TURNING OCEAN ACTION
INTO POLITICAL CHANGE

Impact report

2025



SEAS AT RISK

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Foreword



2025 was a year in which geopolitical tensions continued to rise, alliances started to fragment and EU Member States realised they needed a stable and coherent EU. With the overall political focus on security and competitiveness, environmental policies came under attack, with debates focusing on a false trade-off between nature protection and economic choices.

Civil society also came under attack. Within the European Parliament, right-wing political groups challenged the legitimacy of EU funding for environmental NGOs, fighting for key funding to be removed from the next EU budget.

Our work on the global scene was hampered by an unpredictable United States challenging multilateral ocean governance, causing last minute derailing of negotiations on a net-zero framework for shipping (using outright personal threats), and proceeding with deep-sea mining in international waters where they do not have jurisdiction.

All in all, a challenging year for Seas At Risk!

And yet, there are rays of hope. Rather than being attacked, the ocean rose higher on the political agenda than ever, with 65 Heads of State and Government gathering at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice. We were there in full force with many of our members, both on the streets – leading a **Blue March** with over 2,000 participants – and in the conference to ensure policy-makers and leaders would hear us. Much of our advocacy efforts before and during the conference were focused on banning bottom trawling in **Marine Protected Areas**, and these efforts bore real fruit with Denmark, Portugal and Sweden all announcing new commitments to protect their waters.

In Nice, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented the **EU Ocean Pact** that acknowledges protecting and restoring ocean health as a priority. It is not the Pact with ambitious measures we advocated for, but it announced an **Ocean Act** that can become the much-needed coherent regulation that turns political promises into bold and binding action and supports a regenerative blue economy.

Keeping ocean health high on the EU policy agenda is also the aim of the Brussels **Ocean Week** that we organise every year together with partner blue NGOs, reinforcing collaboration and shared purpose across the ocean community.

Hope also shone through in other areas. Opposition to **deep-sea mining** strengthened, with six additional European countries endorsing a precautionary pause. We gained traction with our '**Vision for Fair and Low-Impact Fisheries'**, developed with and endorsed by a broad range of stakeholders, and are making headway with our push for wind propulsion as a credible and immediate pathway to **decarbonise global shipping**.

The coming year will again be challenging with the current political winds and attacks on civic space, while many important ocean files will be up for negotiation in the EU institutions. But we will work from a robust basis: with a renewed five-year strategy, a team of experts, and support from our many members we will ride the waves and continue to strive for a healthy, thriving and climate-resilient ocean that supports all life.

Dr Monica Verbeek, Executive Director



2025 At a glance



Marine biodiversity

In 2025, we significantly raised the bar for what real protection of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) should look like. By putting the spotlight on ineffective management and mobilising public and political pressure, we helped drive concrete national commitments to better safeguard Europe's seas. We empowered our members to take legal action and, together with allies, escalated the issue to the European Commission – opening the door to future infringement procedures and systemic change.

Low-impact fisheries

Our vision for a just transition to small-scale, low-impact and fair fisheries is no longer theoretical – it is influencing EU policy. After years of determined advocacy, our ideas are now reflected in key policy developments. The publication and strategic dissemination of our 'Vision for Fair and Low-Impact Fisheries' positioned us as a leading voice on fisheries reform, influencing both decision-makers and stakeholders across Europe.





Decarbonising shipping

As global debates on shipping decarbonisation intensified, we stood out as a clear, solutions-driven voice. We successfully positioned wind propulsion as a credible, immediate pathway to reduce emissions – challenging the overreliance on costly future fuels. Through high-impact reports, workshops, and strong media presence, we helped steer policy discussions toward practical, ocean-friendly solutions.



Offshore Renewable Energy

We strengthened our role as a leading voice for ensuring that the expansion of renewable energy goes hand in hand with ocean protection. By elevating our recommendations in EU policy debates and supporting our members on the ground, we helped to keep biodiversity at the heart of the energy transition. Internationally, we broke new ground by establishing ourselves as pioneers in nature-inclusive offshore wind decommissioning and paving the way for the establishment of the North Sea Alliance, a coalition of NGOs working to align offshore wind expansion in harmony with biodiversity.





