced as quickly as they cropped up. We're staying on our toes to keep abreast of the latest trends and shifts to make sure our communications land every time, no matter the channel. Bluesky, for example, is the new kid on the Brussels block but LinkedIn has been consistently our fastest-growing channel, average **12,000 impressions each month**, thriving off the connections each one of us has worked to build and spreading through our networks and beyond. Paradoxically, the fragmented social media advocacy landscape has reminded us that nothing is more effective than good, old-fashioned face-to-face campaigning and network-building.

Embracing the found-again freedom of in-person events, we've poured energy into organising events to bring our issues to citizens and decision-makers alike. A buzzing Brussels Ocean Week made for a rare opportunity to engage a range of stakeholders through a film screening on microplastics, a social action on deep-sea mining, a panel discussion on ecocide, a unique fisheries event mixing film, music and discussion and an unforgettable Blue Manifesto launch. Through these carefully crafted events, we cement our physical presence in the ocean community, build connections and have a whale of a time doing so.

In between our real-life opportunities to raise our ocean causes, we rely on our website. The Seas At Risk website continues to be one of our most important communication tools. In 2024, we published **90 new pieces of content**, including articles, member news, press releases, event pages, and multimedia. As a result, we hit **203,000 total pageviews** and reached more than 100,000 unique users – more than double our 2023 numbers! This shows just how much interest there is in our work, and how far our content can go when we get it right. Our newsletters maintain steady growth, helping us drive traffic back to the website, our social media channels and to our members.





For over 30 years, Seas At Risk has championed the cause of the European marine environment and that of the ocean and seas around the world. An umbrella organisation of environmental NGOs across Europe, we promote ambitious policies for marine protection at European and international level. We strive for seas and an ocean where marine life is abundant, diverse, climate-resilient, and unthreatened by human pressures. Our network of member organisations in every corner of the EU shares our dedication to protecting the marine environment and its crucial ecosystems. Our long history of successful advocacy work and a passionate team means that we have an important level of insight and understanding of the problems the marine environment is facing, as well as the ideas, individuals and institutions that are key to solving them. With a growing membership representing millions of people, this advocacy carries both political and intellectual weight.

Want to join the fight to protect Planet Ocean?

Seas At Risk members are national or international environmental NGOs that coordinate projects and campaigns for the protection of the marine environment and marine life. Seas At Risk and our members regularly come together in workshops, seminars and meetings to share experiences and best practices, and to coordinate joint actions to increase the impact of our work. We provide the platform for this knowledge exchange and play a pivotal role in ensuring that agreed ideas turn into action.

Find out how to become a member of Seas At Risk here.



Culture statement

The Brussels-based Seas At Risk community has grown!

With each new face, background and set of experiences we welcome, we onboard a unique set of values, norms and expectations. As we develop as an organisation, we decided it was time we had open, honest discussions about the organisation – and colleagues – we'd like to be. Through an all-staff workshop and additional work by a dedicated task force, we created our first-ever <u>Culture Statement</u>.

Seas At Risk's culture reflects who we are and the values we uphold as a collective working for the protection and restoration of the marine environment. The statement serves as both a compass and a commitment that goes beyond existing laws and regulations. It outlines the seven deep values that guide our actions in all we do: **justice**, **diversity**, **respect**, **integrity**, **passion**, **curiosity**, **and collaboration**.

We are proud of the final Culture Statement and are already thinking of ways to put it into action and keep the Seas At Risk spirit alive.



