



OUR OCEAN

GREECE - APRIL 15-17, 2024

AN OCEAN OF POTENTIAL

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FACTS AND STATS





01

INTRODUCTION

Greece is a maritime nation and a coastal state, with an extensive coastline of 20,739.96 km and 29,417 islands and islets, that create a unique insular geography. Greece is a country inextricably linked -historically, culturally, economically, and socially- to the Sea. The country's economic landscape is significantly shaped by maritime activities: shipping, fisheries and aquaculture, port and transportation facilities, marine recreational activities and tourism. Almost 20% of the world merchant fleet in terms of tonnage capacity is of Greek ownership. Tourism, on the other hand, contributed 13% directly and 20% indirectly % to the country's GDP.

By hosting the 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9), Greece reaffirms its commitment to a sustainable blue economy, balanced economic growth, social cohesion, and the protection of the marine environment, while addressing key challenges related to climate change impacts, marine biodiversity loss, and marine pollution. Special focus is given by Greece to green shipping, sustainable tourism, marine plastic and microplastic pollution, as well as the green transition in the Mediterranean Sea. In particular, the promotion of a sustainable blue economy, inter alia through the decarbonization of maritime transport and the development of offshore renewable energy, is an essential priority for Greece towards achieving UN, EU and national climate objectives. In addition, climate change and its connection to security is one of the top priorities of Greece's candidature for the position of a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2025-26.

An effective response to these challenges calls for a coherent political, legal, and technical approach to "conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"

in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14), as well as other relevant ocean-related SDGs and targets, towards the achievement of which, Greece remains firmly committed.

Our Ocean Conferences seek to have a pivotal contribution in support addressing common challenges related to ocean governance and marine environmental degradation through the identification of practical solutions and transformative actions, for the protection and sustainable management of the seas and oceans and their resources.

The 9th Our Ocean Conference (OOC-9) aims to keep the ocean issues on top of the global political agenda uniting all involved partners and actors, in dialogue, synergies and fruitful cooperation. Governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, the private sector, academia, our youth: we all have a shared interest and a shared responsibility in protecting our Ocean and seas, and our climate. OOC-9 aspires to make a considerable direct contribution to the upcoming ocean-related high-level events at the UN level. In particular, the OOC-9 will seek to contribute thematically, politically and through its commitments, to the 3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) to be held in June 2025 in Nice, France, a city also laying at the Mediterranean shore like Athens, as well as to its High-Level Preparatory Event on ocean action to be held in Costa Rica, in June 2024.





02

THE OCEAN AND CLIMATE NEXUS

The Ocean and the Climate are inextricably and intimately interconnected. The Ocean plays a fundamental role in the global climate system and provides services essential to sustaining life on the planet. The ocean-climate nexus embraces interactions among various elements that regulate the climate of our planet, including the carbon, heat and water cycles and the biological systems.

The ocean acts as an important carbon sink. It captures, stores, and redistributes atmospheric carbon through its biological, physical and chemical natural processes. The ocean is also great at absorbing heat. The Special Report on Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) published by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) in 2019, indicates that the ocean absorbed between 20-30% of the total anthropogenic atmospheric CO₂ emissions in recent two decades. It is also estimated that the global ocean is warming unabated since 1970 and absorbed more than 90% of excess heat in the climate system.

Increased absorption of anthropogenic CO₂ emissions is causing ocean warming, acidification, deoxygenation, and changes in nutrient cycling. These threaten marine species, ecosystems, food chains, economies, and human communities. For example, marine heat waves are resulting in large-scale coral bleaching in the Pacific Ocean, while alien species from warm tropical waters are spreading in Mediterranean Sea.

According to the IPCC report "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" it is projected- that the ocean will transit to unprecedented conditions with increased temperatures, further acidification and oxygen loss. Marine heatwaves and extreme El Niño and La Niña events are projected to become more frequent, while the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation is projected to weaken. The global mean sea level has risen by about 0.2m since 1901. It is forecasted that it will continue to rise at an increasing rate (likely reaching 0.15–0.30 m by 2050, and 0.28–1.02 m by 2100 compared to 1995-2014), while extreme sea level events are expected to occur frequently at many locations.

The World Meteorological Organization State of the Global Climate report, published in March 2024, is a dire alarm for the planet. It reveals that 2023 was the warmest year on record. The global average temperature reached at 1.45 ± 0.12 °C above pre-industrial levels, extremely close to the 1.5°C threshold of the Paris Agreement. Moreover, the Ocean heat content reached its highest level in the 65-year observational record, the global mean sea level reached a record high, while at the end of 2023 most of the global ocean had been in marine heatwave state.

The adaptive capacity of marine and coastal ecosystems and human systems is expected to encounter hard limits due to the interacting, cumulative and cascading effects of sea level rise, ocean warming and acidification etc.

However, the ocean could instead provide solutions to the climate change crisis. Offshore wind, sea waves and tidal renewable energy could power our communities and accelerate the phase-out of fossil fuels. Decarbonizing maritime transport could help further cutting out GHGs emissions (i.e. global shipping contributes 3% of worldwide GHGs emissions).

Marine and coastal "blue carbon" ecosystems can play a fundamental role both in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Healthy "Blue carbon ecosystems" (e.g. mangroves, seagrass, and salt marshes) could increase carbon sequestration, while supporting adaptation to climate change through services such as shoreline stabilisation, coastal protection, and erosion control.

The Mediterranean region is a climate change hotspot, experiencing significant impacts due to global warming. This rapid temperature increase, together with the sea level rise, have far-reaching consequences for the environment, ecosystems, and human societies in the region. The IPCC report "AR6 Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" alerts that species such as *Posidonia oceanica*, might lose as much as 75% of their habitat in the Mediterranean by 2050, while coastal flood risks will increase in low-lying areas along 37% of the Mediterranean coastline and the number of people exposed to sea level rise may reach up to 130% compared to present in 2100.





03

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAS)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”

Marine protected areas (MPAs) primarily aim to conserve coastal and marine ecosystems, which are linked with significant economic and societal benefits and support of local livelihoods.

The EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 set the target that, by 2030, at least 30% of the sea area should be legally protected (with 10% of the sea area to be strictly protected). Even though the designation of new MPAs alone will not guarantee the conservation of the EU’s marine ecosystems, it is the first step for their effective management, as individual MPAs and as a network, also in conjunction with coastal and terrestrial ecosystems. Greece’s territorial waters amount to 124,695 km², 18.3% of which are covered by MPAs corresponding to a total of 22,796 km². These are currently under the responsibility and supervision of the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (N.E.C.C.A.) through the operation of 24 local Management Units .

In Greece, 48.3% of habitat assessments indicate that they have a good conservation status, which is considerably above the EU average of 14.7%. Coastal and salt-tolerant habitats encompass 16.8% of the protected habitats. Most protected species across taxonomic groups are birds, comprising the largest proportion at 51.7%. They are followed by fish, accounting for 10.4% of protected species, and vascular plants, representing 10.1%.

Greece is home to Europe’s 40 % of the plant species and 18% of the animal species. The degree of endemism for some taxonomic groups, especially those that have diversified in insular systems, exceeds 50%. Greek islands are one of the most outstanding laboratories of nature

and one of the world’s hotspots for endemism: 3,500 plant species; 300 bird species; 60 reptile species; over 2,500 species of invertebrates. However, Greece also has the second highest number of threatened species in Europe as well as in the Mediterranean biodiversity hotspot .

At the global level, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) adopted in 2022, aiming to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030, includes inter target 2 on the restoration of 30% of all degraded terrestrial, inland water, and marine and coastal ecosystems, and target 3 on the conservation of 30% of land, waters and seas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) play an important role in achieving the 30 by 30 global conservation objectives, as an inclusive approach to conservation, encompassing a diverse array of landscapes and seascapes where effective conservation outcomes are realized through various management regimes. Unlike traditional protected areas, OECMs are not necessarily designated for conservation purposes but contribute significantly to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration efforts. By recognizing and integrating OECMs into conservation strategies, the scope of protected areas can be expanded by effectively safeguarding critical habitats and biodiversity hotspots beyond formal designations.