Deep-sea mining

Our targeted advocacy contributed to tangible political wins. Six additional European countries backed a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining, while Norway halted its mining plans in Arctic waters until 2029. At EU level, we successfully pushed for stronger safeguards, limiting support for this destructive industry across multiple policy processes.

Marine litter

We reinforced our position as a leading authority on plastic pollution. Our in-depth analysis of single-use plastics informed the European Commission's policy review, while our new work on microplastics in textiles is contributing to emerging EU regulation. By bridging technical and environmental policy, we are driving more coherent and ambitious action.





Blue March & the UN Ocean Conference

We brought the ocean to the streets – and to the centre of global attention. At the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, we mobilised around 2,000 people through the Blue March, generating widespread media coverage and public engagement. At the same time, our strong presence inside the conference – through events, interventions, and direct engagement with leaders including Commission President Ursula von der Leyen – ensured our influence was felt where it matters most.



Marine Biodiversity

In 2025, we transformed the debate on marine protected areas from ambition to accountability. By exposing gaps in protection and amplifying the voices of fishers and citizens, we drove real political pressure and tangible commitments.

We supported members in launching legal actions and escalated failures in MPA protection to the European Commission, strengthening the case for enforcement at EU level. Together with partners, we co-launched the 'Protect Our Catch' campaign, giving small-scale fishers a powerful platform to demand an end to destructive practices such as bottom trawling in MPAs.

Public mobilisation became a key force for change. We helped deliver a petition signed by over 250,000 citizens directly to Commissioner Costas Kadis, while a joint opinion piece on Euronews amplified our message across Europe. At the UN Ocean Conference, we led a major civil society march of over 2,000 participants, generating extensive media coverage and increasing pressure on Member States.

Through innovative communications – including vox pop videos and high-level events such as a screening of 'Ocean with David Attenborough' during Ocean Week in the European Parliament – we brought together decision-makers, experts and the public around a shared call for action.

As a result, effective MPA protection is now firmly on the EU agenda, contributing to new commitments from countries including Denmark, Portugal, Spain and Sweden to restrict destructive fishing practices.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

Legal action

We supported members in launching legal actions and escalated failures in MPA protection to the European Commission

250,000+ citizens

signed our petition, which was delivered directly to Commissioner Costas Kadis, calling for better management of MPAs

Raising our voice

From opinion pieces to social media, we amplified the call for effective MPA protection and secured commitments from EU countries



Low-Impact Fisheries

2025 marked a turning point: our vision for fair, low-impact fisheries is now influencing policy at the highest level.

The launch of our 'Vision for Fair and Low-Impact Fisheries', unveiled at the European Parliament, positioned us at the centre of the debate. By bringing together institutions, fishers, scientists and civil society, we built momentum behind a shared, forward-looking agenda. Its wide dissemination across Europe ensured our ideas reached key decision-makers.

Our sustained advocacy delivered concrete results. The European Commission's new guidance on allocating fishing opportunities reflects core principles we have championed for years – rewarding environmental and social performance, and supporting small-scale fishers.

At a critical moment for EU fisheries policy, we defended the Common Fisheries Policy against attempts to weaken it, coordinating NGO efforts and producing influential briefings and reports. Our analysis exposed how current power dynamics favour large-scale fleets, reinforcing the need for reform through implementation – not rollback.

Through targeted research, policy input and coalition-building, we continued to shape debates on ecosystem-based management, bycatch reduction and sustainable consumption. Increasingly, our work is being recognised and referenced within EU institutions.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

New vision influencing policy

Our vision is building momentum to protect low-impact practices

Building stronger coalitions

We unite fishers, scientists, civil society and institutions to drive a shared agenda

Bringing solutions

Shaping policy debates on bycatch reduction and sustainable consumption



Decarbonising Shipping

We have become a driving force in redefining what clean shipping looks like.

Our flagship report, 'Wind First!', shifted the narrative by demonstrating that wind-assisted propulsion is not a future concept, but a ready-to-deploy solution. Backed by robust evidence, it elevated wind technology in both EU and global policy discussions.

Through our One Planet Shipping initiative, we combined thought leadership with practical solutions – delivering case studies, webinars and strategic insights that connect climate ambition with ocean protection.

