



**Conserve and sustainably use  
the oceans, seas and marine resources  
for sustainable Development**

# EU internal action

## Overview and challenges

SDG 14 is the compass of EU's ocean policy and there are no significant policy gaps in the EU policy framework. <sup>(34)</sup> Building on a comprehensive set of policies and legislation, the EU recently renewed its agenda on [international ocean governance](#) (target 14.C) for a [sustainable blue economy](#) and a sustainable fisheries policy. [Progress is being made](#) towards sustainable fishing in the North-East Atlantic Ocean and Baltic Sea, and the EU pursues an effective zero tolerance approach towards illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing (target 14.4), while the area designated as marine protected areas (MPAs) (12 %) has already exceeded 10 % of EU waters (target 14.5).

However, many other SDG 14 targets are unlikely to be met by the agreed timelines. The good environmental status defined by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive [has not been achieved](#). Regarding pollution (target 14.1), 46 % of European coastal waters suffer from eutrophication caused by excess nutrients. High concentrations of at least certain contaminants are found in all European sea basins and in seafood. Marine litter, notably plastics, is present in all compartments of the marine environment. Between 2014 and 2019, the total volume of underwater noise more than doubled in EU waters. Maritime traffic is a major source of continuous underwater noise, while oil and gas and offshore renewables are the main source of impulsive noise.

The loss of biodiversity has not yet been halted in Europe's seas (target 14.2). Across European seas, [seabed habitats are under significant pressure](#) from fishing, coastal developments and other activities.

Together with the landmark Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted in December 2022, (see more details in the chapter on SDG 15), the agreement on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction concluded in February 2023 will aim to protect 30 % of international marine waters.

## Key initiatives

An important body of legislation is in place to achieve the goal of preserving coastal and marine environments, notably: the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#), the [Water Framework Directive](#), the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Invasive Alien Species Regulation, the [Bathing Water Directive](#), the [Urban Wastewater Directive](#), the [Nitrates Directive](#), the [EU waste law](#), the [Directive on Single Use Plastics](#) and the [Port Reception Facilities Directive](#).

The [Maritime Spatial Planning Directive](#), the EU's new approach for a sustainable blue economy, and the common fisheries policy (CFP), which underwent deep reform in 2013, contribute to the sustainable use of marine resources, to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to preserving biodiversity.

These policies are complemented by other EU initiatives such as the [Circular Economy Action Plan](#), the [EU Plastics Strategy](#), the [EU Zero Pollution Action Plan](#) and the [EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles](#).

In 2022, the Commission adopted criteria and guidance for the identification and designation of additional protected areas. Under the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, Member States are expected to submit pledges for new areas to be designated. These pledges will be discussed in biogeographical seminars in 2023.

In early 2023, the Commission proposed an important set of measures to improve the sustainability and resilience of the EU's fisheries and aquaculture sector, including [a Pact to foster sustainable, science-based, innovative and inclusive fisheries management](#), [an Action plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems](#) and [an action plan to foster the energy transition in the fisheries and aquaculture sector](#).

## Selected enablers

The [European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund](#) (EMFAF) supports the achievement of SDG 14 through support in implementing the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the EU maritime policy and the EU agenda for international

<sup>(34)</sup> Assessment of the existing EU policy tools in the field of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 and other ocean-related Agenda 2030 targets (europa.eu).

# EU 2030 targets and 2015-2023 trends

## Target and policy reference

Achieve a Good Ecological/Environmental Status in coastal waters by 2027 and marine environment by 2020

[Water Framework Directive](#) (WFD)

[Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) (MSFD)

Legally protect and effectively manage at least 30 % and strictly protect at least 10 % of EU sea area

[EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030](#)

Birds Directive and Habitats Directive

Reach Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) for fish stocks regulated under the Common Fisheries Policy by 2020.