The target of conservation of 30% by 2030 has been also adopted at the regional Mediterranean level (by the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean) in 2021, where the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural





Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO) was adopted, aligned with the targets of the KMGBF.

Greece is committed to the 30 by 30 target at the global, EU, Mediterranean and national levels. At the national level, in particular, Greece has committed to extending its Marine Protected Areas to 30% of territorial waters by 2030, supported with a state-of-the-art surveillance system to be put in place to effectively patrol them, as well as to rehabilitate 30% of its specific marine habitat types by 2030. Moreover, strongly committed to reducing impacts on marine biodiversity from overfishing by 2030, Greece has declaring that 10% of its seas will be no-take reserves.

An effectively managed network of MPAs with well-defined conservation measures is an essential instrument for safeguarding marine biodiversity, coastal ecosystems

and ocean health. The OOC-9 will be the first Our Ocean Conference that will convene after the adoption, in June 2023, of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which aims to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Another important element at the global level is the work done in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystems Restoration (2021–2030) for ecosystems in marine and coastal areas as well as the activities developed in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030), coordinated by the of UNESCO, under the theme “the science we need for the ocean we want”.

²<https://necca.gov.gr/en/areas-of-action/protected-areas/#1670402135676-4447d9ce-eb1c>

³BirdLife International 2017; IUCN 2019

⁴<https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/2>





04

SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

The Blue Economy encompasses all industries and sectors related to oceans, seas, and coasts, whether they are based in the marine environment or on land. The ocean economy is a dynamic enabler of global growth, environmental protection, innovation, and cooperation and it could double in size, reaching US\$3 trillion by 2030, according to OECD estimates.

Thanks to its innovation potential, the sector is well-placed to drive the green transition, replacing unchecked expansion with clean, climate-proof, and sustainable activities that tread lightly on the marine environment. A resilient economic model based on innovation, circular economy, and a respectful attitude to the ocean is forming. "Blue growth" is giving way to a sustainable blue economy.

The sea has always been a source of wealth, culture, and glory for Greece. The country is proud to have 29,417 islands and islets, of which 227 islands are inhabited, making the Blue Economy a key factor of regional cohesion and local development. Currently, Shipping, marine industries, fishing, marine tourism, and mariculture account for more than 20% of Greece's economy.

Host country Greece will soon harness offshore wind, a significant untapped potential. The winds of the Aegean Sea will become an energy source that will redraw the energy map of the region. Moreover, as a world leader in maritime transport, Greece takes seriously the responsibility of decarbonizing shipping, while preserving competitiveness.

- With tourism being the backbone of its economy, aiming to control its environmental footprint, Greece develops a National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism, to promote water and energy savings, recycling, and eco tourism especially in small islands and protected areas, along with the establishment of a National Observatory for Sustainable Tourism

- Aiming to the decarbonization of maritime transport, Greece supports the increased level of ambition of the International Maritime Organization's Strategy for reducing GHG emissions from ships, in particular its goal of reaching net zero by 2050.
- Emphasis is also given on converting our numerous islands to innovation labs for green economy, energy autonomy, digital innovation and eco-mobility, through transformative Initiatives such as the GR-eco Islands projects, while Greece remains committed to the promotion of Maritime Spatial Planning as a key tool for a Sustainable Blue Economy

A project worth noting is that undertaken by since 2019, regarding the accessibility of underwater cultural sites. The project involves the North Sporades cluster, where the impressive 'Alonissos shipwreck' of 5th c. BC lies, and at the West Pagasitikos Gulf area, that includes the byzantine shipwreck (9th c. A.D.) near the Kikynthos' islet, the late roman shipwreck (4th c. A.D.) near the Telegraphos promontory and the ancient anchorage site at the Glaros' promontory. These four underwater archaeological sites are since 2019 accessible to divers under specific terms. Also, several coastal archaeological sites, such as Pavlopetri (submerged prehistoric settlement) in Laconia and Palaia Epidavros (submerged roman villa) in Argolis, as well as several recent shipwrecks, are also accessible to visitors-divers or swimmers under specific terms. This ambitious project not only support the local economies and the diving tourism in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way, but also ensure an overall protection of the underwater cultural heritage and the environment.

The transition to a Blue Economy is creating an Ocean of Opportunities and an Ocean of Cooperation. The OOC-9 aims to bring everyone involved on board, in a dialogue on how to incorporate new solutions for the Green and Digital Transition and the transformation of the Blue Economy value chains towards climate neutrality and zero pollution.





Ocean-related technologies, research, and innovation will take center stage, presenting new tools, new alliances, and products.

This conference will build upon the outcomes of the “2nd UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy” organized by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Island Policy of the Hellenic Republic, the UfM EU and Jordan Co-Presidency, and the Secretariat of the Union (Athens, 19 -20 February 2024). Three years since the adoption of the landmark 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) and its Roadmap for implementation adopted in 2022, the Conference aimed at bringing together a diverse representation of the rich and dynamic stakeholders that make up the Mediterranean SBE community, as key drivers of concrete actions and scalable solutions across the region. The Conference served as a key milestone to take stock of progress achieved, discuss joint challenges and transformative tools, and engage the whole Mediterranean SBE Community in setting the path towards further deliberations at political level. New businesses on renewable resources, marine ecosystem

preservation, pollution reduction, and technologies that increase resilience to climate change are leading the way. At the same time, traditional sectors need to reduce their environmental footprint. Thus, a sustainable blue economy will create an ocean of employment opportunities and a market of new, highly skilled jobs.

Research, education, ocean literacy and new advanced professional skills will be discussed during the “Our Ocean Youth Leadership Summit”, which will be held in parallel to the main conference, on the 15th of April. The voice of the new generations is to be heard, as they are factors for change. The conference aims to harness fresh perspectives and innovative ideas, to drive meaningful progress towards ocean sustainability.

Greece has a longstanding excellent record in keeping a very high quality of coastal bathing waters, ranking among the top countries worldwide, ranking 2nd with 596 beaches, 18 marinas and 6 boats (overall 620 sites) in the context of the Blue Flag programme, the most widely recognized ecological label for beaches, marinas, and sustainable tourism crafts.





05

MARITIME SECURITY

Around 90% of traded goods are carried over the waves, hence shipping is an extremely important sector for economic development worldwide. However, maritime security has suffered significantly after Covid-19. New overlapping disruptions have affected global trade, and they are threatening progress made in curbing greenhouse gas emissions from ships.

Since November 2023, escalating attacks on ships in the Red Sea have been added to disruptions in the Black Sea, caused by the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, strategic flashpoints in other parts of the world and cyber-attacks on ports have brought special attention to safer routes and security measures for the protection of strategic installations.

In both the Suez and Panama canals, transits are down by more than 40% compared to their peaks. The Suez Canal enables a more direct route for shipping to and from the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean without having to circumnavigate the African continent. In 2023, approximately 22% of global seaborne container trade passed through the canal, carrying goods including natural gas, oil, cars, raw materials, and many manufactured products and industry components. By the first half of February 2024, container tonnage crossing the canal fell by 82%.

Meanwhile, Climate-induced drought and alarmingly low water levels forced the Panama Canal Authority to reduce daily transits from an average of 36 to 18 per day, by February 2024. The Panama Canal is particularly important for China, the USA, and countries on the West Coast of South America.

According to a UNCD report, the disruption in the Red Sea and Suez Canal, and the Black Sea, combined with factors linked to the Panama Canal reduced transits, could erode environmental gains achieved through “slow steaming”, as rerouted vessels increase speeds to cover longer distances. Longer distances caused by rerouting from the Suez Canal to the Cape of Good Hope imply a 70% increase in greenhouse gas emissions for a round trip from Singapore to Northern Europe.

