



Re: More than 50,000 citizens and 20 Environmental NGOs across Europe call on you to invest EU funds to protect our oceans.

11/02/2019

Dear Member of the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament,

On behalf of the undersigned NGOs and more than 50,000 citizens¹, we are writing to you to request that the vote on the 19th of February in the Fisheries Committee on the post-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) ensures that the fund is allocated to the protection of our ocean.

The marine environment is facing unprecedented environmental degradation, whether through pollution, littering, unsustainable fishing, or seabed destruction. The extent of the problem is only now being understood and, includes more than 275,000 tons of plastics entering the EU seas every year², 87% of EU Mediterranean fish stocks being overfished³, more than 200,000 seabirds across Europe dying in fishing gear every year⁴, and more than 44,000 sea turtles in the Mediterranean drowning from being caught in fishing gear annually⁵.

There are many actions that must be taken to help turn the tide on the degradation of the marine environment, including to preserve nature at sea, tackle plastic pollution, fight against environmental crime, end accidental death of animals, prevent oil spills, and research ocean life.

The current EMFF is still perceived as a tool to support fishers and their economic activity, and therefore has had limited impact on improving the marine environment. Despite Member States having the possibility to use the fund to finance activities set out under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), as well as activities which implement the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directives at sea, very little uptake from Member States was directed to these activities. In particular, there is a lack of financial commitment towards implementing the Monitoring Programmes

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/european-parliament-ministers-invest-in-our-oceans>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/good-environmental-status/descriptor-10/pdf/MSFD%20Measures%20to%20Combat%20Marine%20Litter.pdf>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/com-2018-452_en.pdf

⁴ ICES. 2009. Report of the Working Group on Seabird Ecology (WGSE), 23-27 March 2009, Bruges, Belgium. ICES CM 2009/LRC:10.91 pp.

⁵ Casale (2011) Casale P. Sea turtle by-catch in the Mediterranean. Fish and Fisheries. 2011;12(3):299–316. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-2979.2010.00394.x

and the Programmes of Measures set out under the MSFD, as well as to support the management of the Natura 2000 network as was set out in the Prioritised Action Frameworks.

The European Commission's proposal, despite giving the opportunity to finance activities to support the marine environment, fails to ensure that funding will go towards these types of activities. Therefore, we ask that at least 25% of the EMFF budget per Member State should be ring-fenced for activities that protect and restore the marine environment.

More than 50,000 citizens have already signed a petition (www.oceanalert.net) asking you to spend at least 1.5 billion Euros of the European Maritime Fisheries Fund for nature at sea. Will you listen to them and ensure that public money is spent to benefit nature or continue to put money aside for harmful subsidies?

Kind regards,

Ariel Brunner



Senior Head of Policy
BirdLife Europe and Central Asia

On behalf of:

BirdLife Cyprus
BirdLife Finland
BirdLife Sweden
Birdwatch Ireland
ClientEarth
Društvo za Opazovanje in Proučevanje Ptice Slovenije (DOPPS)
Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU)
Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS)
Lega italiana protezione uccelli (LIPU)
Lietuvos Ornitologų Draugijos (LOD)
Latvijas Ornitoloģijas Biedrība (LOB)
Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO)
Natuurpunt
Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (OTOP)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Seas At Risk (SAR)
Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO/BirdLife)
Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA)
Udruga BIOM
Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN)
World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)