Adhere to zero-tolerance policy towards illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

[EU Common Fisheries Policy](#)

50 % reduction of plastic litter at sea and 30 % reduction of microplastics in the aquatic environment

[Zero Pollution Action Plan](#)

[Priority Substances Directive](#)

Farm to Fork Strategy

[Proposal for a Regulation on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides](#)

## Trends 2015-2023

In 2020, good environmental status was not achieved for all descriptors (quality parameters) of the marine environment, as defined by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). In 2018, 58 % of surface waters (rivers, lakes and transitional and coastal waters) had not achieved the WFD's 'good ecological status' <sup>(34)</sup>, which would be one of the reasons the MSFD's objective has not been achieved.

Nevertheless, there have been drastic improvements in terms of the determination of good environmental status, the knowledge base, data availability and monitoring mechanisms and methodologies for the marine environment.

In 2021, 9 % of the EU's seas were **protected** areas under the Natura 2000 network, with an additional 3 % covered by national protection schemes. Only 1 % of the sea area is strictly protected and many marine protected areas are still not effectively managed. Significant activities related to marine-based **restoration** have been implemented, yet an estimate of the restoration area is not available. It is clear, however, that the EU did not meet the voluntary target to restore at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems by 2020, which was included in the previous EU Biodiversity Strategy.

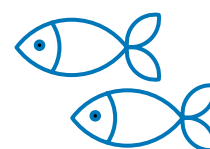
MSY was achieved for major commercial fish stocks. In 2020, the overall ratio of fishing mortality to MSY level (F/FMSY) fell below 1 in the Northeast Atlantic for the first time (overfishing occurs when  $F/FMSY \geq 1$ ). Other stocks remain overfished and/or outside safe biological limits. In the Baltic Sea, due to the dire environmental situation and a history of overfishing, habitat loss and declines in fish biomass have been recorded. In the Mediterranean, steps towards the MSY objective were observed, with a decrease of F/FMSY below 2 for the first time since 2003. However, the state of most stocks in the Mediterranean and Black Seas remains critical.

50 % reduction of nutrient losses, of the use and risk of chemical pesticides, of the use of the more hazardous ones, and of the sale of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture.

Progress towards the -50 % **nutrient losses** is measured with the help of three indicators. Firstly, the gross nitrogen balance (kg per ha utilised in agricultural area) slightly increased in the EU-28 from 2008 to 2015. Secondly, data on nitrates concentration in the EU show that groundwater quality has improved over the past 30 years. Thirdly, the gross phosphorus balance (in kg per ha utilised in agricultural area) slightly decreased from 1.7 to 1.6 from 2008 to 2015.

The Gross Nitrogen Balance was 46 kg/ha of utilised agricultural area and Gross Phosphorus Balance 1 kg/ha of UAA (EU average 2012-14). The share of groundwater monitoring stations with nitrates concentrations above 50 mg/L was 14.1 % as EU average in 2016-2019, slightly up from 13.2 % in the period 2012-15.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ecological status of surface waters in Europe (europa.eu)





Under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), a threshold value for **beach litter** was agreed on in 2020. Monitoring activities provided beach litter data for several years but harmonised methodologies for their collection and assessment have only recently been put in place; collection and processing of recent data is being finalised, which will make it possible to identify trends. For **microplastics**, a baseline for quantities is being set, while work will continue throughout 2023 on baselines and threshold values for seafloor macro litter, floating macro litter and micro litter and threshold values.

More details on indicators and trends for SDG 14 can be found in the statistical and analytical annex and Eurostat's monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs.

ocean governance. Between 2021 and 2027, EMFAF has a total budget of EUR 6.108 billion. Here is an example of a project under EMFAF's predecessor, the European Maritime and Fisheries fund (EMFF):

- ▶ The **Maricap aquaculture project** promoted small-scale, sustainable and virtuous aquaculture in Capraia, a remote island in Tuscany that used to be dependent on fishing and seasonal tourism. New high-skilled and well-paid jobs were created in ecologically sound and sustainable marine aquaculture.