Compromising sea routes is not the only way to affect maritime security. Cyberattacks pose a new significant threat to ports worldwide. Between 2011 and 2023, 15 cases of port cyberattack occurred, hampering trade, and raising alarm bells. These involved six instances in Europe, six in America, two in Asia, and one in Africa. Two primary motivations drive port cyberattacks: ransom demands and the desire to cause cyber-terrorism.

All these incidents represent a serious threat to maritime safety and maritime transport in general, resulting in high operating costs and above all the social and psychological impact on seafarers (e.g. out of kidnapping crew members as hostages and lately even deaths and injuries as a result of attacks in the Red Sea etc).

In addition, safeguarding the ocean from piracy, illegal trafficking of goods and people, illegal fishing and pollution and other illegal activities at sea is a key challenge that needs to be effectively addressed and to bring about innovative and creative efforts to improve maritime security.

At the EU level, the EU and Members States have adopted an enhanced EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) to ensure a peaceful use of the seas and safeguard the maritime domain against new threats since the EUMSS’s initial adoption in 2014, with an Action Plan for its implementation. The Strategy responds to emerging critical challenges such as piracy, armed robbery at sea, smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings, arms, and narcotics, as well as terrorism. The Strategy promotes rules-based governance at sea and enhances international cooperation, and focuses on six strategic objectives, translated into around 150 concrete actions.

Greece acknowledges and supports the efforts made by the international community and especially the International Maritime Organization during the last years in order to tackle the problem of piracy. In this respect Greece was the initiator of the IMO Assembly Resolution A 1069 (28) on the “Prevention and Suppression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in the Gulf of Guinea”. Furthermore, Greece has, initiated





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the procedure to be a contracting party to the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in order to deal with the emerging maritime threats and contribute towards the ensurement of safer and more secure seas for maritime trade and economic prosperity in the region.

Within the last years Greece has submitted to the IMO severalmultiple working documents highlighting the need to restore security in the affected areas and further ensure effective maritime governance, and growth, as well as promote the image of the industry and of the seafaring profession.

In addition, Greek naval forces have repeatedly contributed to patrol operations that safeguard the free and

unhindered conduct of marine circulation during the last decades. The latest European mission "Aspides" began in February 2024 at the Red Sea with the participation of the frigate "Hydra". In addition to the close affiliation and/ or participation of Greece in EMSA & EFCA activities, the Hellenic Coastguard is very effective in the prevention and interception of illegal activities at sea.

Furthermore, Hellenic Coast Guard is in the process of expanding coverage areas of National Vessel Traffic Monitoring Information System -VTMIS, in order to increase maritime domain awareness. This is expected to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation in these areas, through effective monitoring and management of maritime traffic.

⁵https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/publications/joint-communication-update-eu-maritime-security-strategy-and-its-action-plan-enhanced-eu-maritime_en





06

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Fisheries and aquaculture sustain economic development in coastal communities, and are vital for food quality, food security and for healthy ecosystems. Productive fisheries are dependent on healthy seas, the eradication of all illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, the growing potential of the aquaculture sector, decent employment conditions and fisher's engagement, and on international cooperation in regulation.

Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea generate an annual revenue of \$2.9 billion and are responsible for half a million jobs throughout the value chain. On average, 1 in every 1 000 coastal residents is a fisher, and in some coastal areas that number can be up to 10 times higher.

However, the industry faces several problems. The workforce is ageing. In 2020, more than half of all crew were over the age of 40, while only 10 percent were under the age of 25. Small-scale fisheries account for 82 percent of the vessels and 59 percent of the jobs. It employs the highest number of young fishermen, but small-scale fishers earn less than half the wage earned by fishers on industrial-scale fleets⁶.

Over-fishing is depleting fishing stocks and pollution is hampering reproduction. Illegal unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing pose other serious threats. Up to 26 million tonnes of fish are caught illegally every year, corresponding to at least 15% of world catches and causing a threat to the ocean's biodiversity .

The EU ensures IUU prohibition, relying on the support of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) . It also prevents IUU products from entering the market and works with countries worldwide to ensure compliance with international obligations against illegal fishing. The EU supports sustainable fisheries through funding programs in West Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific.

The GFCM's 2030 Strategy focuses on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture. Moreover, GFCM is actively involved to promoting the social acceptability of aquaculture. The recent in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Greece, as a member state of EU, respects and aspires to achieve the vision of sustainable fisheries development, and fully implements every obligation targeted at the objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. In the same line, Greece supports and applies measures established by the Regional Fisheries Management Organizations [General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean/ Food and Agriculture Organization (GFCM/FAO), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)].

Under this prism, utilizing not only the financial resources from the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), but also the national contribution, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food develops and implements strategies and policy actions regarding:

1. The fish stock monitoring and assessment, through the National Fisheries Data Collection Program,
2. The implementation of control and enforcement measures (Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Ministry of Maritime Affairs & Insular Policy),
3. Strengthening actions to ensure the sustainability of the sector (eligibility of tools and techniques, energy transition, temporary or permanent cessation of fishing activities, etc.).

Within the same frame, and under the umbrella of the "Pact for Fisheries and Oceans", EU introduced new commitments, with the ambition to set more strict terms and conditions for the protection and restoration of marine ecosystems from the sustainable fishery perspective.





On a more immediate level, the ultimate goal that was set is described below:

By 2030, 30% of the marine areas of the EU will be protected and 10% of these will be strictly protected.

Hence, the EMFAF 2021 - 2027 Programme for Greece includes measures, which among others, concern:

1. The eligibility of fishing gears,
2. The assessment and the reduction of the impact of fishing on the seabed,
3. To strengthen the knowledge, the research and the innovation, as well as to improve the implementation and the monitoring with the participation of all stakeholders.
4. The development of solutions and incentives to mitigate the impact of fishery on the environment, such as innovative fishing gears, novel fishing techniques and improved fishing practices,
5. The improvement of fisheries monitoring, e.g. innovative tools, improved recording and reporting. Ensurement that EMFAF grants are assigned for actions that concern the development and the implementation of effective and robust monitoring, inspection and enforcement.

Also, the Hellenic Coast Guard (HCG) headquarters, through Fisheries Control Directorate (DELAL) and its subordinate regional Port Authorities, contributes

significantly to the prevention of IUU fishing. According to data from DELALHCG data for the year 2023, 10.991 inspections have been carried out both in ports and at sea, while 909 infringements related to fishing legislation have been confirmed.

Remaining strongly committed to reducing impacts on marine biodiversity from overfishing by 2030, Greece has declared since 2021 that 10% of its seas will be no-take reserves and has also committed that a 40% (weight/weight) of fishing gear containing plastic will be collected and directed to recycling starting from 2025.

Moreover, in order to halt IUU fishing and to protect marine ecosystems, especially in MPAs, Greek fishermen's unions are already establishing no-fishing areas during reproduction months and the cleaning of plastic debris from beaches .

Our Ocean Conference builds on the notion that for a resilient ocean, it is essential to incorporate sustainable fisheries policies altering fishing methods, surveillance of prohibitions and restrictions, and other integral solutions to effectively tackle overfishing that poses a direct threat to marine biodiversity.

Our Ocean Conference fosters capacity building for decision making and investments through technical cooperation, innovation, and efficient partnerships.

⁶FAO. 2022. The State of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries 2022. General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean. Rome. (<https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3370en>)

⁷https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_621

⁸<https://www.efca.europa.eu/en>

⁹FAO. 2021. GFCM 2030 Strategy for sustainable fisheries and

aquaculture in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7562en> [<https://www.fao.org/3/cb7562en/cb7562en.pdf>]

¹⁰https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding/emfaf-programmes-2021-2027_en

¹¹<https://www.themayor.eu/en/a/view/why-are-this-greek-island-s-fishermen-asking-the-government-to-declare-no-fishing-zones-12322>





07

MARINE POLLUTION

More than three fourths of marine pollution comes from land-based sources through waterways and riverine inputs. Plastics, microplastics, chemicals, oil spills, petroleum waste, toxic waste, pesticide and fertilizers are some of the sea pollutants. Ocean acidification is a consequence of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, carbon dioxide (CO₂) in particular. All of these and more, cause ocean ecosystems to deteriorate, harming oxygen levels, nutrient and species balance and animal and human health through the food chain. Moreover, climate change is affecting biochemical processes at the sea, with significant adverse effects to marine biodiversity.

