President of the European Commission

Mission Letter

Name of Commissioner

Commissioner for the Ocean

I would like to entrust you with the role of Commissioner for the Ocean

Human health and the resilience of all life on our planet depend on a thriving ocean. The ocean and its biodiversity are vital for the global climate system, providing oxygen, regulating our climate, and supporting vast food webs that both people and animals rely on.

Europe's seas and our global ocean, along with their landscapes and ecosystems, are integral to the social fabric of our Union, with more than 40% of the European population living in coastal areas. These diverse marine environments are key cultural and economic assets that we must restore and protect, as many livelihoods depend on healthy marine ecosystems. We must take concrete steps to invest in our seas and coastal areas, to ensure that present and future generations can benefit from the beauty and opportunities offered by our blue planet. This will also support how we achieve our climate, energy and nature goals, secure food sovereignty, create jobs and deliver a prosperous Europe. It is within this complex landscape of ocean action that I believe a single Commissioner for the Ocean is the most effective way to ensure policy coherence – environmental protection and thriving maritime industries are two sides of the same coin.

Europe's seas are among the most intensively used waters globally and face significant threats from overfishing, pollution, and the cumulative impacts of increased human activities. The European Environment Agency has identified the climate risks to coastal and marine ecosystems as the most severe on the continent, demanding immediate action. Europe is already experiencing rising sea levels and record heat, with the three hottest years occurring since 2020. This underscores the urgent need for a European Ocean Deal during this mandate to ensure the recovery of marine ecosystems, promote good governance, and achieve sustainability in line with the Green Deal's ambitions. Prioritizing ocean health and supporting sustainable blue economic activities, such as low-impact fisheries, through the adoption of an Ocean Deal must become Europe's new focus.

Your leadership will be pivotal in reversing the decline of ocean health to achieve a resilient and thriving marine environment by 2030. Together, we can build a climate-proof future where marine ecosystems flourish and coastal communities thrive in harmony with nature.

Your mission

A European Ocean Deal for people and nature to turn the tide

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting biodiversity, improving public health, and ensuring the sustainability of our economy at sea are cross-cutting priorities. They deserve a clear strategy embedded in a legally binding overarching framework integrating an ecosystem-based approach to all maritime activities: A European Ocean Deal. As part of this framework:

- An ecosystem-based approach to all maritime activities is of the utmost importance to prevent any negative effects on areas that contain particularly sensitive habitats, species and/or ecological processes. The approach aims to ensure that the sea space, a common resource, is shared equitably amongst the ever increasing numbers of maritime activities and stakeholders, considering the carrying capacity of marine ecosystems.
- I want Europe to lead global efforts to curtail biodiversity loss in line with the UN Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the newly adopted UN High-Seas Treaty, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the EU Nature Restoration Law, including by completing and strengthening the network of European marine protected areas and restoration areas to make them ecologically coherent, well managed and effectively protected.
- I want you to reinforce policy coherence through the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) by promoting nature-based climate adaptation and resilience measures in planning processes, incorporating the EU's protection and restoration targets, aligning with energy, climate, fisheries and sustainable finance policies, promoting responsible multi-use of EU sea spaces, and linking with land-use planning and coastal management for effective climate change adaptation.
- As part of this and in collaboration with relevant Commissioners, you will lead efforts in sustainable deployment of offshore renewable energy for a nature-positive energy transition. This means balancing environmental protection with socio-economic needs, avoiding impacts on biodiversity as well as ensuring a level playing field for the European renewable energy sector's supply chains, adhering to circular economy principles.
- I want you to lead on delivering on our zero-pollution ambition for our seas and ocean. This will require the adoption of further measures to address chemical pollution, improve the quality of our water bodies, address the issue of microplastics further by both finalising the work we started to address plastic pellet pollution, tackling the other sources of microplastic pollution and revise existing legislation on single use plastics to improve the impact of EU rules and extend its scope to other single use plastics which pollute our seas.
- I want you to establish a European Ocean and Seas Agency or cooperation mechanism for streamlined ocean data collection, open access, and regular environmental and climate reports to better support policy implementation and transboundary cooperation as the ocean has no borders.
- Looking at the current failure of Member States to reach the 2020 targets for healthy seas and oceans, I want you to strengthen the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) by linking it with the MSPD to ensure proper enforcement, setting legally binding

targets and thresholds, introducing non-deterioration criteria and enhancing cross-border cooperation and enforcement.

- Acknowledging that 75% of the EU's foreign trade volume is conducted by sea, I want you to lead on improving the sustainability of the maritime transport sector. This should include establishing mandatory ship speed reduction measures, a plan for rerouting ships away from critical habitats to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as measures to address underwater noise pollution, which will all work to reduce ship strikes and minimize disturbance on marine life and sensitive species.
- I want you to develop an action plan for a just transition to a sustainable blue economy that respects ecological limits and promotes low-impact and regenerative activities to support sustainable livelihoods, foster social justice, and boost public health and wellbeing.
- You will propose a new legislation on ocean resilience and coastal adaptation, focusing on nature-based solutions to better prepare the EU for climate-related challenges with an EU-wide monitoring system for marine carbon sequestration (i.e. "blue carbon").
- You will propose an EU Strategy for a healthy ocean extending to 2040 that focuses on the regeneration of European seas while charting a path for the EU's implementation of the new UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- I want Europe to lead the way on international ocean governance and play a prominent role in UN discussions, notably at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice in 2025, as well as in other regional and international forums.