We also secured progress on critical pollution issues.

By supporting action within OSPAR (the international convention protecting the North-East Atlantic marine environment), we helped advance restrictions on wastewater ('scrubber') discharges – challenging the transfer of air pollution into the sea. At the same time, we hosted the Clean Arctic Alliance (a 24 organisation-strong coalition) and worked behind the scenes with a number of Member States to push forward measures on Arctic black carbon emissions at the International Maritime Organization.

Our work is helping ensure that shipping's transition is not only zero-emission, but also aligned with ocean health and global equity.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

New report shows

18% energy savings

retrofitting a ship with wind propulsion

One Planet Shipping

initiative connected shipping, climate ambition and ocean protection

Arctic black carbon emissions

measures pushed forward with the Clean Arctic Alliance

First-ever

agreement at OSPAR to restrict wastewater scrubbers discharge



Offshore Renewable Energy

We are pushing for the offshore energy transition to work with nature – not against it.

In 2025, we strengthened our influence in EU policy discussions by consistently advocating for the alignment of offshore renewable energy with biodiversity protection. Working closely with our members, we ensured these priorities were reflected at both EU and national level.

We also played a key role in strengthening cross-border cooperation, contributing to the creation of the North Sea Alliance that brings NGOs together in Europe's most advanced offshore energy region.

Alongside policy work, we reinforced our thought leadership. We advanced discussions on Maritime Spatial Planning by organising targeted events with decision-makers, industry and civil society, addressing key challenges such as multi-use and the interaction between offshore wind, fisheries and marine ecosystems.

At international level, we established ourselves as pioneers on nature-inclusive offshore wind decommissioning. We commissioned a dedicated report and developed policy recommendations with our members, helping shape early discussions within OSPAR. The report reached key stakeholders through a launch webinar and wider dissemination, including a feature in a leading climate and energy podcast.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

North Sea Alliance established

bringing NGOs together

Targeted events

with decision-makers, industry and civil society, addressing key challenges

Dedicated report

on offshore wind farm end-of-life strategies



Deep-Sea Mining

We are helping to build the momentum needed to stop deep-sea mining before it starts.

In 2025, six additional European countries publicly supported a precautionary pause – clear evidence of growing political traction. At EU level, we successfully pushed for stronger safeguards across key policy processes, limiting support for this high-risk industry.

This progress was driven by targeted advocacy, coalition-building and strong evidence. We convened a high-level policy event in Brussels with EU Permanent Representations, bringing together decision-makers and experts to address environmental and governance risks.

We also strengthened the knowledge base through a policy brief on deep-sea mining in the Arctic, supporting informed decision-making in one of the most sensitive regions. This was complemented by active coordination with partners and internal exchanges with our members, ensuring a strong and unified voice.

Our communications efforts further amplified impact, generating media coverage and public engagement across Europe.

Crucially, our work extended beyond the EU. Together with partners, we contributed to Norway's decision to pause its Arctic mining plans until 2029 – a major milestone in preventing premature exploitation.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

6+ countries

publicly support a precautionary pause on deep-sea mining, bringing the total number of European countries up to 20

Stronger EU safeguards

across key policy processes, limiting support for this high-risk industry

High-level policy engagement

in Brussels with EU Permanent Representations, bringing together decision-makers and experts

Pause until 2029

Norway pauses its Arctic mining plans - a major milestone in preventing premature exploitation



Marine Litter

We are turning evidence into action to drive ambitious EU policy on plastic pollution.

Building on our long-standing monitoring of marine litter across Member States, we delivered a comprehensive gap analysis on single-use plastics – identifying where existing EU legislation falls short and where stronger measures are needed. This work is informing the European Commission's evaluation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive, reinforcing our role as a trusted expert in this field. By sharing our findings across the Break Free From Plastic movement, we also equipped NGOs across Europe to engage more strategically in national advocacy and upcoming policy processes.

At the same time, we are taking a leading role on emerging issues. In 2025, we expanded our work on microplastics in textiles, positioning ourselves within the Eco-Design Forum and helping bridge the gap between technical product standards and environmental policy objectives. Through coordinated NGO input – ranging from contributions to Joint Research Centre work to a dedicated workshop during Ocean Week – we are building momentum for binding requirements on microplastic and chemical emissions.