Several of these substances end up in the sea during sea accidents, illegal activities, human movement, and human activities at sea or on land. Lack of waste management at ports, islands or seaside regions is also a big source of pollution and degradation of aquatic ecosystems.

The maritime sector stands at a pivotal moment, facing the pressing challenge of decarbonization while navigating economic and geopolitical headwinds. Our Ocean Conference wishes to be a strong advocate of Green Shipping. Host country Greece puts special emphasis on the transition to sustainable maritime transport and on initiatives targeting the shipping industry and involved partners that will give new impetus to synergies and innovation to speed up the green and digital transition of the sector.

IMO is fulfilling its role as the global regulator for shipping ensuring that the maritime sector delivers cargo safely and in an environmentally sustainable manner. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) is the main international convention covering prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships from operational or accidental causes. MARPOL has had a positive impact on the marine environment. It has changed how ships are designed and operated. The number of oil spills fell by over 90% over the last 50 years. Thanks to MARPOL, the discharge of plastic garbage into the sea is banned and operational wastes, such as garbage and sewage,

cannot simply be disposed of at sea, and are very strictly regulated. Air pollution rules have also immensely cut sulphur oxide emissions from ships. The latest efforts focus on driving the decarbonization of shipping supporting the global fight against climate change. Greece is a party to MARPOL and actively takes part into the deliberations at IMO supporting initiatives that promote sustainable shipping and prevent pollution from ships while taking into account the special characteristics of the shipping sector.

In Europe, the European Environment Agency (EEA) monitors marine pollution and its effects on ecosystems, while the European Marine Board evaluates risks related to chemicals in rivers, estuaries, and seas.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) constitutes the key EU legislation regarding the quality of the marine environment. Main objectives include addressing chemical pollution, eutrophication and marine litter. Approximately 80% of assessed areas are designated as “problem areas” based on EEA criteria. Eutrophication caused by excessive nutrient input (such as nitrogen and phosphorus), harms marine ecosystems. Nearly 25% of assessed areas exceed thresholds for nutrient enrichment and eutrophication. Finally, approximately 75% of Europe’s marine and coastal areas are designated as problem areas for marine litter.

Greece as an EU member state and a country with a strong shipping tradition is deliberating on the European Commission’s proposals to modernise EU rules on maritime safety and prevent water pollution from ships.

Proposed regulations include Port State control to cover additional international rules, on ballast water, sediments and removal of wrecks. In addition to banning illegal discharges of oil and noxious liquid substances, the Commission proposes to include discharges of harmful substances carried in packaged form, sewage, and garbage, as well as discharge waters and residues from Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (scrubbers).





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EMSA's surveillance and information-sharing database CleanSeaNet – that provides information sharing will be upgraded. Moreover, a stronger legal framework for penalties and fines, enabling national authorities to take adequate action in case of illegal discharge and impose penalties, will be put in place.

At the global level, following the adoption of the ground-breaking UNEA resolution 5/14, the international community, through an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), is engaged in the ongoing process to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, with the ambition of completing that work by the end of 2024.

With combating marine pollution as a high political priority, Greece is committed to halving marine plastic litter and reducing the disposal of microplastics by 30% by 2030. Moreover, Greece is committed to an integrated "Source-to-Sea" approach for addressing land-based sources of marine pollution. Since pollution prevention and control is also a matter of education and awareness raising of the public to shift to more sustainable consumer options, Greece strongly supports bottom-up voluntary activities in tackling marine pollution by promoting initiatives that boost ocean literacy, citizens' science and stakeholder involvement.





08

THE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean Sea basin is a marine biodiversity hotspot with one of the highest rates of endemism and a vast resource of economic activities for 480 million people living in the region. However, its ecosystem is under threat from habitat loss and degradation, over-fishing, pollution, and climate change.

The vulnerability of the Mediterranean Sea aquatic ecosystems is attributed to a low rhythm of sea water renewal, due to its geomorphology. The Mediterranean Sea represents the largest of the semi-enclosed European seas and occupies a basin of almost 2.6 million km², which corresponds to 6.5 % of global land area. The length of its coastline amounts to 46,000 km. The basin itself measures about 3,800 km from east to west and 900 km from north to south at its maximum between France and Algeria.

In the Mediterranean, the scourge of marine litter is a threat to nature and people. With an estimated annual plastic leakage of 229,000 tonnes, made up of 94 per cent macroplastics and 6 per cent microplastics, plastic pollution is particularly acute. Plastics constitute around 95 per cent of waste in the open sea, both on the seabed and on beaches across the Mediterranean. This poses a momentous challenge to important economic activities upon which Mediterranean economies and societies have relied for decades, including tourism and fisheries. Small-scale artisanal fishing is particularly affected.

Recognizing the urgency to act, the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system, representing the institutional legally binding framework in the UN context, for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution, encompassing 21 Mediterranean countries and the European Union (the Contracting Parties to the Convention and its Protocols), was the first Regional Sea to adopt legally binding regional regulations to reduce and prevent marine litter and plastic pollution with time-bound implementation targets, well ahead of the adoption of the landmark UNEA Resolution 5/14 for an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution (February

2022). In this context, measures on marine litter monitoring were introduced by UNEP/MAP since the 1990s. In 1996 the Contracting Parties introduced the Amendments to the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources (LBS Protocol). The Strategic Framework for Marine Litter Management was adopted in 2012. A year later, a trailblazing Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean (hereinafter referred to as 2013 Regional Plan) was adopted. During COP 22 (December 2021), the Contracting Parties approved the updating of the 2013 Regional Plan by introducing additional commitments and reflecting the latest global and regional developments related to plastic pollution and circular economy.

The 2021 Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management lays out the national and regional infrastructure for marine litter management in the form of regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks, monitoring and assessment and legally binding measures to combat marine litter from both land- and sea-based sources, with a focus on cleanup operations and solid waste management. The Regional Plan also provides for prevention measures such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). Prevention is a key component of the Regional Plan as it urges national authorities to take action to prevent marine litter and plastic leakage, including microplastics stemming from rivers and wastewater treatment plants. Circular economy principles are also embedded, while the Plan includes provisions for the phase-out of harmful chemical additives used in plastic products, and in particular, those listed under the Stockholm Convention.

The Mediterranean is one of the world's busiest shipping routes with about 30% of international maritime freight traffic and some 20 to 25% of maritime oil transport crossing the sea each year (source: Blue Plan, UNEP/MAP).





Even though greenhouse gases emission (GHGs) in Mediterranean countries are at relatively low levels, according to UNEP, observed climate change effects, mainly in temperature increase in the Mediterranean region exceed global means. The region is mainly vulnerable to the impacts of warming, prolonged and stronger heat waves, and increased drought and water deficit in an already dry climate. Mediterranean countries are also already experiencing coastal flooding and coastal erosion.

It is expected that, by 2040, the mean temperature will be 2.2°C above pre-industrial levels, rainfall is expected to decrease 4%, and sea level could raise by more than 90 cm by 2100 with detrimental impacts on coastal infrastructure, loss of cultural heritage and loss of agricultural land due to water and soil salinization. By 2100, burnt areas may be doubled and 40% of endemic fish could be extinct.

For sulfur emissions, the IMO has decided to designate the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an emission control area for sulfur oxides and particulate matter, under MARPOL Annex VI, from May 2025.

Shipping, fishing, industrial, touristic, and other coastal activities are contributing to pollution. The Mediterranean basin produces approximately 208–760 kg of solid waste per year, per capita, and tourist activities in the Mediterranean basin are one of the great contributors.