The **Programme for the Environment and Climate Action** (LIFE) has funded more than a hundred marine projects since 1992. For the period 2021 to 2027, LIFE has a total budget of EUR 5.43 billion. It supports the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Birds and Habitats Directive, the EU Biodiversity Strategy and other EU maritime-related policies. Examples of projects include:

- ▶ **Integrative, Innovative and Participatory Management for Natura2000 Network in the Marine Environment (LIFE INTEMARES)** is one of the largest marine environment conservation projects in Europe. It integrates various funds, policies and actors across Spain's national network of marine protected areas to bolster critical knowledge of management practices, improve the monitoring of habitat types and species, and guarantee the conservation of marine species and habitats with sustainable socio-economic development.

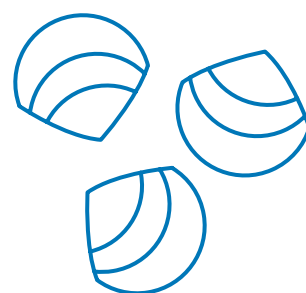
**Copernicus**, the EU's flagship for Earth observation, and the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET) will be key to providing ocean data and observations in the EU and worldwide. The EU is a top provider of ocean science, with up to 85 % of all funding being provided by its Member States. Under **Horizon Europe**, about EUR 350 million annually is earmarked from the EU budget to contribute to this over the 2021-2027 period. In addition, for 2021-2023, the 'Restore Our Ocean and Waters by 2030' mission will receive about EUR 110 million each year.

The **Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 Mission** will support the aforementioned targets and protect some 25 000 km of free-flowing rivers. It also aims to make the blue economy climate-neutral and circular with net-zero maritime emissions. In addition, it will heighten citizens' awareness and scientific knowledge (target SDG 14.a) and strengthen ocean observation through a European digital twin of the ocean.

## Stakeholder engagement

The EU delivers on SDG 14 in a collaborative approach. For example,

- ▶ The Fisheries **Advisory Councils** are stakeholder-led platforms which provide the European Commission and EU countries with recommendations on fisheries management.
- ▶ The **European Maritime Day** is an annual event during which Europe's maritime community meet to network, discuss and outline joint action on maritime affairs and a sustainable blue economy.
- ▶ The EU **Marine Strategy Coordination Group** for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and involving Member States brings together key stakeholders and the European Commission.
- ▶ The **#EUBeachCleanup** campaign, co-organised by the EU and the United Nations around World Coastal Clean-up Day every year in September is a key event to raise awareness about marine litter.





**A number of initiatives** are being initiated, or will be in the near future, in support of the implementation of SDG14. As set forth by the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy

## Multi-level approach

SDG delivery implies ambitious action at all levels. Good practices in implementing SDG 14 include:

Ireland's Programme for Government-Our Shared Future (2020) commits to achieving 10% MPA (marine protected area) coverage of the maritime area as soon as is practicable and 30% coverage by 2030. To that end, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is developing specific new legislation to underpin and enable the identification, designation and management of MPAs.

Community-led local development (CLLD) is supported by the EU in coastal and fisheries areas. Fisheries local action groups (FLAGs) are partnerships between fisheries actors and other local private and public stakeholders to address their area's needs, involving thousands of local stakeholders. In the 2014-2020 period, 348 FLAGs were operational under the EMFF in 19 Member States and supported over 10 000 local projects with EUR 440 million of EMFF funding. Examples of projects include:

- ▶ Marine protected areas under fishers' surveillance: fishers are helping enforce protection measures and halt poaching in the region's oldest fisheries marine reserve, Cabo de Palos, Spain. Its improved protection has led to an increase of endemic species.
- ▶ A coastal management plan by local fishers and fish farmers. They have been actively involved in designing a coastal stock management plan for the Emilia-Romagna coastline, focusing on three local high value species identified by the sector at regional level.

The Flanders Marine Institute in Belgium promotes marine knowledge creation through interdisciplinary research and collaboration at all levels. The principle of co-design is central in its approach, with collaboration with other marine research groups, citizens, policy makers and industrial partners. Its InnovOcean Campus hosts partners from the global and European level to Flemish marine research institutes, provincial authorities. The institute connects local to global across all ocean-related SDGs.