Our work also gained visibility beyond policy circles. At the UN Ocean Conference, we co-developed a high-profile exhibition translating complex science into compelling public engagement, helping bring the issue of microplastic pollution to a wider audience.

By combining robust evidence, strategic advocacy and strong coalition-building, we are helping to accelerate progress toward systemic, enforceable solutions to plastic pollution in Europe.

OUR IMPACT IN 2025

Gap analysis

on single-use plastics completed

NGOs empowered

across Europe

Work expanded on microplastics in textiles

through the Ecodesign Forum and Ocean Week



Blue March & UNOC

At the UN Ocean Conference, we combined high-level advocacy with powerful public mobilisation.

We played a central role in shaping discussions – organising and contributing to more than 15 events and bringing key issues to the forefront, from marine protection to plastic pollution and the blue economy.

At the same time, we mobilised citizens through the Blue March, gathering over 2,000 people in a vibrant demonstration of public support for ocean action.

This dual approach – inside and outside the conference – helped translate momentum into real political commitments, particularly on protecting Marine Protected Areas from destructive fishing.

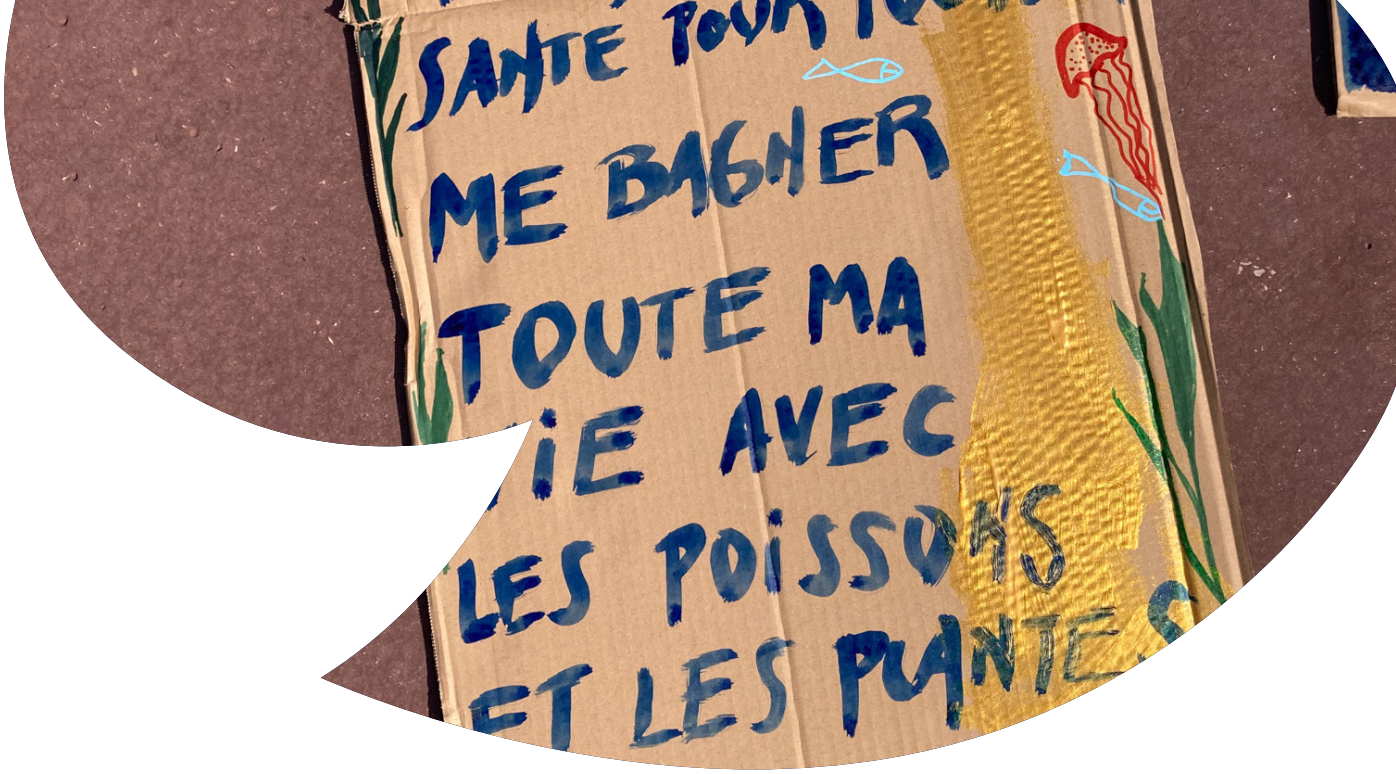




15+
EVENTS
organised or contributed to at the United Nations Ocean Conference

2,000+
PEOPLE MOBILISED
through the Blue March, showing the power of citizen voices

REAL COMMITMENTS
Stronger political momentum for ocean protection



Communications

In 2025, our Communications Team significantly amplified our visibility, influence and reach – turning strong policy work into powerful public and political impact.

We maintained a consistent and authoritative voice on EU ocean policy, publishing 110 pieces on our website and reinforcing our position as a go-to hub for timely, relevant analysis. At the same time, our digital presence grew rapidly: LinkedIn followers increased by 46% and Instagram by 63%, while our early move to the emerging platform Bluesky quickly built an engaged audience of 2,000 followers.

