The Ocean is our greatest ally.

Don’t let it become our enemy!

#ProtectTheOcean
#RESTORENATURE
THE NATURE RESTORATION LAW IS A TEXT OF EXISTENTIAL IMPORTANCE FOR OUR FUTURE.

It is a unique opportunity to restore degraded habitats and act on climate change, to curb the fast disappearance of flora and fauna, to protect our societies from natural disasters, to improve our health and well-being, and to protect European jobs by strengthening sustainable food provision and practices. The law will allow to restore ecosystems, rewild nature, green cities, remove pollution and make our lives much better. The European Parliament has a decisive role to play to echo the high eco-expectations of Europeans.

93% of EU citizens see climate change as a serious problem¹: show them they can count on you to fix it!

Scientists warn that the ocean, our best ally, could become our worst enemy

The ocean generates 50% of the oxygen we need, absorbs up to a third of all CO₂ emissions and captures over 90% of the excess heat generated by human activities. The ocean is not only the planet’s blue lung, but also the largest ‘carbon sink’ and an indispensable ally against climate change. But industrial fishing, pollution, warming and acidifying seawater are causing unprecedented harm to life underwater.

Without abundant and healthy marine biodiversity and ecosystems, the ocean cannot safeguard life on the planet: the UNESCO warns that the ocean’s ability to regulate the climate may decline and even be reversed in the future. Instead of absorbing carbon, the ocean could thus contribute to the warming greenhouse effect of CO₂ emissions.²

The Parliament has the power to save the ocean, the climate, coastal fishers and our future!

MAKE IT YOUR LEGACY TO PROTECT THE OCEAN

✔ Adopt the Nature Restoration Law.

✔ Vote to ban bottom trawling and all industrial fishing in Marine Protected Areas.

✔ Vote to protect coastal fishers by giving exclusive use of the 12 nautical-mile zone to fishing vessels under 25 meters.

✔ Vote to grant fishing opportunities in priority to social and ecological fisheries: vessels below 12 metres deploying selective, low-impact fishing gear.

BRING NATURE BACK TO EUROPE AND MAKE OUR LIVES BETTER!
1 **Adopt the Nature Restoration Law**

**RESTORE WHAT WE HAVE HARMED AND PROTECT WHAT WE CAN SAVE.**

- It is the first European-wide law to set legally binding targets to restore our degraded ecosystems.

- The Commission proposes to restore a minimum of 20% of the EU land and sea area by 2030 and to repair all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. But the European Parliament can do better to deliver on the promise the EU made along other nations in December 2022 to restore at least 30% of degraded habitats by 2030 under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

- Investing in nature restoration is the only smart financial thing to do: while climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods and fires already cause economic losses of over 12 billion euros annually in the EU, the estimated benefits of restoration are worth 1.8 trillion euros.³

- Protecting nature creates economic value and jobs:
  - Every €1 spent into nature restoration produces €8 to €38 in economic value.
  - The Natura 2000 network of protected areas provides economic benefits of 200-300 billion euros annually and supports around 4.4 million jobs.

- In the face of the severe loss of biodiversity and the climate breakdown, a ‘business as usual’ approach is a ‘criminal abdication’ in the UN Secretary-General António Guterres’ own words.

2 **Truly protect the ocean**

**CREATE TRUE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN EUROPE BY BANNING INDUSTRIAL FISHING WITHIN THEM.**

- Our marine ecosystems are in urgent need of protection: in 2020, the European Environment Agency (EEA) reported a high loss of biodiversity in more than 80% of Europe’s seas.⁷

- Protecting EU waters regenerates marine life, fish populations and coastal ecosystems to healthy levels that lead to much better economic performance and enhanced food security for Europe. Economic returns are 10 to 1 relative to the status quo, via fisheries enhancement, ecotourism and other ecosystem benefits.⁸

- Passive restoration is the cheapest and most effective solution to fix marine ecosystems: by simply setting aside areas as no-take zones where fishing, mining, drilling and other extractive activities are forbidden, marine life and habitats can recover to Spectacular levels and generate benefits that spill over far beyond the no-take zone. In “strictly” protected areas for example, fish biomass is on average 670% higher and 20% more diverse than in the surrounding unprotected waters.⁹

- Immediately banning industrial fishing in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is the best way to restore marine ecosystems and increase their capacity to store carbon.