Many of the Mediterranean countries' economies are largely dependent on natural resources, particularly along the southern rim of the Basin. However, the Mediterranean is the more overfished region of the world. Total fish

populations have fallen by more than a third over the last 50 years. Increased fleet capacity, illegal fishing, and catches of unwanted species are the main causes of this ecological crisis.

Regarding Biodiversity protection, the Mediterranean's own Strategic Action Programme for the conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region, the "post-2020 SAPBIO", aligns the Mediterranean with the global targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted in 2023 (see also Marine Protected Areas section, above), in particular the 30 by 30 target of protecting 30% of the Mediterranean Sea and coast by 2030.

The region has provided the world with civilizations that have excelled in sea. A special love for seafaring, naval adventures, trade, and social exchanges has been exhibited over millennia. The Mediterranean Sea connects Europe, Asia, and Africa, serving as a crossroad where culture, people, and civilizations meet. The Mediterranean has functioned as an eternal bond and a crucial link between neighboring countries.

Our Ocean Conference gives special attention to the cooperation that we can harness to achieve a more sustainable marine environment for present and future generations. Common struggles require collective ideas and a commitment to effective solutions. The Green Transition of the Mediterranean towards a cyclical economy is a key challenge.

¹²See also <https://www.medecc.org/outputs/infographic-mar1-main-results-2020/>

¹³<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/who-we-are/barcelona-convention-and-protocols>

¹⁴<https://www.medecc.org>

<https://www.medecc.org/outputs/infographic-mar1-main-results-2020/>

¹⁵<https://www.rac-spa.org/sapbio>





09

GREEN SHIPPING

Shipping is a major factor of the world economy and maritime transport is the key enabler of global manufacturing, trade, and tourism. The Greek-owned fleet is leading the global maritime market. Greek ship owners control more than 3,901 vessels. In terms of tonnage, the Greek-controlled merchant fleet has doubled its capacity over the last 15 years. EU passenger ships can carry up to 1.3 million passengers, representing 40% of the world's passenger transport capacity. EU ports handled close to 4 billion tonnes of goods, accounting for around half of all goods by weight traded between the EU-27 and the UK, and the rest of the world.

From an environmental point of view, greenhouse gas emissions as well as air pollution and particulate matter from shipping and port activities contribute to climate change. These emissions are expected to increase significantly if mitigation measures are not put in place swiftly.

In a groundbreaking move, the EU has confirmed the world's first law on green shipping fuels. By 2034, ships will be required to increasingly switch to sustainable fuels. At least 2% of the EU's shipping fuels must come from e-fuels derived from renewable electricity. Moreover, starting in January 2024, the EU's Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) cover CO₂ emissions from all large ships (those with a gross tonnage of 5,000 and above) entering EU ports, regardless of their flag. The EU ETS also covers methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions, although the latter two gases will be included only from 2026.

Greece has honestly and actively contributed to the adoption of the revised IMO strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships, which ensures that shipping will be fully compliant with the Paris Agreement's objectives.

Greece is constructively engaged in the Maritime Environment Protection Committee work to achieve a global solution on this important topic, by submitting well documented concrete

proposals which try to find the right and effective balance between ambitious measures to reduce emissions and their impacts as well as to follow a simplified and pragmatic approach, which is crucial for maintaining the competitiveness of EU shipping.

Our Ocean Conference and host country Greece wish to lead the dialogue towards innovation and technologies, synergies, and investments facilitating the transition route to Green Shipping. There is significant untapped potential to reduce shipping emissions. The transition to clean energy gives new impetus to innovative technologies and strong synergies. Geopolitical tensions have further highlighted the need for a transition to clean energy and energy diversification.

Greece as an EU member state and a seafaring nation recognizes the challenge and prioritizes decarbonization, smart mobility, worldwide availability of sustainable alternative fuels, ship energy efficiency, and carbon intensity, accelerated use of onshore power supplies, the protection of biodiversity, and the ambition of zero pollution.

EU Member States support the implementation of the 'Fit for 55' package which encompasses the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the FuelEU Maritime Regulation, the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulation, and the extension of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) to maritime transport noting however that (a) implementation should be constantly monitored to address potential problems that may arise and (b) appropriate alignment with future global measures on the same subject should be pursued.

Greece identifies that one of the key areas in making a significant impact in terms of emissions is the implementation and use of Onshore Power Supply - OPS (also known as shoreside electricity) at ports. In this respect, the greek port management bodies participate/develop relevant studies and projects to create the necessary conditions so that they are ready by 2030 to have the appropriate Onshore Power Supply - OPS (cold





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ironing) infrastructure for electrification of ships during their stay.

In the National Program "Transport 2021-2027" provision has been made for improving the accessibility of the islands by promoting coastal transport. The action, funded with 80 million euros under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) includes the strengthening of (public service obligation) coastal connections by using "green" ships (that do not use fossil fuels for propulsion), in order to achieve appropriate inter-island maritime connections between insular destinations, with particular regard to remote islands. The action aims to promote

territorial and social cohesion in a sustainable way, promoting the renewal of the fleet and the development of low-emission ro-ro passenger ships.

Furthermore, an investment entitled "Master plan for the renewal of the Greek passenger shipping industry fleet" was included in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan "Greece 2.0", funded under the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF) with a total budget equal to 1,233,180.00 Euros. The master plan main objective is to effectively foster sustainable fleet renewal and act as catalysts to attract investors and unlock the necessary high-volume financing for the purchase of the new fleet.





10

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN COASTAL AREAS AND ISLANDS

Sustainable tourism in coastal areas and islands ensures an optimal balance between tourism development, marine environment conservation and local communities needs. Additionally, it can be a core driver to build resilience to climate change challenges.

A healthy ocean is unequivocally a cornerstone of high-quality traveler experience, and a tool to enhance social and regional cohesion. and small islands are some of the richest and most fragile ecosystems on earth and the most visited places for leisure. In the Mediterranean region tourism is the primary economic activity for islands like Cyprus, Malta, the Balearic Islands, Sicily, and for the Greek islands.

Coastal areas and islands face development challenges due to rapid urbanization connectivity problems, and lack of infrastructure. Moreover, the dominant mass tourism model does not take nature into account and is ineffective in generating stable economic opportunities for the local population.

On the contrary, sustainable coastal tourism can support nature conservation funding, generate new alternative forms of tourism, achieve new and better markets, and thus provide more income opportunities for local communities and sea professionals (i.e. fishermen), contributing to population attraction and retention. Sustainable Tourism is gaining ground, giving birth to a more nature-conscious visitor, who is willing to pay more to protect, enjoy nature, and live like the locals, during his travels.

Greece has added coastal sustainable tourism to its traditional tourism products and places special focus on the long-term development and resilience of the destinations, establishing environmental protection rules.

Small Greek islands are rebranding their services based on comprehensive sustainability plans that local authorities are preparing. They are called "Model Tourist Destinations of Integrated Management", and they are destinations with special characteristics and rich potential.

National, local, regional, and indigenous cultures were molded by our interaction with our seas through travels, commerce, and numerous marine-related activities. Eternal bonds and precious linkages are there to remind us that our environment is situated deep inside our souls, expressed in art, everyday practices, science, and philosophy.

Greece is blessed with a civilization of more than 4.000 years, carved by our activities, cultural exchanges, and economic relations in the Aegean, the Ionian, the Mediterranean Sea, and our oceans. Greece is extremely grateful for the richness and wisdom brought to us by our ancestors.

We are responsible for preserving our common heritage and passing it on to our children. Our communities cannot be deprived of their past, as they would be left without a future.

The host country believes that more efforts should be undertaken for the protection of cultural heritage landscapes and monuments from climate change impacts. Especially in the Mediterranean Basin which fostered great civilizations and thousands of important monuments are still there to remind us of our common roots. Sea cultural routes should be designed and promoted. Traditional sea vessels should be protected. More networks of high-value cultural landscapes should relate to MPAs and sea parks.