This growing reach translated into tangible influence. We secured 1,329 media mentions in 2025, with consistent coverage across major national, international and EU outlets. Key advocacy moments – particularly the UN Ocean Conference – significantly amplified our visibility: our activities, including the Blue March, generated 156 media mentions alone, with coverage in outlets such as POLITICO Europe and The Guardian.

Targeted outreach further boosted our impact, including over 92,000 impressions through POLITICO newsletter sponsorship and strong, above-benchmark engagement during Ocean Week.

Beyond numbers, our communications work plays a strategic role in shaping the narrative. Through coordinated campaigns, media engagement and coalition-building, we ensured our messages were reflected in major policy debates – from the European Ocean Pact to global shipping decarbonisation discussions at the International Maritime Organization.

By convening and amplifying civil society voices, we extend our influence far beyond our own channels – driving wider uptake of our ideas and strengthening collective impact. As a result, we continue to be recognised as a leading and trusted voice in ocean policy, shaping both public discourse and decision-making.

1,329
media mentions

110
pieces published

+46%
LinkedIn followers

+63%
Instagram followers









About Us

For over 30 years, Seas At Risk has been at the forefront of protecting the European marine environment and that of the ocean and seas around the world. As a dynamic network of environmental organisations, we drive ambitious policy change at both European and international level.

In 2025, we entered a new phase. Together with our members, we launched a renewed five-year strategy to accelerate progress toward a healthy, thriving and climate-resilient ocean that supports all life. This is not just about responding to challenges – it's about shaping the future.

Our growing network – now 39 member organisations – brings together expertise, influence and a shared commitment to change. Combined with our deep policy knowledge and strong relationships across institutions, this makes us a uniquely effective force in ocean advocacy.

We know the issues. We know the solutions. And we know how to turn them into action.

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.