- Europe claims to “protect” more than 10% of its waters but destructive fishing activities such as bottom trawling are still carried out in 86% of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).⁷ On average, trawling is even 1.4 times more intense inside “protected” areas than outside.¹⁰

- The EU needs to adopt a clear definition of Marine Protected Areas and align it with IUCN resolutions¹¹,¹².

- To truly protect so-called marine “protected” areas, the Parliament should ban fishing by vessels over 12m in length and/or using towed gear, including trawling, in all Marine Protected Areas.

3 **Save coastal fishers: reserve the EU’s coastal zone to fishing vessels under 25 meters**

**YOU WANT TO PROTECT COASTAL FISHERS? BID FAREWELL TO MEGA TRAWLERS!**

- Coastal waters are essential nurseries and juvenile habitats for many fish species. Preserving their physical and biological integrity is key to maintain a high diversity of coastal fish assemblages and fisheries resources.¹³

- Coastal fishers directly depend on the health of local fishing grounds and ecosystems, while industrial fleets and mega-trawlers, designed for distant water fishing, are highly mobile, and therefore less affected by the overexploitation and depletion of coastal ecosystems.¹⁴

- Fishing vessels below 25 m in length represent 97% of the European fishing fleet, around 82% of employment but only 28% of total landings because there are no legal provisions protecting European coastal fishers from the 3% of industrial fishing vessels above 25 m, which overexploit coastal waters without regard for other fishers.

- Coastal fishers already voiced their concerns against megatrawlers and other large-scale vessels operating in inshore waters. In France, the Normandy Regional Fisheries Committee, among other organizations, advocates for a 25 meter-limit for fishing vessels in the Channel.¹⁵

- In January 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution stressing that “the viability of small-scale fisheries depends on a secure access to resources and fishing areas”.¹⁶

- To safeguard our valuable marine resources, to support sustainable fishing practices and coastal communities, and to foster local employment and coastal economies, the European Parliament should immediately reserve the 12 nautical miles from the coast to fishing vessels under 25 meters.
Favour low-impact fishing

GRANT FISHING OPPORTUNITIES IN PRIORITY TO SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL FISHERIES

→ Coastal waters are recognized as the “most sensitive part of Union waters”. Small-scale fisheries respect coastal marine ecosystems and contribute to a thriving local economy, employment, and food sovereignty thanks to high added-value low-impact fishing methods.

→ Yet, instead of encouraging sustainable fishing, the current allocation of fishing opportunities rewards those who bear the greatest responsibility for the collapse of fish stocks: vessels of less than 12 meters using passive techniques represent 70% of the fleet, but they only land 10% of catches because the European quota allocation system favours the biggest vessels with the highest socio-ecological impact.

→ The current allocation of fishing opportunities is detrimental to small-scale fishers and local employment. In Europe, employment for vessels under 12 metres fell by 33% between 2015 and 2020 while large-scale fishing increased by 4%.

→ In January 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling “for a differentiated approach to the management of small-scale fisheries that includes priority access to inshore fishing areas”.

→ High-impact fishing is not a fatality. Fishing ports, like nature, can be brought back to life.

→ To allow for the restoration of coastal habitats and to promote local employment along the European seashores, Member States shall grant fishing opportunities in priority to fishing vessels below 12 metres in length deploying selective, low-impact fishing gear.
Our world is well into the Anthropocene: Humanity has put so much pressure on the Earth system that it is now moving rapidly away from the stable past 12,000 years.

These rapid changes are due to the unsustainable consumption and destructive extraction of resources. They undermine critical life-support systems and could trigger tipping points that irreversibly destabilize the Earth as we know it.

Scientists have shown that the resilience of the Earth and human well-being are inseparably linked, yet their interdependencies are generally under-recognized.

Climate and biodiversity scientists as well as international institutions such as the United Nations, the OECD, the World Bank and the IMF have been repeating that the loss of ecosystem services is irreplaceable and that doing nothing will cost incomparably more than acting.

The droughts, fires, floods, storms, sea level rise and ocean acidification we are witnessing today are nothing by comparison to what is coming.

Acting on the climate breakdown and the nature crunch needs to happen now.

CONCLUSION

TAKE A STEP BACK AND CONSIDER YOUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FACE OF OUR COLLECTIVE TRAJECTORY:

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→ Acting on the climate breakdown and the nature crunch needs to happen now.

Ignoring the long-term consequences of inaction is an unacceptable breach of evidence-based policymaking.

Vote to keep Nature as an ally and to avoid turning it into our enemy.

Restore Nature and protect the Ocean.

Now.