To that effect, the Hellenic Ministry of Tourism promotes the initiative for the establishment of an Observatory for Coastal and Marine Tourism in the Mediterranean, aiming to contribute to the monitoring of the environmental, social and economic impacts of coastal and marine tourism. This observatory will seek to not duplicate related work already carried out by different entities (e.g. the UNEP/MAP under the Barcelona Convention) but rather cooperate with existing observatories for sustainable tourism to exchange data, know-how and expertise while also developing a network of related research centers.





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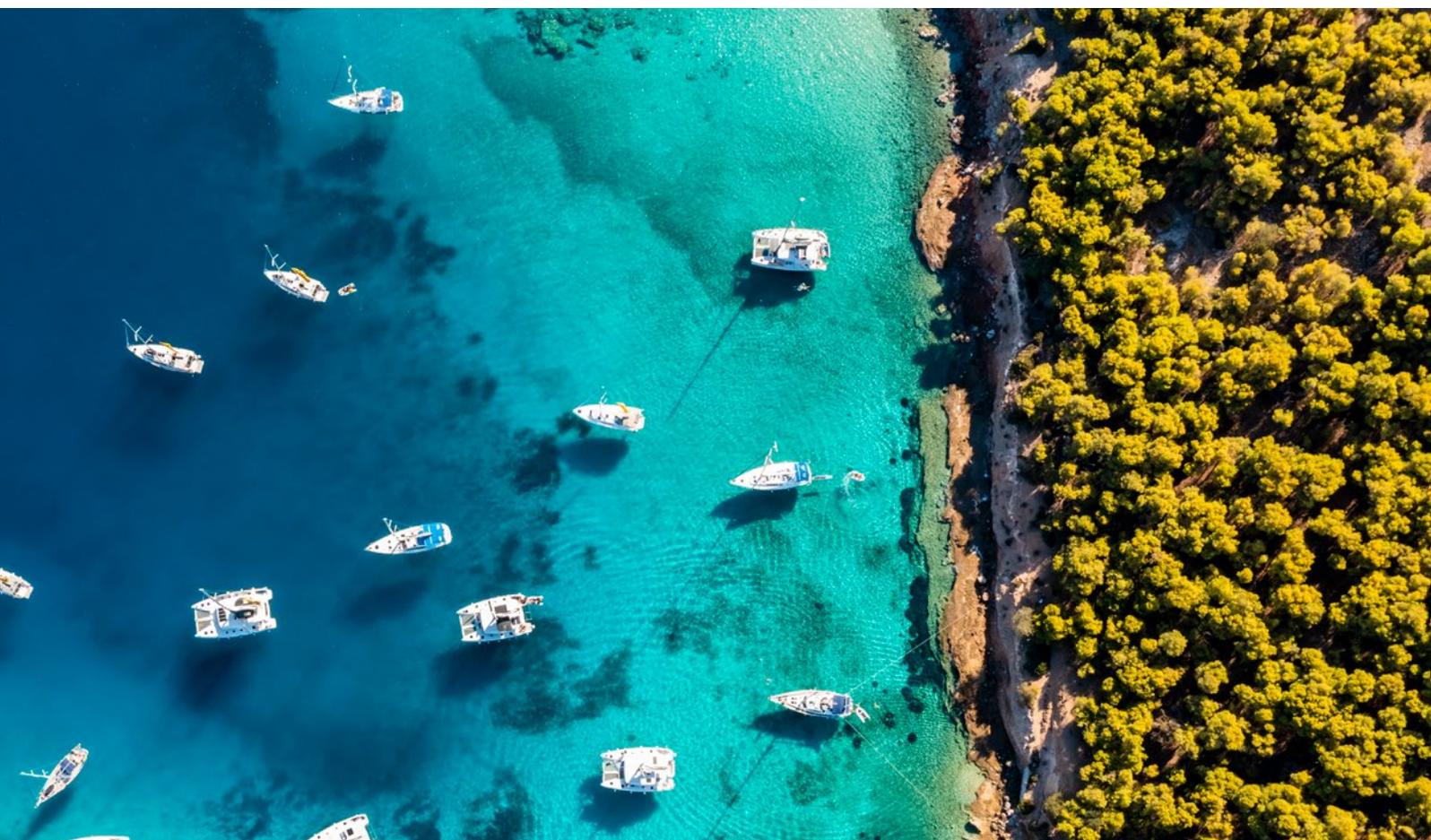
AN OCEAN OF POTENTIAL

Through actions financed by the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility projects are being promoted to develop specific forms of tourism, such as diving tourism, and to upgrade beach accessibility infrastructure, based on the principles of sustainable development and in line with environmental protection objectives.

Finally, the Special Spatial Framework for Tourism will be an additional tool for central and local governments,

and the tourism sector market, to ensure the protection of coastal areas and their unique environment, in an integrated way with regard to tourism activities in Greece so as to further promote sustainable tourism practices.

Our Ocean Conference believes that the sea is not an impediment, but an Ocean of potential and opportunity.





11

REDUCTION OF MARINE PLASTIC AND MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION

Tonnes of plastic waste are cast every year in our seas and 80% of marine litter is made of plastic. Microplastic pollution is seen as an emerging threat across the globe and is becoming a topic of study and concern. The problem of plastic pollution has emerged as a threat to human and ocean health.

By the end of 2050, the production rate of plastic is expected to amplify 4–5 folds, covering 15% of oil burning worldwide. We need to commit ourselves to more and effective action.

The ingestion of microplastics by marine animals is an issue of concern as microplastics act, as vectors for other toxic pollutants adsorbed onto their surface and give rise to new microbial communities. Chemicals found in plastic have been shown to possess endocrine disrupting properties with an ability to interfere in hormonal functions, thus contributing to human health problems.

At present, almost all the world's oceans and seas are contaminated with microplastics. However, the Mediterranean Sea is the sixth bigger microplastic hotspot worldwide. The concentrations of polymers in this region are approximately four times higher than in the North Pacific Ocean.

However, this is not a local problem, as the Mediterranean is not the only semi-closed sea basin in the world. The use of plastics is widespread, despite efforts for a cyclical economy, reuse, and recycling.

Various types of plastic particles are found in coastal areas, beaches, on the sea surface, and on the seafloor which is accounted for nearly 30 thousand tons of plastic mass in the Mediterranean basin, according to a scientific

literature review. The persistence of microplastics in the Mediterranean Sea has been identified in surface water, in sediments and deep seafloor and in coastal ecosystems, such as seagrass meadows.

To overcome this severe plastic pollution in the Mediterranean region, the European Union (EU) has formulated different strategies for the immediate preservation/remediation of different parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

Fishing gear (nets, lines, pots, traps) accounts for 27% of all beach litter and approximately 20% of fishing gear is lost at sea in the EU, contributing to marine litter. The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF), which came into force on 14 July 2021, plays a crucial role in supporting sustainable practices related to fisheries and aquaculture in and specifically provides for tackling fishing gear pollution. For example, the EU funded project BLUENET established a program to recycle abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing and aquaculture gear. This recycled gear is then used as raw material to manufacture long-line ropes for mussel aquaculture production. Moreover, the EU-funded OCEANETS project, aims to prevent gear loss, facilitate gear recovery, and recycle recovered fishing gear contributing to Circular economy.

Decreasing plastic pollution and accelerating the transition to a circular economy is the way forward. The Our Ocean Conference supports the shift towards a more holistic approach to prevent and control anthropogenic pollution that ends up in the ocean. Joint efforts, synergies and cooperation between all involved stakeholders are needed to turn the tide.

