



### Questions and answers on the European Ocean Pact

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#### **Why is the Commission proposing a European Ocean Pact now?**

The ocean is facing many challenges, including climate change, pollution, and overexploitation of marine resources, which require urgent action.

This environmental degradation is further exacerbated by rising geopolitical tensions, which undermine international cooperation and pose a significant threat to global security. The freedom of navigation and action at sea is increasingly challenged, while critical maritime infrastructure is under threat. The emergence of hybrid threats and cyber-attacks has blurred national borders, making maritime security a pressing concern. As a result, safeguarding European borders and infrastructure has become a top priority.

To tackle these complex challenges and reaffirm Europe's leadership in ocean governance, the European Ocean Pact introduces a comprehensive approach that builds upon existing laws and initiatives.

The European Ocean Pact will provide a single reference framework that spans all policy areas, enabling a more effective and coordinated response to the pressing issues facing our oceans.

The pact brings together the European Union's policies and actions related to the ocean and creates a unified and coordinated plan for managing the ocean.

#### **Why is the ocean important?**

The ocean is important because it is the foundation of life on Earth, providing a wide range of resources, benefits and services that are essential for human well-being. It provides a big part of the oxygen we breathe, food for billions of people, and it regulates the climate. It holds 80% of global biodiversity.

The ocean and seas are also important for our prosperity, competitiveness and security. They are critical for our energy, data, and strategic resources.

With the world's largest collective maritime area, about 70,000 km coastline and 40% of its population living within 50 km of the sea, the EU has a critical interest in maritime matters. Maritime routes carry some 74% of the EU's external trade, and underwater communication cables carry 99% of inter-continental internet traffic.

The EU blue economy (all the sectors related to the sea, including fisheries and aquaculture, shipping, coastal tourism, ports, marine renewable energy) directly supports nearly 5 million jobs and contributes over €250 billion in gross value added annually to the EU economy.

By adopting a coordinated and unified approach to ocean management, we can better protect the ocean, build a resilient and more competitive blue economy and support thriving coastal communities.

#### **What is the European Ocean Pact?**

The Pact is a European initiative, bringing together European ocean policies into a single, cohesive framework, yielding direct benefits for ocean protection and its ecosystems, coastal communities and the economy as a whole.

The Pact aims to take a holistic approach, promoting collaboration across EU Member States, regions, and stakeholders including fishers, other blue economy professionals, innovators, investors, scientists, and civil society. It sets out a series of flagship actions over the years to come.

It announces the adoption of a proposal for an Ocean Act by 2027, as well as the establishment of an

Ocean Board, gathering relevant stakeholders.

The European Ocean Pact is built around six priorities:

1. Restoring ocean health and productivity
2. Boosting the sustainable competitiveness of the blue economy
3. Supporting coastal and island communities
4. Advancing ocean research, knowledge, and innovation
5. Enhancing maritime security and resilience
6. Strengthening EU Ocean diplomacy and international ocean governance

The Ocean Pact was developed following a collaborative and inclusive process, incorporating contributions from the general public, fishers and other blue economy professionals, sectoral organisations, scientists and NGOs. It will be updated as needs evolve. In essence, the European Ocean Pact is a comprehensive and collaborative initiative that seeks to protect and sustainably manage the ocean, while promoting economic growth, social well-being, and environmental protection.

### **What are the main initiatives announced by the European Ocean Pact?**

By 2027, the Commission will propose an **Ocean Act**, building upon a revised Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. It will strengthen and modernise maritime spatial planning through improved cross-sectoral coordination at national level and a more coordinated approach to managing seas basins, ensuring a more coordinated and sustainable use of marine resources

The Act will provide a **single framework to** facilitate the implementation of the Pact, while also reducing administrative burden.

The Pact will also cut red tape by simplifying coordination processes and reducing reporting obligations for Member States. It will provide a clear strategy to implement existing legislations in a more cohesive and effective manner across different sectors.

In addition to the Ocean Act, key initiatives include:

- Establishing a high-level **Ocean Board** to support the effective implementation of the Ocean Pact.
- Launching a public "**EU Ocean Pact Dashboard**", tracking the implementation and achievement of the Ocean Pact's targets.
- Strengthening **coastal communities' resilience** through EU financing and EIB loans, prioritizing support for small-scale fisheries and introducing a Blue Generational Renewal Strategy.
- Consulting and developing a strategy for islands and an updated strategy for outermost regions.
- Fostering **sustainable aquaculture** through a dedicated Initiative and promoting European blue carbon reserves and innovative business models for coastal communities.
- Implementing a coordinated strategy to **remove unexploded ordnance** in EU waters, starting in the Baltic and North Seas.
- Fostering a community of **young ocean advocates** through an EU Ocean Youth Ambassador Network
- Enhancing the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing through the mandatory implementation of digital catch certification and IT CATCH by January 2026.