Fair, low-impact fishing and a prosperous seafood market

As the world's largest market for seafood products, the EU must lead by example with respect to driving sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, both within its territorial waters and worldwide. The future of fisheries, which humans are part of and upon which millions of Europeans rely on for food and livelihoods, depends on us constantly rethinking and improving the way we fish to ensure that our activities and the seafood we eat are sustainable in the long term.

- You will lead the transition to low-impact fisheries by ensuring the full implementation of the current Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and related fisheries laws, as well as the *Action plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries*, ensuring sustainable and resilient fisheries that benefit all life below and above water. These policies are closely related and mutually supportive, requiring you to coordinate and work closely with relevant Commission services such **as DG Environment, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and DG Climate Action.**
- Within the framework of an Ocean Deal, I want you to further implement an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, particularly in the context of climate change. This requires setting precautionary limits on fishing opportunities, ensuring an ample seafood supply for both people and wildlife, boosting the resilience of marine species across the entire ocean food web to better withstand rising sea temperatures and more extreme weather events.
- I want you to work **with DG Trade** to propose new legislation to restrict the import and trade of aquatic food products that cause harm to endangered species and result in the bycatch of sensitive species.

- You will work **with the Commissioner for Trade** to ensure that Europe leads discussions in the World Trade Organization for implementing the global agreement on eliminating harmful fisheries subsidies, and further discuss subsidies that contribute to overfishing, illegal fishing and fleet overcapacity.
- The upcoming CFP evaluation must identify how to address shortcomings in the current policy, such as how to better deliver on social objectives, or climate adaptation and resilience. In this regard, you will lead the amendment of the Multi-Annual Plans of Fisheries Management to fully integrate an ecosystem-based approach and timebound management objectives.
- You will oversee the implementation of the *Action plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries* especially on the topic of bycatch of sensitive species and mobile bottom fishing in marine protected areas, adopting emergency measures where necessary and initiating enforcement actions if obligations are not met.
- I want you to ensure that harmful subsidies to fisheries and maritime sectors are phased out of the EU funds. The EU must finance a just and fair energy transition in its maritime industries.
- You will lead on delivering delegated and implementing acts to strengthen the EU fisheries control system, including improved digital traceability of all seafood products, stronger engine power monitoring, and the installation of Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) on vessels at high risk of violating EU fisheries rules as well as for data collection purposes at large
- We must also reinforce our zero-tolerance approach to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, by rolling out the IT CATCH system. This system strengthens import controls and encourages public disclosure of citizens who own fishing vessels, which will enable you to ensure that no illegal seafood products enter the EU market. Further, by using all available tools, including seafood trade bans and sufficient budgets, you will support the fight against IUU fishing globally.
- To ensure seafood that is associated with human rights abuses does not enter the EU market, you will liaise with the DG Grow and DG Trade to coherently prevent the import of seafood products linked with human rights abuses. You will also collaborate with DG Justice to ensure that strong due diligence requirements are imposed on seafood companies.
- You will make every effort to leave no one behind and ensure the inclusive participation of local community representatives in decision-making processes. By following an ecosystem-based approach, measures for inclusive participation will help ensure that livelihoods of local communities are safeguarded and will better support local economies in the long term.
- You will lead on the adoption of new Strategic Guidelines for the aquaculture sector, setting clear guidelines for Member States to reduce the amount of wild-caught fish used as feed by diversifying the feed supply chain and shifting production to non-fed and low-trophic aquaculture.
- I want you to contribute to the EU Sustainable Food System Strategy, looking at the affordable supply of high-quality local and healthy foods. In this regard, I want you to lead on shaping a vision for seafood, focusing on ensuring a level playing field for the European fisheries supply chain, securing the long-term competitiveness and

sustainability of our seafood sector within the boundaries of our planet. Europe needs to lead efforts to work on equitable intake of common marine resources, enhancing the duty to care about food security worldwide.

- I want you to make every effort to ensure the seafood industry complies with legal requirements, but also contributes to the sustainability and ethical integrity of the global seafood supply chain. This will help ensure a level playing field for EU operators, add value to low-impact seafood products, secure long-term viability, and boost consumer trust in products sold on our market. It is crucial that consumer information is required on all seafood products, including in restaurants and mass catering facilities.
- Internationally, you should continue to prioritize and lead the EU's efforts to strengthen global fisheries management and marine protection in Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, alongside strengthening Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements to ensure that they are more transparent and benefit local communities. The EU must ensure that it does not contribute to overfishing in non-EU waters.

A European Ocean Fund

With the largest maritime territory in the world, the EU must play a key leadership role in the global realm. To do so, robust investment is needed. To support the implementation of ambitious ocean policies, including the implementation of a European Oceans Pact, an EU Ocean Fund is required.

- I want you to propose a Multiannual Financial Framework for 2028-2034 to transform the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund into a substantial Ocean Fund, which would exclude harmful subsidies and ensure sufficient funding for ocean-related EU agencies aiming at long-term restoration and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems.
- I want Europe's maritime sector investments to be based on the most sustainable blue economy pathways possible, ensuring a just, fair, decarbonised, and low-impact transition.
- I want you to lead on revising State aid rules for the fishery and aquaculture sectors to align with the new Ocean Fund and to remove all environmentally-harmful subsidies no later than 2027.

The way forward

The mission outlined above is not exhaustive or prescriptive. Other opportunities and challenges will no doubt appear over the course of this Commission's term of office. On all of these issues, I will ask you to work closely with me and with other Members of the College.

I look forward to working closely together at what is an exciting and testing time for our Union. You can count on my full personal and political support throughout our mandate.