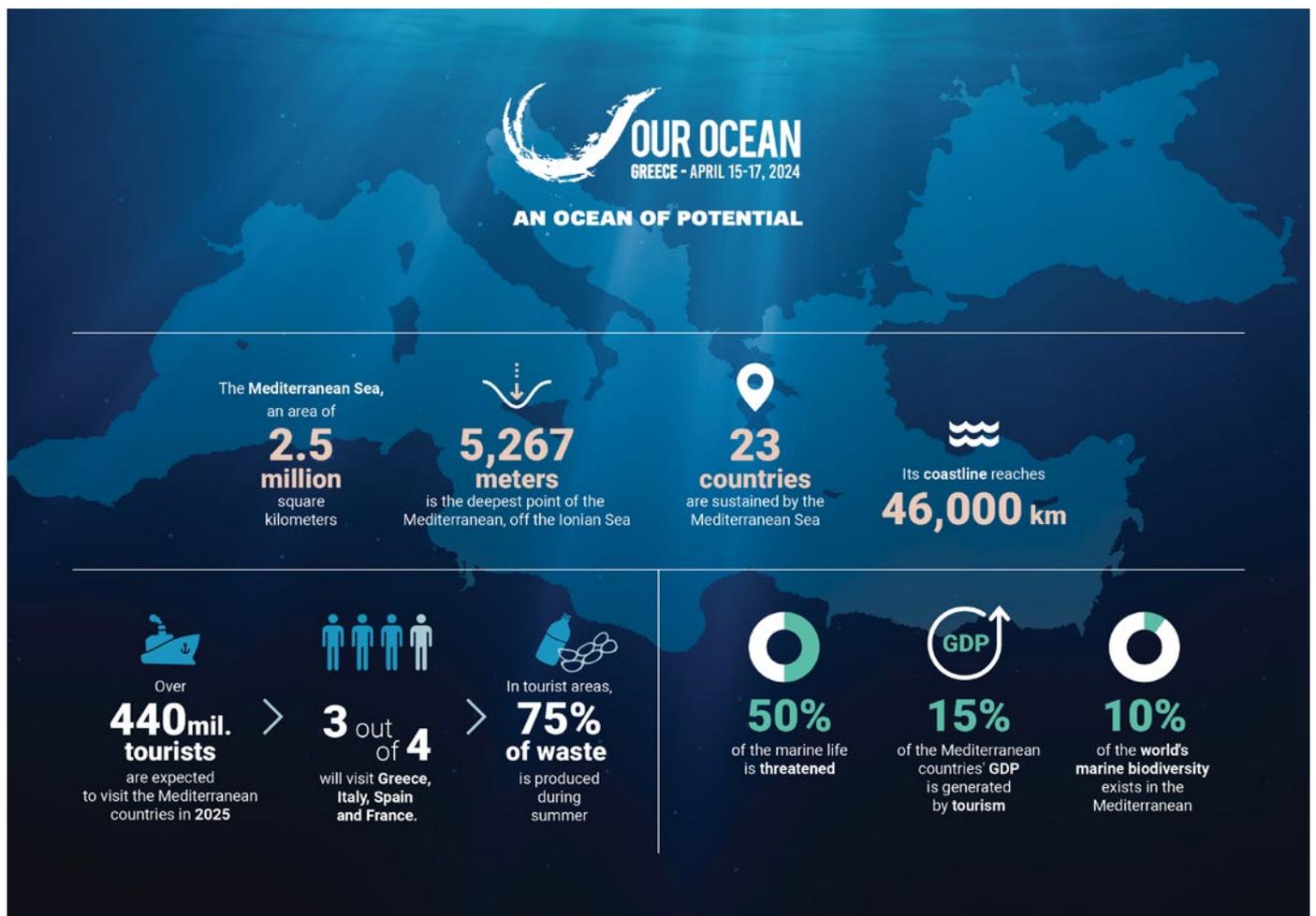




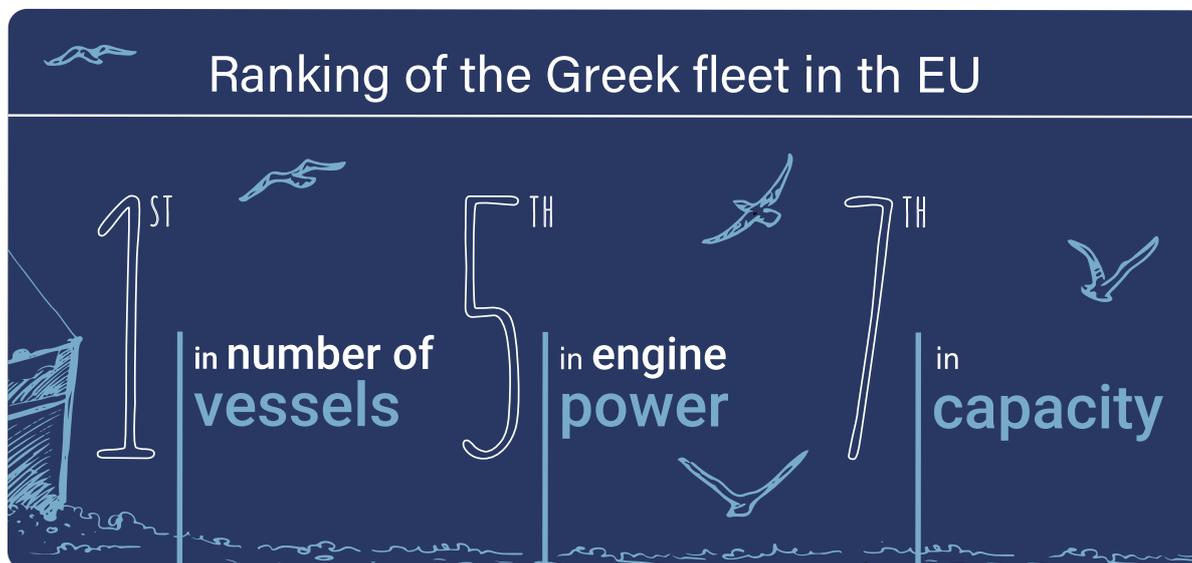
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FACTS AND STATS