## EU external action

### Global trends

In relation to SDG 14, the increasingly adverse impacts of marine pollution and climate change, combined with over-fishing, are jeopardising recent gains in protecting portions of the world's oceans. Cumulative impacts threaten organisms and ecosystem services, and hence food security, tourism and coastal protection. Between 2009 and 2018, the world lost about 14% of its coral reefs, and the oceans are also under increasing stress from multiple sources of pollution, which is harmful to marine life and eventually makes its way into the food chain. Trends for marine ecosystems' status are in general not positive. However, the efforts made by governments to protect these environments, and especially their key biodiversity areas, increased from 2000 to 2020.

The rapidly growing consumption of fish (an increase of 122% between 1990 and 2018), along with inadequate public policies for managing the sector, have led to depleting fish stocks. Almost half a billion people depend at least partially on small-scale fisheries, which account for 90% of employment in fisheries worldwide. Nearly all small-scale fishers (97%) live in partner countries and many face high levels of poverty and lack broader social and economic development opportunities.

### Internal/external coherence including policy coherence for development

Concerning the external dimension of EU policies on oceans in relation to SDG 14, the EU is strongly committed to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The EU's International Ocean Governance agenda embodies its renewed commitment to strengthening implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda, and particularly synergies between SDGs 14, 2 and 6, interlinking marine, water and food security aspects.

As part of this agenda, the EU commitment to an ambitious renewed set of marine biodiversity targets was instrumental to the conclusion in December 2022 of the Kunming-Montreal agreement on a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, which provides the new framework for pursuing all targets under SDG 14. Similarly, the EU supported an ambitious UNCLOS Implementing Agreement on the protection of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) (targets 14.2 and 14.4), agreed in March 2023. The EU was also a driving force behind the launch of negotiations that will address pollution through a legally binding global agreement on plastics (target 14.1) and is committed to reaching an agreement by end-2024. Furthermore, the



**EU supports Tanzania** through the “Blue economy” project, by focusing on (i) the environmental protection and a climate-resilient sustainable management of coastal ecosystems

EU is advocating for the designation of two new MPAs in the Southern Antarctic.

As part of EU efforts of coherence between internal and external actions, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive emphasises the need for EU Member States to cooperate with their neighbours in the four marine regions, notably through the Regional Sea Conventions. Four Regional Sea Conventions cover EU marine waters: (i) The Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment in the Baltic Sea Area (HELCOM); (ii) The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-east Atlantic (OSPAR); (iii) The Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (UNEP-MAP); and (iv) The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Bucharest Convention). The EU is a contracting party to the first three and is actively engaged in ensuring a shared understanding of the ambition for marine environmental protection across the marine regions.

As regards fisheries, since 2012 the EU has applied the core principles of the CFP – promoting responsible and sustainable fisheries – at international level. EU Member States have ratified or acceded to implementing agreements of UNCLOS such as the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement and joined global efforts to prevent illegal fishing under the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing (target 14.4).

The EU financially supported and actively participated in the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Transshipment, which is another important tool to combat IUU fishing.

At regional level, the EU plays an active role in 18 Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) to foster sustainable fisheries conservation and management measures (target 14.C). Through its voluntary financial contributions, the EU has been instrumental in developing sound stock status assessments, monitoring fishing activities and preventing marine pollution in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

In all marine areas surrounding the EU, it cooperates with riparian countries using relevant international forums. As a member of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), over the last 5 years the EU successfully promoted the adoption of 75 conservation and control measures which have already started to bear fruits. In the Arctic, the EU has been a leading proponent of, and is a party to, the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.