Meet the team



Christine Adams
Fisheries Policy
Officer



David BrownSr. Finance Officer



Bérénice CauDevelopment
Officer



Rémi Cossetti Marine Policy Officer



Ann Dom Sr. Policy Advisor



Ljuba FerrarioOffshore
Renewables Policy
Officer



Chiara FracassoJr. Shipping Policy
 Officer



Louisa Gray Membership & Communications Officer



Simon HolmströmDeep-Sea Mining
Policy Officer



Adenieke Lewis-Gibbs

Jr. Communications

Officer



Xiaowei LiuOperations Director



Giulia Messeri Operations Officer



Frédérique Mongodin Sr. Marine Litter Officer



Bruno NicostrateSr. Fisheries Officer



Tatiana Nuño Sr. Marine Policy Officer



Sian Prior Shipping Director



Andrea RipolSr. Marine Policy
Officer



Anaïs Rios Shipping Policy Officer



Frederic SchwarzOperations Trainee



Anne Seidler Marine Policy Officer



Warwar Soe Finance Officer



Sara TironiSr. Communications
Officer



Tobias Troll Marine Policy Director



Monica Verbeek Executive Director



Helen Willetts Communications Director



Meet the Management Committee



Gonçalo Carvalho Ana Gutierrez Dewar Chair (Sciaena)



Secretary (Retorna)



Arsalan Alim Treasurer (Stichting de Noordzee)



Francesca Carlsson Non-post holder (EEB)



Ilaria Di Silvestre Non-post holder (International Fund for Animal Welfare)



Ida Carlén Non-post holder (Swedish Society for Nature Conservation)



Iris Ziegler Non-post holder (Sharkproject)



Dr. Bettina Taylor Non-post holder (BUND)



Gareth Cunningham Non-post holder (Marine Conservation Society)

Our members:



Archipelagos



Bulgarian Biodiversity Fou<u>nda</u>tion



BUND



Danmarks Naturfredningsforening--



De Waddenvereniging



Deutsche Stiftung Meereschtuz



Eco-Union



Ecologistas En Accion



European Environmental Bureau



France Nature Environnement



Good Fish



GEOTA



International Fund for Animal Welfare



Irish Wildlife Trust



Legambiente



Marine Conservation Society



Natuurpunt



Friends of the Earth Norway



OceanCare



Retorna



Sciaena



Sea First



SFACT



Shark Guardian



SHARKPROJECT International



Stop Finning Germany



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Nature Conservation

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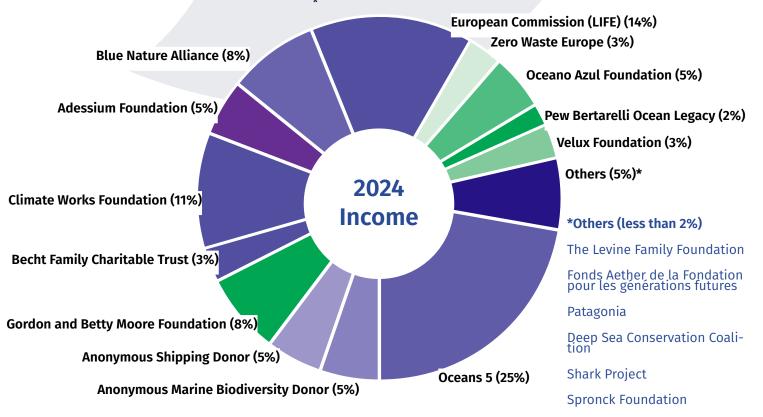


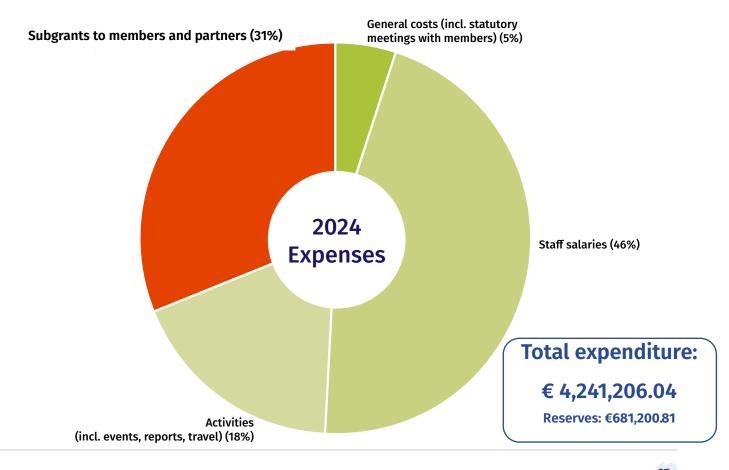


Thank you to our donors!

Financials

Total income: €4,487,092.21





Contact

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