The Members

Archipelagos
Greece

Blue Marine Foundation
International

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation
Bulgaria

BUND
Germany

Danmarks Naturfredningsforening
Denmark

De Waddenvereniging
the Netherlands

Deutsche Stiftung Meeresschutz
Germany

Deutsche Umwelthilfe
Germany

Eco-Union
Spain

Ecologistas en Accion
Spain

European Environmental Bureau
International

France Nature Environnement
France

Good Fish
the Netherlands

Grupo de Estudos de Ordenamento do Território e Ambiente (GEOTA)
Portugal

International Fund for Animal Welfare
International

Irish Wildlife Trust
Ireland

Legambiente
Italy

Marine Conservation Society
UK

Naturvernforbundet
Norway

Natuurpunt
Belgium

OceanCare
Switzerland

One Planet Port
the Netherlands

Retorna
Spain

Sciaena
Portugal

Sea First Foundation
the Netherlands

Seastemik
France

Shark Guardian
UK

SHARKPROJECT International
International

Splendeur Nature
France

Stichting De Noordzee
the Netherlands

Stop Finning Germany
Germany

Sunce
Croatia

Surfrider Foundation Europe
International

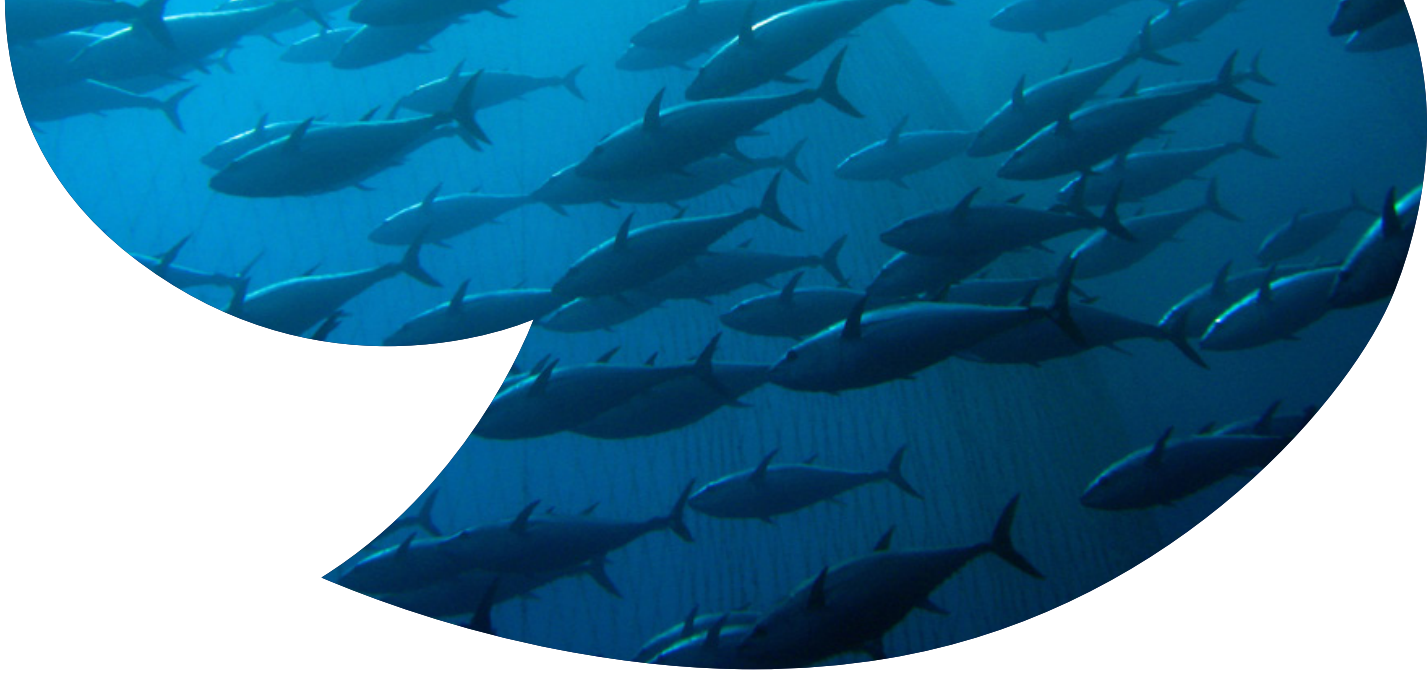
Sustainable Fisheries and Communities Trust
UK