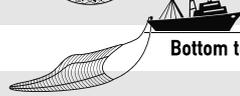
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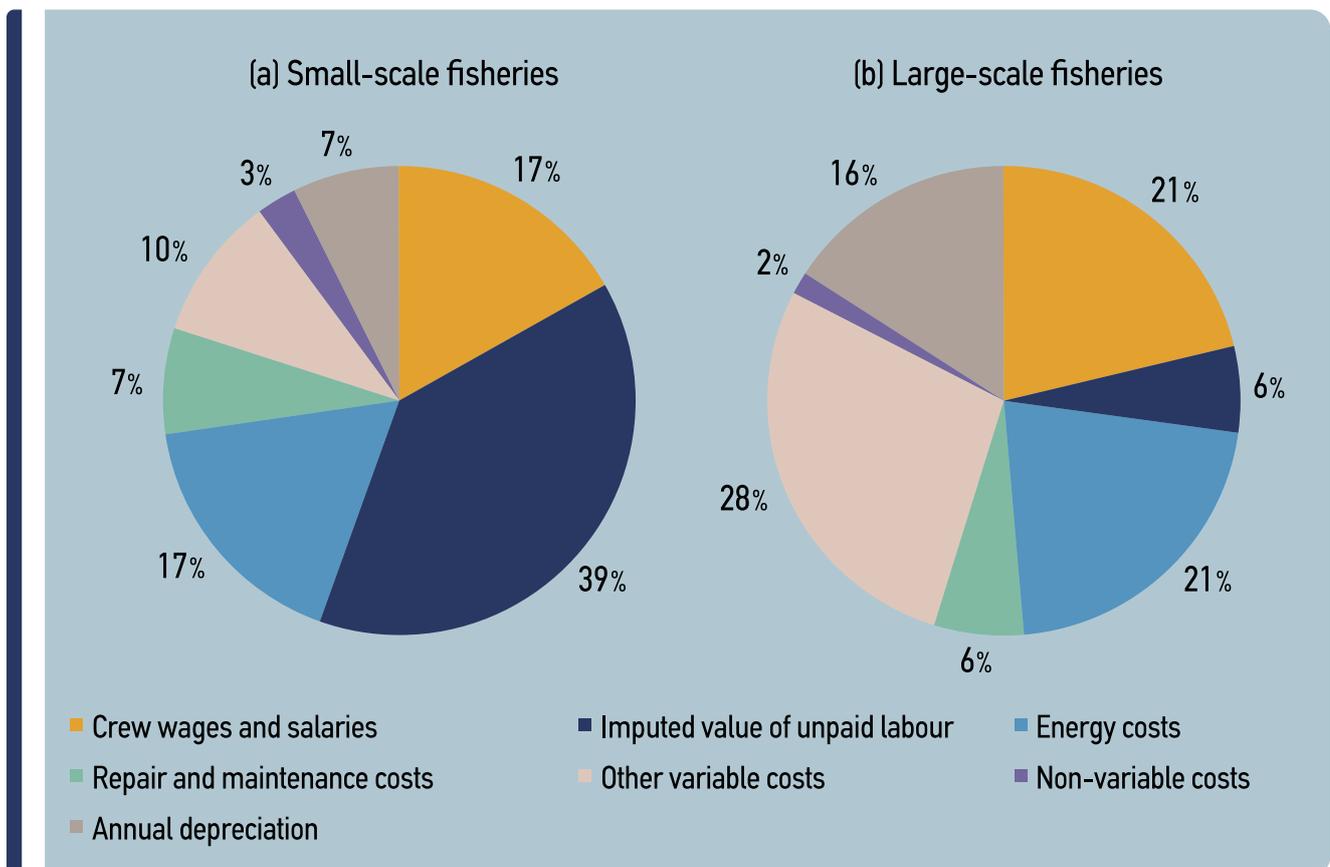
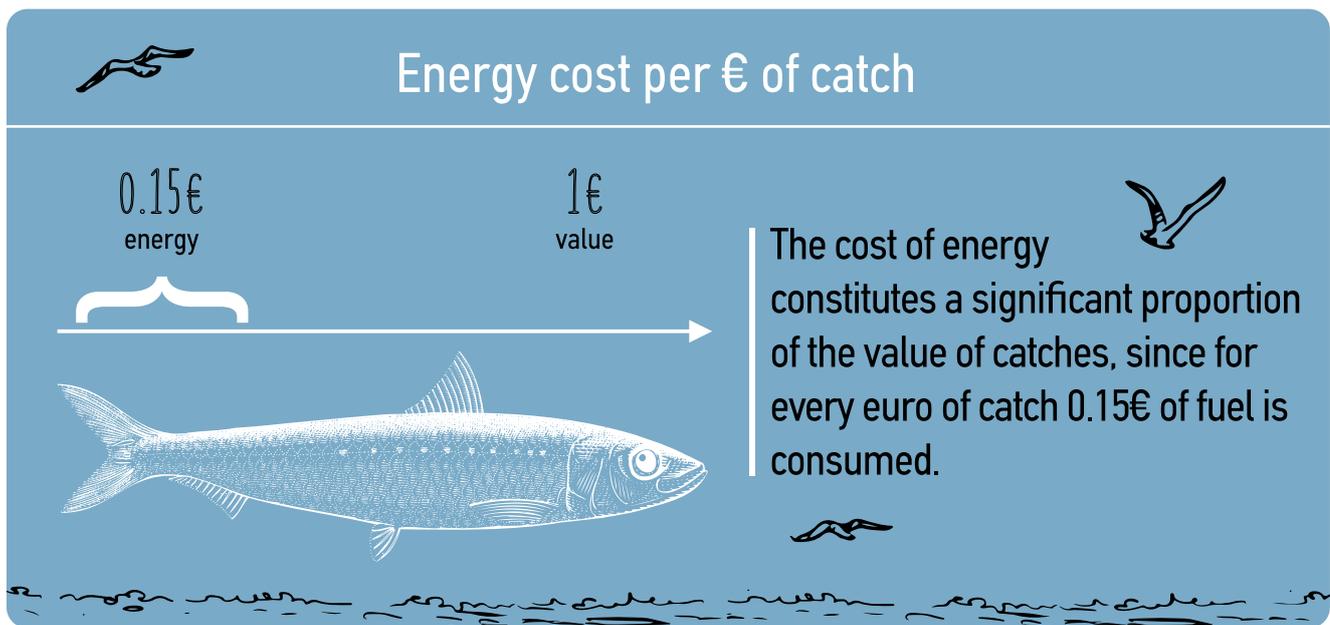
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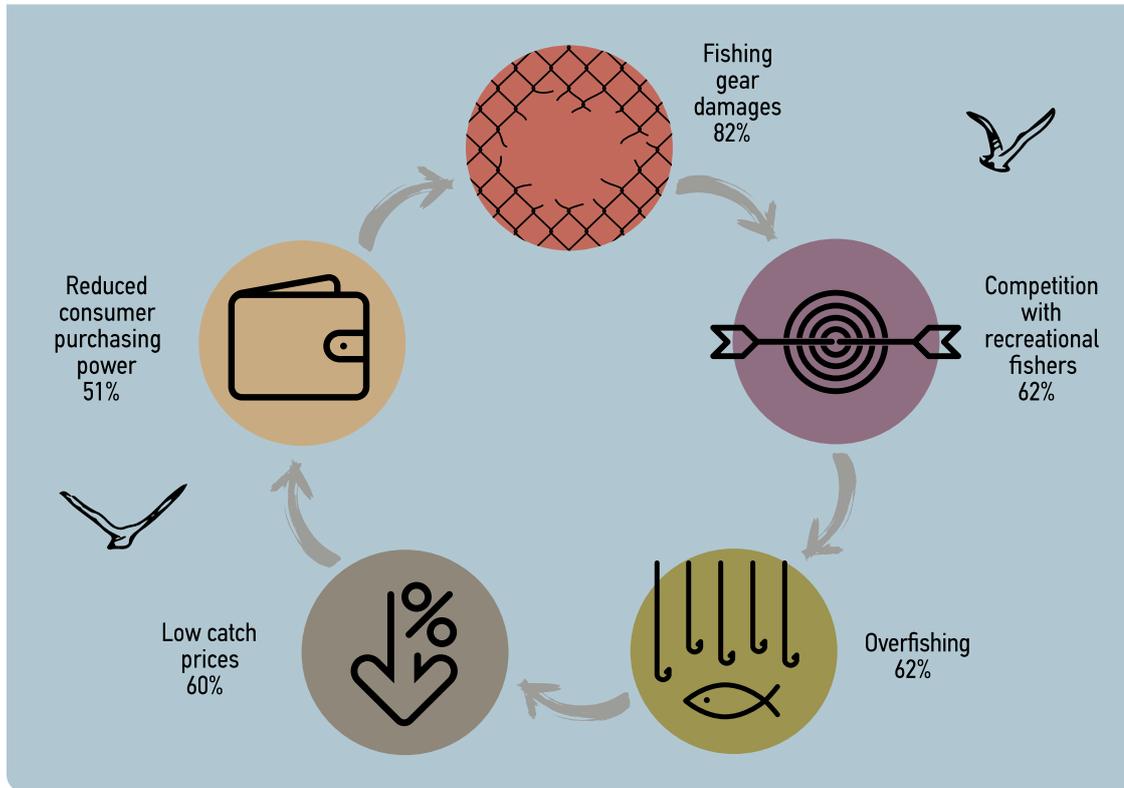
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Fleet segment	Number of active vessels	GT	kW	Average vessel age	Average vessel length
Small-scale fisheries*	10,848	21,701	201,633	32.7	6.8
 Nets	7,587	15,070	137,664	31.9	6.8
 Longlines	2,807	5,429	50,801	34.0	6.6
 Traps/Pots	323	596	7,076	30.0	7.2
Other	131	606	6,092	52.7	9.3
Large-scale fisheries	661	35,066	122,660	28.6	20.6
 Purse seiners	211	8,546	35,424	28.8	22.0
 Bottom trawlers	217	22,950	67,393	30.7	25.6
Other (Passive gears)	233	3,570	19,843	26.4	13.9
TOTAL	11,509	56,767	324,293	32.4	7.6





The 5 main problems facing small-scale fishers



per 1€ of catch value