The EU also ensures that its trade policy is consistent with SDG 14. The EU was active in the negotiations that successfully resulted in the new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference on 17 June 2022, delivering on SDG Target 14.6. The EU is committed



to achieving a complementary agreement in the continued WTO negotiations on the outstanding issues. The EU has also engaged in, and contributed to, discussions of the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade with the aim of developing new products and services that can contribute to preventing pollution from reaching the marine environment and provide innovative solutions through a multi-stakeholder approach. Moreover, in recent years, the EU has ensured that the bilateral free trade agreements concluded with non-EU countries include a sustainable development chapter in which fisheries and aquaculture are an integral part.

Science is fundamental to the sustainable management of the ocean. The EU advocates science-based fisheries management in all international forums. More broadly, it is committed to the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. The EU is a strong partner in the Future of the Seas & Ocean Initiative (FSOI) of the G7 and the GEO Blue Planet initiative linking ocean and coastal information with society. The EU is cooperating with key partners on both sides of the Atlantic to build an [All-Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance](#). The IOG Agenda also encourages the creation of an Intergovernmental Panel for Ocean Sustainability.

In relation to impacts on developing countries and policy coherence for development, the EU zero tolerance policy for IUU fishing entails a strong dimension of dialogue with countries in all regions of the world, most of them developing and least developed countries. Before taking any measure to restrict imports of fisheries products, the primary aim is to address shortcomings and improve the fisheries control system as flag, coastal, port or market states (indicator 14.6.1). When the EU considers that the control systems in place in non-EU countries exporting fishery products to the EU are deficient, it takes action to encourage change. These actions have proved instrumental in triggering positive reform in most of the countries concerned and have facilitated that countries with poor monitoring and controls systems and, sometimes, flag of convenience status, have progressed towards greater cooperation and respect for international obligations.

To carry out and sustain such reforms, many countries receive financial technical assistance to upgrade their fisheries governance frameworks. For example, in 2021 the CAPFISH Programme supported Cambodia's efforts to combat IUU fisheries by helping it become a party to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement and the UN Agreement on straddling and migratory fish stocks and prepare and implement the new Fisheries Law.

Managing fisheries sustainably at international level goes beyond fighting IUU fishing. The EU also works bilaterally

with partner countries to promote sustainability, while fully recognising the role of fisheries in the livelihoods of coastal developing countries and the challenges they face to set up performing fisheries management and monitoring policies.

To this end, the EU considerably adapted its Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs) with 13 partner countries in Africa and the Pacific <sup>(35)</sup>, six of which classify as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and seven as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). These agreements grant EU vessels access to fisheries surpluses in the exclusive economic zone of partner countries and support sustainable fisheries management, including small coastal fisheries, with a yearly contribution of EUR 135 million from the EU. These ensure that EU fishing is based on the best available scientific knowledge and transparency standards and strengthen fisheries governance in partner countries by applying EU standards for monitoring and control of fishing operations and social provisions for fishers. Partner countries derive additional economic benefits by supplying goods and services to EU fishing vessels and through jobs on-board and in the processing industries (estimated at 20 000).

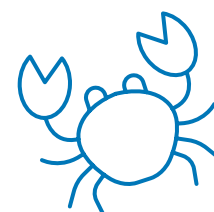
EU and Member States financial support for SDG implementation and results

In 2021, EU institutions reported to the OECD commitments for EUR 314 million in projects contributing to SDG 14, which makes it the smallest SDG when measured by the volume of funding. The largest share of the EU contribution is made up of projects targeting SDG 14 as a significant objective, clearly underlining the cross-cutting nature of SDG 14. This SDG has been mostly associated with interventions where the main SDG was SDG 2, 8, 6 or 13. A smaller share of the EU contribution is made up of projects that target SDG 14 as the main SDG. These projects show significant interlinkages with SDGs 1, 2, 5 and 13. When taking into account also other official flows, private funds mobilized through public intervention and support to international public goods, the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD) of the EU to SDG 14 amounted to EUR 2.9 billion in 2021. In terms of results of the selected assistance <sup>(36)</sup>, a total of 543 000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine areas was under protection with EU support in the period 2018-2021.