Sustainable Water Action Network (SWAN)
Ireland

Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
Sweden

Whale and Dolphin Conservation
International

Zero
Portugal



The Management Committee



Gonçalo Carvalho
Chair



Arsalan Alim
Treasurer



Ana Gutierrez Dewar
Secretary



Iris Ziegler
Non-post holder



Francesca Carlsson
Non-post holder



Ilaria Di Silvestre
Non-post holder



Gareth Cunningham
Non-post holder

Directors



Monica Verbeek
Executive Director



Helen Willetts
Communications Director



Tobias Troll
Marine Policy Director



Sian Prior
Shipping Director



Xiaowei Liu
Operations Director

Policy Team



Ann Dom
Senior Policy Advisor



Bruno Nicostrate
Snr Fisheries Policy Officer



Andrea Ripol
Snr Marine Policy Officer



Tatiana Nuno
Snr Marine Policy Officer



Rémi Cossetti
Marine Policy Officer



Anne Siedler
Marine Policy Officer



Anaïs Rios
Snr Shipping Policy Officer



Bavo Smets
Jnr Shipping Policy Officer



Simon Holmström
Deep-Sea Mining Policy Officer



Frédérique Mongodin
Snr Marine Litter Policy Officer



Ljuba Ferrario
Offshore Renewables Policy Officer



Chiara Fracasso
Jnr Shipping Policy Officer

Communications & Development



Sara Tironi
Snr Communications officer



Louisa Gray
Communications Officer



Adenieke Lewis-Gibbs
Jnr Communications officer



Bérénice Cau
Development Officer

Operations Team



David Brown
Snr Finance Officer



Giulia Messeri
Operations Officer



Frederic Schwarz
Jnr Operations Officer



Warwar Soe
Finance Officer

The Team

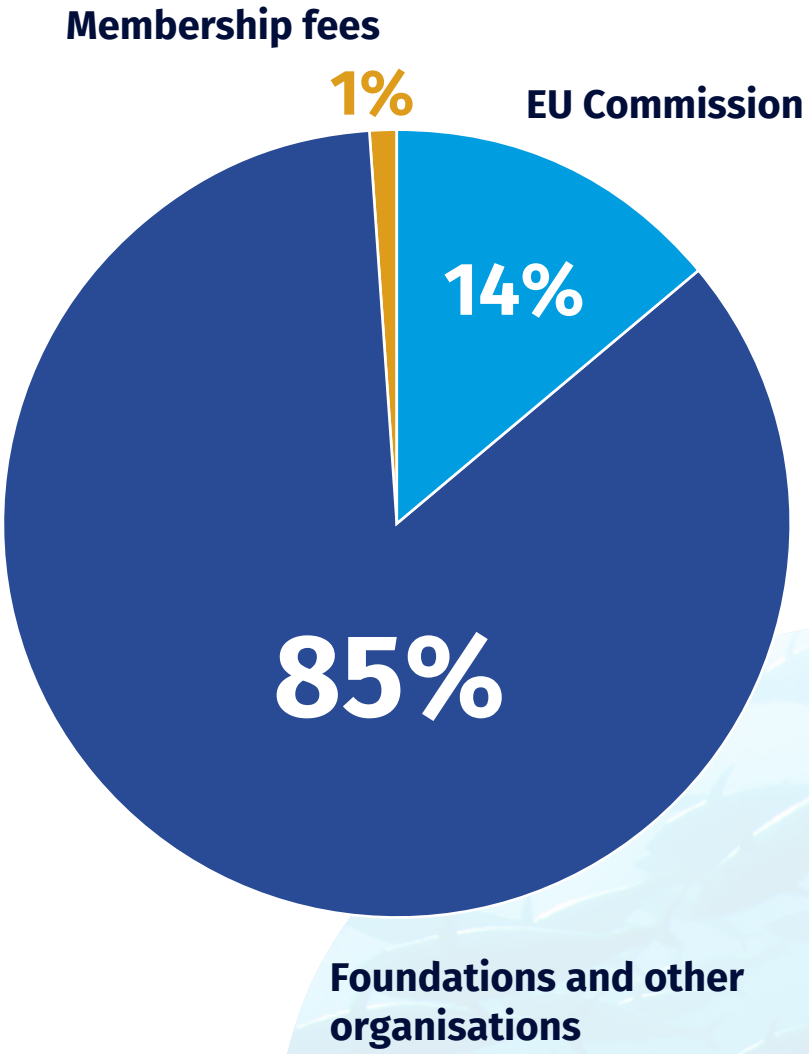
Donors

Thank you to all our donors, for providing support, trust and funding. Without your help, our mission and vision would not be possible.