### **How will this Ocean Pact work?**

The European Ocean Pact introduces a more comprehensive and integrated approach to ocean management, ensuring that all EU policies linked to the ocean are better coordinated.

As a key milestone, the Commission will propose an Ocean Act in 2027, building on a revised Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. This will enhance and modernise maritime spatial planning, providing a powerful tool for implementing the Ocean Pact's priorities and promoting sustainable ocean management.

The Pact will simplify and streamline coordination processes, reduce reporting obligations for Member States and provide a clear strategy to implement existing legislations in a more cohesive and effective manner across different sectors.

To ensure the successful implementation of the Ocean Pact, the Commission will work closely with EU Member States, regions and stakeholders. This will involve monitoring progress, addressing challenges, and adjusting as needed.

A high-level Ocean Board will be established to support the Commission in its oversight and implementation efforts.

To ensure transparency and track progress, the Commission will launch a dedicated EU Ocean Pact Dashboard and publish regular State of the Ocean Reports.

### **How will the European Ocean Pact improve the EU's competitiveness?**

The European Pact aims to position Europe as a global trend-setter in the sustainable blue economy, showing how environmental resilience goes hand-in-hand with economic opportunities.

The European Ocean Pact aims to increase the EU's competitiveness by supporting the development of sustainable and innovative industries, and by promoting the use of new technologies and tools to study and understand the ocean's ecosystems.

By fostering innovation in sectors like renewable ocean energy, clean shipping, sustainable aquaculture, blue bioeconomy, underwater robotics and other emerging ocean sectors, the Pact contributes directly to Europe's economic prosperity.

A regenerative blue economy that restores the ocean while fostering development, social inclusion and equity will work to revitalise marine resources and the ocean's natural balance.

This is expected to create new job opportunities and stimulate economic growth.

### **How does the European Ocean Pact support the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in the EU?**

The European Ocean Pact recognises the crucial role of fisheries and aquaculture in the blue economy, as they provide a vital source of food and contribute to the EU's food security.

Yet, 70% of aquatic food consumed in the EU today is imported. There is a need to strengthen the competitiveness and resilience of these sectors.

To address this challenge, the EU will undertake a comprehensive evaluation and possible revision of the Common Fisheries Policy, as well as develop a Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture. This complements the [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#) and aims to ensure a stable supply of sustainable and nutritious food for the EU market.

Key initiatives to support the development of fisheries and aquaculture include:

- Decarbonising and modernising the fisheries fleet, with support from the [Energy Transition Partnership for the fisheries and aquaculture sector](#)
- Prioritising support for small scale fisheries
- Unlocking the potential of aquaculture through the establishment of an EU Initiative on Sustainable Aquaculture, involving various stakeholders such as Member States' authorities, representatives of the aquaculture sector, research and innovation institutions, business accelerators, and financial institutions.
- Scaling up European algae production, which offers a promising opportunity for sustainable and nutritious food production
- Launching an EU-wide campaign in 2027 promoting the benefits and the value of EU-produced and sustainable aquatic food, and to raise awareness about the importance of sustainable seafood production.
- Leading by example, through its zero-tolerance approach to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, based on dialogues with third countries the EU will promote sustainable fishing practices globally. A key tool in this effort will be the digital EU Catch Certification scheme (CATCH), which helps to prevent IUU fishery products from entering the EU market, thereby

safeguarding its integrity and promoting a level playing field.

### **How will the Pact support coastal communities?**

The Ocean Pact introduces a targeted set of actions to boost resilience, prosperity, and sustainability in coastal communities and islands.

This includes the launch of an EU Coastal Communities Development and Resilience Strategy and a consultation to inform the development of an islands strategy and update the outermost regions strategy.

The EU will bolster coastal resilience and drive ecological, economic and social benefits by combining financing from structural and cohesion funds, Horizon initiatives (such as Mission Ocean programmes), complemented by EIB loans, to support coastal resilience investment.

### **What added value will the Ocean Pact have for islands, and especially in the EU outermost regions?**

The European Ocean Pact recognises the specific challenges faced by island communities, particularly the EU's outermost regions, where their extreme remote location, climate change vulnerability and limited economic diversification, mostly limited to fisheries, pose significant hurdles.

