

# **BLUE MANIFESTO**

---

2026

**ASSESSMENT**



# INTRODUCTION

The Blue Manifesto, launched in 2020, is a joint initiative of more than 140 civil society organisations across Europe, providing EU policy- and decision-makers with a science-based, time-bound roadmap to achieve a healthy and resilient ocean by 2030.

---

Framed as a call to action, this Manifesto outlines key milestones to be reached by specific years towards ensuring sustainable ocean governance, halting biodiversity loss and pollution, and supporting a just transition to a climate-resilient and nature-positive economy. The vision it promotes is one of systemic transformation, aimed at safeguarding marine ecosystems while delivering a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Previous assessments of progress under the Blue Manifesto have found that while some milestones were on track for partial delivery, the majority had not been fully met. This assessment of the updated Blue Manifesto roadmap provides a critical evaluation of the milestones scheduled for completion in 2024 and 2025, and an initial review of progress towards 2026 objectives.

# METHODOLOGY

The full assessment with each milestone is available online with the QR-code.

In the full assessment, each milestone has been evaluated using a traffic-light scoring system:

-  **Dark green** - The requested outcome has been delivered in substance
-  **Light green** - A substantive part of the requested outcome has been delivered, but important elements remain outstanding
-  **Yellow** - No substantive action has been taken yet or where developments are underway and therefore impossible to assess as of now
-  **Orange** - Action has been taken, but it is insufficient, delayed or moving away from the requested outcome
-  **Red** - The deadline has passed without delivery, no relevant action has been taken, or action directly contradicts the requested outcome

Each rating in the full assessment is accompanied by a brief justification, with references to relevant legislative, regulatory and policy developments where applicable.

For this handout, the results have been consolidated by category (which you can find in the full assessment). Each category includes several individual ask, which are assessed and rated separately in the full assessment. The overall rating shown here for each category is the average of the ratings awarded to all tasks falling under that category.

3.8 / 10

Number of asks assessed 10

## POLLUTION

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**A disappointing start.** With pollution as one of the three pillars of the triple planetary crisis, the EU cannot afford continued reluctance to tackle major sources of marine pollution. The second half of the mandate must turn this around with decisive action at source.

---

1.5 / 10

Number of asks assessed 4

## DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**Still hooked on destruction.** The EU continues to struggle to address some of the most damaging pressures on the marine environment such as destructive fishing practices, dredging or coastal infrastructure developments. It is time to break this dependency and phase out destructive activities that are incompatible with healthy and resilient seas and threaten the long-term survival and stability of coastal communities.

---

7.5 / 10

Number of asks assessed 4

## INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**A strong performance in difficult circumstances.** The EU has continued to deliver important results internationally despite an increasingly challenging environment for multilateralism. It should maintain this leadership, most notably for halting deep-sea mining and ensuring the implementation of the BBNJ treaty, while ensuring that its domestic ocean policies match the ambition it promotes abroad.

3.4 / 10

Number of asks assessed 5

## BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**Doing little, Undoing Much. The real credibility test is yet to come.**

The first half of the mandate has brought limited progress and significant setbacks, including the Environment Omnibus and stress-testing of the Birds and Habitats Directives. While the Ocean Act provides an opportunity to realign priorities, success also hinges on a targeted revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive that is strictly limited to improving enforcement and implementation, and, crucially, on the robust implementation of the Nature Restoration Law.

---

3.5 / 10

Number of asks assessed 10

## FAIR AND LOW-IMPACT FISHERIES

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**The rules are there – now implement them.** Rather than reopening the Common Fisheries Policy, the EU should focus on finally implementing its existing provisions, including those designed to reward low-impact fishing and deliver healthy fish populations and marine ecosystems.

---

4 / 10

Number of asks assessed 2

## SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**More transparency is still needed.** The EU should revise the Common Market Organisation to strengthen seafood labelling, particularly for processed seafood products and ensure consumers have the information they need to make healthier and more sustainable choices.

Unassessed

Number of asks assessed 1

## DECARBONISE MARITIME INDUSTRIES

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**Progress towards genuinely decarbonising maritime industries remains patchy.** Although the negotiations on the Energy Taxation Directive have stalled, the Commission's proposal to revise the Emissions Trading System (ETS) plans to regulate a significantly higher number of ships. The upcoming review of the FuelEU Maritime Regulation offers a further opportunity to tighten rules on the sector.

---

4.5 / 10

Number of asks assessed 2

## NATURE-INCLUSIVE ENERGY

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**The direction of travel is concerning.** Recent efforts to accelerate grids and simplify permitting risk weakening environmental safeguards rather than ensuring a genuinely nature-inclusive energy transition. The upcoming State of the Energy Union report provides an opportunity to put nature and ocean health back at the heart of the transition.

---

3.8 / 10

Number of asks assessed 5

## CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**The ocean is still too often overlooked, while being identified as the ecosystem most at risk in the face of climate change.** The upcoming European Climate Adaptation Framework is an opportunity to change this by recognising healthy and resilient marine ecosystems as one of Europe's strongest allies to tackle and adapt to climate change and by obliging Member States to incorporate protection and restoration into their adaption plans - rather than capitalising on blue carbon credits as a solution.

4.66 / 10

Number of asks assessed 9

## OCEAN GOVERNANCE

*Recommendations for the second half of the mandate*

**Good intentions, but they now need to become action.** The European Ocean Pact and commitments to a stronger governance framework are welcome, but concrete delivery is already lagging behind – not least in the proposed next EU budget. The Ocean Act must ensure that this ambition becomes legally binding, coherent action, as well as implemented within EU framework obligations set by international frameworks.

---

## GENERAL

**The EU can still turn the tide.** The first half of the mandate has fallen short of what is needed to deliver a healthy ocean by 2030. The Ocean Act, alongside revisions to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and to the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) and implementation of existing environmental legislation, gives the EU a major opportunity to change course – and it needs to get it right.

## CONCLUSION

The assessment results are deeply concerning: while the ecological crisis is accelerating and the EU has committed to action at the UN Ocean Conference in 2025, only a few targets have been met or are on track. Irreversible losses in ecosystem resilience and services are already underway, risking substantial social consequences if the widening gap between policy and implementation is not urgently addressed.

However, the EU now holds a critical opportunity to reverse this trajectory. The ongoing revision and drafting of key texts, including the Ocean Act, the MSFD, and the MFF, combined with the Commission's seriousness regarding enforcement of existing and future obligations, will determine whether the EU can finally bridge the implementation gap and align its domestic actions with its international ambitions.

“

**While the ecological crisis is accelerating, only a few targets have been met or are on track. The EU holds a critical opportunity to reverse this trajectory.**

”



This work was made possible through the support of the European Union's LIFE programme. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



**Scan this QR code to access the full 2026 Blue Manifesto Assessment.**