- Adessium Foundation
- Becht Family Charitable Trust
- Blue Nature Alliance
- Clean Air Fund
- ClimateWorks Foundation
- Deep Sea Conservation Coalition
- European Climate Foundation
- European Commission Environment LIFE programme
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
- 11th Hour Project
- Oceans5
- Pew Bertarelli Oceans Legacy
- Spronck Foundation
- Tanka Foundation
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Velux Foundation
- ZeroWaste Europe

Finances

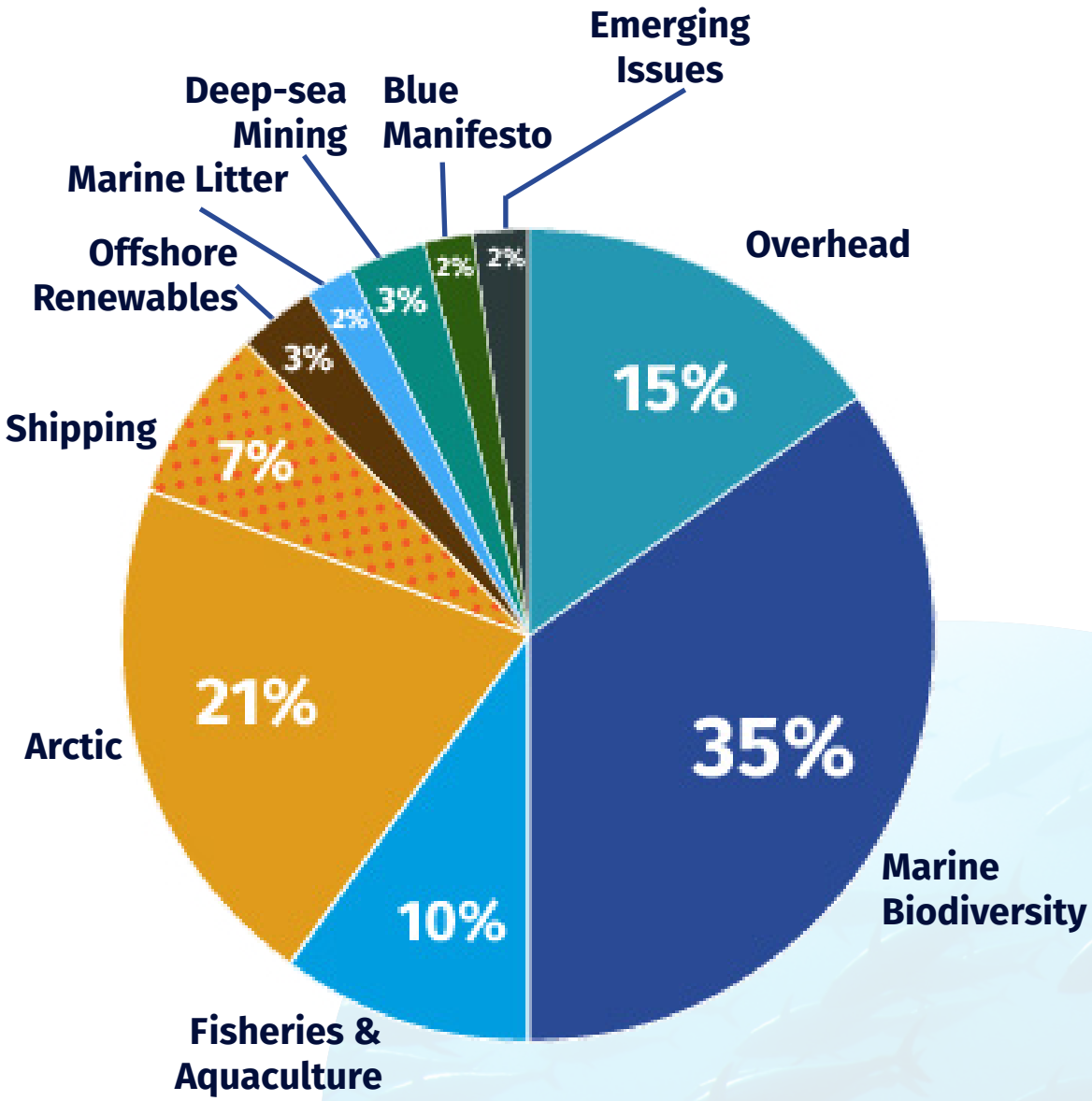
2025 Income



Total income:
4,677,480 euros

Finances

2025 Expenditure



Total expenditure:
4,637,271 euros

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SEAS AT RISK

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