



EU OCEAN PACT MUST CONFRONT DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES FOR THE OCEAN, NGOS WARN

Press release 12.05.2025 | For immediate release

A leaked draft of the European Commission's long-awaited Ocean Pact has sparked serious concerns among 'Blue NGOs'. While the document outlines steps towards better enforcement of existing laws, NGOs warn that concrete actions to address the most pressing threats to marine life and biodiversity are currently lacking.

NGOs welcome the emphasis on improved implementation of EU and international commitments, particularly the proposal for a new "Enforcement Strategy". However, they are alarmed that the document does not propose concrete measures to tackle the fisheries sector's resilience in the face of climate change and ecological collapse, nor does it address key issues such as bottom trawling in Marine Protected Areas, overfishing, growing microplastic pollution and a lack of funding commitments for marine protection.

The lack of reference to the 2023 Marine Action Plan - which outlined specific actions to align fisheries and marine protection, such as the phase out of bottom trawling in MPAs and a just transition to low-impact fisheries - is worrying and the Commission must concretely address these gaps.

ClientEarth, Oceana, Surfrider Foundation Europe, Seas At Risk, BirdLife and WWF EPO said:

"The draft Pact signals that the Commission understands the need to close the gap between legislation and action. But good intentions without decisive action are not enough. It is alarming that the Pact fails to name and address the most destructive activities still allowed in EU waters - without confronting these directly, it risks becoming yet another well-meaning but toothless strategy."

"The Ocean Pact, as it stands, fails to address the elephant in the room: the bad status of European seas comes from human activities on land and at sea. We need to move to a regenerative and inclusive blue economy that is good for people and the planet. Coastal tourism and fisheries, where most of the jobs in the blue economy are created, directly depend on a healthy ocean."

The lack of specific new actions in the draft document is even more surprising after the extensive stakeholder consultation and the detailed measures proposed by over 140 organisations in their [Blue Manifesto](#) - which sets out a roadmap for EU decision makers to achieve a healthy ocean. Addressing these gaps presents an important opportunity for the EU to strengthen its position and demonstrate leadership at the upcoming UN Ocean Conference.

NGOs added:

“To deliver on its commitment to protect the ocean, the EU must close these abyssal gaps before it is too late. Clear targets, binding measures and adequate funding are crucial if the Pact is to truly protect marine ecosystems and future-proof ocean governance.”

The final version of the Ocean Pact is expected on **4 June 2025**, just before the **UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France**.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Read the [Blue Manifesto](#) - roadmap to a healthy ocean by 2030 - which was signed by more than 140 organisations (published in October 2024)
- About the EU's Ocean Pact: [The European Ocean Pact - what is it and why it could be a gamechanger for the ocean | ClientEarth](#)
- More on bottom trawling: [David Attenborough's Ocean reveals how bottom trawling is hurting sealife in horrifying detail](#)

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any request for information or interviews.

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a collective of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground on a daily basis to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: To carry the voice of the Ocean loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilising citizens, children and adults alike (in particular through 48 volunteer branches throughout Europe), using our scientific expertise to carry out lobbying actions and transform companies. Discover the association on <https://surfrider.eu/> or via [this video](#)

CONTACT :

Surfrider Foundation

Lionel Cheylus | Media Relations Manager | 06 08 10 58 02 | lccheylus@surfrider.eu

ClientEarth

Diane Vandesmet | Communications Manager | +32 493 41 22 89 |
dvandesmet@clientearth.org

**SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE**

[We are Surfrider Foundation Europe](#)



Surfrider Foundation Europe is supported by the LIFE programme created by the European Commission. The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the content, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.