

# Press release – Parliament urges EU to take drastic action to reduce marine litter



In a report adopted on Thursday by 646 votes in favour, 3 against and 39 abstentions, MEPs stress that [marine litter](#), and especially micro and nano plastic, “poses a serious threat to a number of marine animal species”, as well as to fishermen and consumers. They highlight that an average consumer of Mediterranean shellfish ingests around 11 000 fragments of plastic every year. The fishing sector is estimated to lose between 1 and 5% of its revenue because of marine pollution.

Fisheries and aquaculture waste accounts for 27% of marine litter. Therefore, Parliament urges the EU to accelerate the development of a [circular economy](#) in this sector by phasing out expanded polystyrene packages and improving marine waste collection and recycling channels. Research on sustainable materials and new designs for fishing gears are also key, MEPs add.

## **EU action plan to tackle pollution**

Only 1.5% of fishing gear is currently recycled in the EU and some gear that is abandoned, lost or discarded at sea “remains active for months or even years”. These so-called ghost nets “indiscriminately impact all marine wildlife, including fish stocks”, the report alerts. To address this issue,

MEPs demand the Commission and member states to adopt the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's [Voluntary Guidelines for the Marking of Fishing Gear](#).

Parliament also demands an EU action plan to substantially reduce the use of plastics and to tackle the pollution of rivers, water courses and coastlines, highlighting that 80% of marine waste comes from the land. MEPs also call for more research to be carried out on the impact of marine litter and micro and nano plastic on fishery resources.

### **Quote**

[Catherine CHABAUD](#) (Renew, FR), rapporteur: "Marine litter is a cross-cutting issue that needs to be addressed holistically. The fight against marine litter does not begin in the sea, but must involve an upstream vision that encompasses the complete lifecycle of a product. Each piece of litter that ends up in the sea is a product that has fallen out of the circular economy loop. To fight marine pollution, we must continue to promote virtuous business models and integrate new sectors like fisheries and aquaculture in these global efforts. There is no sustainable fishing without a healthy ocean."

### **Context**

Only 1% of the plastic in the ocean is found floating on the surface, whilst most of it ends up in deep-sea. Every day, 730 tonnes of waste are dumped directly into the Mediterranean and every year a further 11 200 tonnes of plastics dumped in the environment find their way into the Mediterranean, affirms the report, based on information from the World Wildlife Fund.