Despite these challenges, these regions hold tremendous potential for blue economy growth, thanks to their vast maritime areas, which account for 10% of the EU's Economic Exclusive Zone.

By leveraging their strategic location near various sea basins, and exceptional marine biodiversity, the EU's outermost regions can combine sustainable traditional activities with innovative maritime industries, driving economic growth and job creation.

Thanks to their vast maritime zones, the EU outermost regions have a great potential for developing the blue economy, combining sustainable traditional activities and new maritime industries with high growth potential.

The Pact's actions, including a consultation to inform the development of an island strategy and update the outermost regions strategy, will support these regions in unlocking their full potential, promoting their unique assets and reinforcing a sustainable international ocean management to better preserve marine biological resources.

### **Are there any initiatives or programmes specifically designed for young people and women?**

The European Commission will launch an EU Ocean Youth Ambassador Network, building on the success of the [Youth4Ocean Forum](#). This network will provide a platform for young people to engage in ocean sustainability efforts, across the EU and globally. The European Commission will also host annual Youth Policy Dialogues, ensuring that young people's voices are heard and integrated into policymaking.

A new internship programme under the EU4Ocean coalition will offer young people hands-on experience in jobs that contribute to a competitive and sustainable blue economy. This will not only equip young people with the skills necessary for future careers, but it will also promote a deeper understanding of the private sector's impact on the marine environment and the importance of sustainable practices.

A special focus will be placed on empowering women, as well as other underrepresented groups, allowing them to take an active role in ocean activities.

### **How will the Ocean Pact improve ocean observation and marine knowledge?**

The European Ocean Pact will launch a new ambitious initiative to increase ocean observation to better understand the ocean and its ecosystems. By launching an ambitious ocean observation initiative, the European Ocean Pact will provide critical information to all marine actors and sectors, supporting informed decision-making, sustainable management, and conservation of the ocean.

A key outcome will be the operationalisation of the [European Digital Twin Ocean](#), a digital representation of the ocean and its multiple components. Its ambition is to make ocean knowledge readily available to citizens, entrepreneurs, scientists and policy-makers by providing them with an innovative set of user-driven, interactive and visualisation tools. This knowledge will help design the

most effective ways to restore marine and coastal habitats, support a sustainable blue economy, mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Ocean Observation Initiative will be underpinned by a new European Ocean R&I Strategy, closely tied to the development of a robust EU marine knowledge framework. This framework will build on and further integrate the European Marine Observation and Data network (EMODnet) and the Copernicus Marine Services, which provide the EU with most advanced digital information services. These services include satellite data and predictive analytics for ocean conditions, offering unparalleled insights into global and European sea states.

The European Ocean Pact also promotes international cooperation and collaboration in ocean research and innovation. The pact includes initiatives to support the development of international partnerships and collaborations and to promote the sharing of data and information among scientists and researchers.

### **How does the European Ocean Pact take into account the current geopolitical situation?**

The growing complexity of maritime threats, including attacks on underwater infrastructure, cyber threats, risks posed by the shadow fleet, and strategic competition over maritime spaces, demands a coordinated response. The European Ocean Pact underlines the importance of deepening coast guard cooperation, enhancing maritime domain awareness, investing in cutting-edge maritime technology, strengthening critical infrastructure protection and military mobility, expanding naval defence capabilities as well as reinforced European presence and partnerships worldwide, to effectively counter these emerging threats.

### **How does the European Ocean Pact support international ocean governance and ocean diplomacy?**

The EU and its Member States support multilateralism in ocean governance. Firmly embedded in EU Green diplomacy efforts and supporting the implementation of global commitments notably in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, European ocean diplomacy will intensify actions.

The EU recognises the importance of strategic relationships with partner countries and organisations. In developing our vision for reinforced ocean diplomacy, we have considered the evolving geopolitical context and focused on what the EU can do to shape the agenda, lead by example, build partnerships and uphold international scientific cooperation, starting from a more autonomous European Union in critical ocean infrastructures, data and information services.

The EU will notably prioritise swift ratification of the BBNJ Agreement, aim at an ambitious Global Plastics Treaty, and work on the designation of three vast marine protected areas in the Southern Ocean.

The Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice in June 2025 provides a crucial platform to present the European Ocean Pact and advance our priorities, including the swift implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, a legally binding plastics treaty, and a comprehensive agreement on global fisheries subsidies.

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