Collectively, the EU and those Member States that reported on SDGs to the OECD in 2021 contributed EUR 1.1 billion to SDG 14. EU and Member State flows to SDG14 in 2021 predominantly focused on projects in America and the Caribbean (27%), Asia (27%) and Africa (14%). SDG 14 also has a significant global component (24%).

<sup>(35)</sup> Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome e Principe, Gabon, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar and the Cook Islands.

<sup>(36)</sup> For the methodology on results, see the same section under SDG 2.





## Main policy orientations and initiatives for external engagement

In relation to SDG 14, the sustainable management of oceans, seas and marine resources is an increasingly important aspect of international partnerships and cooperation. The EU promotes an integrated approach to effectively address the drivers of ocean degradation, while linking food security, nutrition and livelihoods with natural resources preservation. The Commission committed to investing up to EUR 1 billion for ocean and coastal biodiversity and climate, including for the high seas (2021-2027).

This cooperation takes place within a dense network of ocean-related relations with several regions. The technical and financial support provided promotes monitoring and assessment of the state of the marine environment and measures to protect and improve it.

In the Southern neighbourhood, increasing attention is being given in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean and the Barcelona Convention to protection of natural resources, promotion of sustainable fisheries, reduction of marine pollution, in particular plastic pollution, and protection biodiversity in the Mediterranean. At the same time, a strategy for the Western Mediterranean between the northern and southern riparian countries fosters sustainable development of the blue economy. Regional support programmes contribute by acting either on the causes of biodiversity loss or on the preservation of endangered ecosystems. For example, the IMAP-Marine Protected Area (MPA) project on achieving good environmental status through MPAs has strengthened and further developed the MPA network, and the Water and Environment Support project has provided technical assistance and training on depollution of the Mediterranean Sea, notably on plastics.

Sustainably managing and protecting marine resources is also part of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. With the support of the EU, the region is exploring avenues to strengthen cooperation. For instance, the EU is helping Albania develop its circular economy, which will have a positive impact on reducing marine pollution, especially plastics, to protect biodiversity and sustainably manage its fisheries.

Similarly, the EU works closely with its neighbours in the Black Sea in the context of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and aims to join the Bucharest Convention. Support was given to an environmental monitoring project (EU4EMBLAS) implemented together with UNDP that focused on SDG 14 and used novel techniques to assess the state of Black Sea biodiversity and screen for the presence of more than 65 000 chemical substances. Several wide-reaching awareness and beach litter clean-up campaigns were carried out.

With African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, under the extended Cotonou Agreement the EU continues to work with each region on areas including sustainable blue economy and sustainable fishing as joint areas for cooperation. Over the years, cooperation significantly expanded from support to sustainable fisheries to a wider set of interconnected issues including water, biodiversity and climate adaptation.

Several regional programmes strengthen ocean governance, promote a sustainable blue economy and improve ocean protection within a coordinated regional approach. EUR 180 million have been allocated to five regional ocean programmes. The aim is to foster regional collaboration and capacities to implement regional fisheries management measures, to boost the joint fight against IUU fishing and to strengthen regional scientific and monitoring and control systems.

For instance, under PESCAO, a Western African fisheries and aquaculture policy is being developed and the coordination of ECOWAS Member States and stakeholders is improving. Under ECOFISH, EU support is strengthening capacity to fight IUU fishing in the Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean region. The EU and Sweden are funding the Pacific European Union Marine Partnership Programme (PEUMP), which is an extensive multi-sectoral programme that supports sound ocean and coastal governance, with a focus on biodiversity protection and sustainable use of fisheries and other marine resources. For its part, the FISH4ACP programme contributes to unlocking the potential of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in 12 ACP countries while minimising detrimental effects on natural habitats and aquatic resources.

### Examples of EU actions (with a focus on Global Gateway and Team Europe initiatives)

In relation to SDG 14, using a Team Europe approach, the EU and Member States support 18 countries and overseas territories in the Pacific Region through the regional TEI Green Blue Alliance for the Pacific. As part of this initiative, support is provided to integrated ocean management to sustain livelihoods in the region.

