



EU Ocean Pact charts a new course for fisheries

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The European Commission has presented today the EU Ocean Pact, a strategic initiative that marks the start of a new framework for the future of fisheries and maritime industries in the European Union. Europêche is encouraged by the recognition of the essential role of fisheries within the broader ocean governance framework.

Javier Garat, president of Europêche, declared: *'This Pact presents an opportunity to align fisheries policies with a modern ocean governance model. Europêche stands ready to work hand-in-hand with EU institutions, Member States and all maritime stakeholders to turn the vision of the Ocean Pact into a more positive future for our fishers.'*

The strategy introduces an *'Ocean Act'* that builds on the existing Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and aims to harness the ocean's vast potential to enhance Europe's resilience, food security, energy supply and competitiveness. The sector sees this as a valuable opportunity to safeguard access to traditional fishing grounds and address the growing spatial squeeze in EU waters.

Europeche particularly welcomes the following measures, which align with the priorities of the European fishing sector:

- **Vision 2040 for fisheries and aquaculture** which together with the strategic review of the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** should help to secure a competitive and resilient sector, contributing to food security and sovereignty.
- **An EU-wide campaign on the benefits and the value added of EU-produced and sustainable "Aquatic food"**, partially reflecting the sector's long-standing call for an EU action plan for blue foods. This is a vital step in promoting sustainable seafood and reconnecting consumers with healthy marine products.
- **A Maritime Industrial Strategy**, fostering synergies between blue economy actors and boosting innovation, investment and sustainable growth.
- **A dedicated strategy for Coastal Communities Development and Resilience Strategy in 2026**, reinforcing the critical social and economic role of fisheries in maintaining vibrant coastal areas.
- **Strengthening the EU's external action in fisheries**, including a new generation of sustainable fisheries partnership agreements (SFPAs), dedicating further efforts toward creating a fairer international playing field that boosts EU competitiveness and global sustainability.
- **The introduction of a Blue Generational Renewal Strategy** to attract and empower the next generation of maritime professionals, ensuring the long-term viability of the blue economy.

- **The revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive** to accelerate progress towards achievement of the environmental objectives, simplify implementation and reduce administrative burden in alignment with the CFP.
- Determining, on a **case-by-case basis**, which fishing techniques are compatible with the conservation of the targeted species and habitats within the relevant Marine Protected Areas.
- **Ocean Research & Innovation strategy** to develop a robust EU ocean knowledge framework.

However, Europêche is concerned about the absence of additional public funding to support the ambitious objectives set out in the Ocean Pact specific to the EU fishing industry. The high level of investment needed for research, innovation, the renewal of the fleet and the broader implementation of the Pact's goals highlights the urgent need to strengthen and expand the EMFAF in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034.

Moreover, while the main text refers to a 'possible revision of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP),' the annex rely on outdated targets from 2020. A similar issue arises with environmental policies, where there is a return to narratives depicting the fishing fleet—particularly bottom fishing—as the most damaging activity to the seabed. This raises concerns about the reintroduction of widely criticised strategies from the previous legislative term, which the new Commission has committed to move away from. Such inconsistencies generate confusion and frustration within the sector.

Mr Garat concluded: *'The EU Ocean Pact sets out a new framework designed to streamline coordination, simplify reporting obligations, better implement existing legislation and achieving cross-sector policy goals. However, ambition must be matched by adequate resources and a move away from the negative rhetoric about the fishing sector. We hope that the implementation of the proposed actions will be guided by the aim of strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of the fishing sector, ensuring a stable supply for the EU market.'*

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