
THE EUROPEAN OCEAN ACT

Securing Europe's Maritime Future

Europe's future security, competitiveness and resilience will be decided at sea.

Europe increasingly depends on its seas for energy, food, trade, communications, defence, climate resilience and millions of jobs. Demand for maritime space is accelerating, while offshore infrastructure, shipping, fisheries, coastal economies and marine ecosystems are coming under growing pressure.

Yet the governance of Europe's seas remains fragmented across sectors, borders and institutions. Information is incomplete, decisions are insufficiently coordinated and existing commitments are not consistently implemented. The result is rising conflict over space, uncertainty for investors and avoidable exposure to physical, cyber and hybrid threats affecting critical infrastructure, supply chains, food production and coastal communities.

The decisions taken in the coming months will shape Europe's seas for decades. Infrastructure and spatial choices made now will indeed determine whether Europe can expand offshore energy, protect maritime assets, maintain productive fisheries and strengthen its industrial and strategic autonomy.

The European Ocean Act is a unique opportunity to establish the common operating framework Europe currently lacks: transparent information and decision-making, predictable rules, coordinated planning and measurable accountability across maritime sectors and borders.

The Act should not add unnecessary complexity or administrative burden for stakeholders. It should make existing policies work coherently together and ensure that Europe's maritime ambitions remain viable over the long term.

Two strategic imperatives for the Ocean Act

1. Strengthen Europe's maritime security and economic resilience

Fragmented planning, inconsistent information and weak cross-border coordination increase conflict between maritime users and undermine investment certainty. Effective maritime security depends not only on defence capabilities, but also on resilient infrastructure, coordinated planning and a clear understanding of the activities taking place at sea, who is responsible for and ultimately controls them, and their impacts, supported by strengthened ocean observation and transparent, interoperable data.

The Ocean Act should provide a stable framework for reconciling offshore energy, shipping, fisheries, critical infrastructure, defence requirements, marine protection and emerging activities. It should ensure that maritime development strengthens, rather than erodes, the natural systems on which Europe's long-term security, competitiveness and prosperity depend.

Decisions should be informed by interoperable data, cumulative-impact assessments and the long-term capacity of Europe's seas to support these activities. This would reduce conflict, strengthen infrastructure resilience and give governments and investors greater certainty about where and under what conditions activities can proceed.

2. Turn commitments into delivery

Europe does not lack ocean legislation, strategies or targets. It lacks consistent implementation across policies, sectors and Member States.

The Ocean Act should define what delivery means in practice: shared responsibilities, common indicators, transparent decision-making, public reporting and regular assessments of national performance. Where agreed objectives are not met, there should be clear requirements for corrective action.

This would strengthen implementation without duplicating sectoral legislation, while helping governments identify emerging risks, direct investment effectively and demonstrate credible results. Amid a complex geopolitical environment, the Act enables EU Member States to avoid falling behind and to turn their maritime industries into a driver of security, economic growth and strategic independence.

Five priorities for actions

The Ocean Act should:

1. **Establish a transparent and accountable delivery framework**, with harmonised indicators, public reporting, regular Commission assessments and corrective action where agreed objectives are not delivered.
2. **Create a common and transparent maritime information base**, infrastructure and activity data, including information necessary to identify the actors, to support planning, monitoring, accountability, maritime security and investment decisions.
3. **Make maritime spatial planning fit for increasingly crowded seas**, through cumulative-impact assessments, transparent criteria for allocating space and effective coordination across borders and sea basins. Maritime spatial planning must do more than accommodate new activities: it must provide a transparent basis for resolving competing demands and safeguarding the long-term productive capacity of Europe's seas.
4. **Safeguard Europe's long-term maritime productive capacity**, by ensuring that major decisions respect the conditions required for healthy and resilient seas and by making the EU's 30x30 commitments enforceable.
5. **Align EU funding with Europe's long-term maritime interests**, prioritising restoration, resilient infrastructure, lower-impact activities and a fair transition, while ending support for activities that undermine these objectives. Common and verifiable criteria should distinguish genuinely sustainable investment from activities that merely carry a "blue" label.

A timely decision for Member States

The Ocean Act will only succeed if Member States help shape it as a strategic European instrument, rather than allowing it to become a limited consolidation of existing rules.

Member State leadership is needed now to ensure adequate governance to secure maritime space, protect essential assets and provide long-term investment certainty. Governments must urgently engage before the core architecture of the Act is fixed.

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