In addition, in recent years, the EU has launched various water-sensitive programmes and projects. In Namibia, a capacity-building project supports the development of environmentally sustainable, climate-resilient inland fisheries and aquaculture. In Tanzania, the EU supports the 'Blue economy' TEI, focusing on: (i) environmental protection and climate-resilient sustainable management of coastal ecosystems; (ii) support to sustainable and job-intensive businesses in the blue economy, including productive uses of the marine and coastal ecosystems; and (iii) transformative governance and policy reforms. An EU budget support programme in Guyana focused on improving integrated coastal zone management by enhancing disaster risk

management and resilience to flooding, as well as on integrating gender equality into the sector.

Actions by the EU and its Member States are mutually reinforcing and coordinated to ensure complementarity and impact in support of the SDGs. In addition to acting together with the EU through joint programming and Team Europe Initiatives, EU Member States carry out their own projects in support of the 2030 Agenda including SDG 14. A few examples of such initiatives are set out below for illustrative purposes.

Croatia has been supporting Albanian institutions by establishing a mutual network for risk prevention and incident management, in order to mitigate risks of marine pollution and to strengthen Albanian response capacities in fighting oil and HNS (hazardous and noxious substances) spills.

As a member of the Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans joint initiative, implemented in a Team Europe approach by 21 EU Member States, Belgium is supporting the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) for biological, chemical and oceanographic research in the Western Indian Ocean, notably through the donation of a research vessel, the provision of training activities and monitoring marine upwelling zones in support of measures promoting sustainable fishing practices.

Spain's Galicia region and Mozambique collaborate on strengthening fisheries and aquaculture in Mozambique to improve food and nutritional security. The PeIxxan MZ project is financed with funds from the Regional Government of Galicia (Spain) and aims to contribute to improving the living conditions of the communities of Namaacha and to financing the Centro Tecnológico del Mar-Fundación Cetmar, with the Fundación Ayuda en Acción and the Direção Provincial da Agricultura e Pescas as partners.

## Looking ahead

As set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy, many of the framework policies and legislations relating to SDG 14 are being reviewed. Recognising a clear need for enhanced marine restoration efforts, the EU Nature Restoration Law is being negotiated, together with a new regulation on the sustainable use of pesticides. The aim is to restore 20% of land and sea areas by 2030 and reduce by 50% nutrient losses and the use and risk of chemical pesticides. As part of the Zero Pollution Action Plan, the Urban Wastewater Directive and the lists of surface and groundwater pollutants are being also updated. In addition, the EU is set to conclude its revision of EU fisheries control system.

Looking further ahead, the EU will prepare a legislative framework for sustainable food systems, which should address the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources. An integrated nutrient management action plan will be adopted in early 2023, addressing nutrient pollution in an integrated manner across sectors. New measures will be proposed in 2023 to address the unintentional release of microplastics into the environment and the chemicals legislation (under the REACH regulation) will be applied to restrict intentionally added microplastics. These initiatives will also help address marine litter.

Additionally, the Commission will make a proposal to boost ocean observation and is evaluating the performance of, and possibly reviewing, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Furthermore, the Commission has launched a fitness check of the polluter pays principle, which will look at how well the EU applies the principle and should provide the basis for recommendations on how to better implement it.

On the external side, the EU will continue to take determined action to accelerate the implementation of SDG 14 globally, including through the roll-out of a range of multiannual indicative programmes with partner countries where marine and coastal resources and fisheries is a shared priority. A tangible contribution to SDG 14 (and other interlinked SDGs) will be the deployment of the Global Gateway strategy and its dedicated regional investment plans at regional and national level, to be undertaken in a Team Europe approach. In relation to global oceans governance, the EU will advocate swift ratification and implementation of the three recent landmark agreements on fisheries subsidies (WTO), a framework on biodiversity (under the CBD) and on marine areas beyond national jurisdiction (under UNCLOS).

