



  
*voice* for the  
**Ocean**

**REPORT ON THE EUROPEAN  
CITIZEN CONSULTATION**

ORGANISED BY SURFRIDER  
FOUNDATION EUROPE

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This project becomes true thanks to the EU financing of the LIFE programme, our sincere thanks go to the European commission for the continued confidence.

A big thank you too to our volunteer chapters, present in 9 European countries who have helped to bring this consultation to life and raise awareness among their community on the ground of European policy issues, through communication campaigns and local events. Surfrider Europe would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped us with the communication and promotion of the consultation. In particular, a special thank you to Thomas Dupuy, our volunteer analyst who has spent many long hours studying the results.

Our thanks also go to the 40 plus European and international partners for their work supporting Voice for the Ocean. Thanks to them, the initiative extended across the whole of Europe, from the beaches of the North Sea to the cliffs of the Atlantic Ocean and along the Mediterranean.

This project becomes true thanks to the EU financing of the LIFE programme, our sincere thanks go to the European commission for the continued confidence.

Finally, Surfrider Foundation Europe would like to thank the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry for the Environment and the Mairie de Paris. A big thank you for their trust and their support.

Surfrider Foundation Europe hopes that the conclusions of this report will fuel and guide the reflections of Europe's policy makers with regard to the future of the ocean. It is now time to place citizens' priorities at the heart of the next European parliamentary term and put the ocean high up on the political agenda.

# 01

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Voice for the Ocean:  
citizen mobilisation and  
participatory democracy

## SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE

### Organiser



Surfrider Foundation Europe is a European non-profit organisation devoted to the conservation of the coastline and the protection of the marine environment and its users.

Created in 1986 in Malibu (USA) by surfers engaged in the fight against bacteriological pollution and waste in the marine environment, its European equivalent was established in 1990 by the three-time world surf champion Tom Curren, in Biarritz. Initially the undertaking of surfers wishing to protect their environment, Surfrider Foundation Europe now gathers citizens, sharing a passion for the ocean and the desire to protect it. It brings together a network of 1,700 volunteers, 13,000 members and 150,000 active supporters in 10 European countries. The actions of Surfrider are focused on 3 main areas: the improvement of water quality, the fight against marine litter and the adaptation to climate change.

## VOICE FOR THE OCEAN

making the ocean a priority for the European Union



The ocean feeds us, takes care of us and inspires us. It is a source of life: the lungs of our planet, we depend on it for every other breath we take. In 2019, our ocean is facing severe threats linked to pollution, litter, the extinction of certain species and the considerable impacts of climate change.

On the eve of the European elections in May 2019, Surfrider Foundation Europe has carried out an extensive citizen consultation: Voice for the Ocean. Its objective is simple: to understand and communicate European citizens' priorities in the area of the protection of the ocean. Surfrider wants to mobilise all European citizens for this democratic event which is all too often ignored and place the ocean at the heart of European debate throughout the next European mandate.

The ocean has no borders, likewise the impact of decisions concerning marine pollution, climate change, tourism and maritime transport. With Voice for the Ocean and the thousands of citizens who took part in the consultation, Surfrider is directing its campaign at European decision makers and stakeholders.

## CALENDAR AND METHODOLOGY

### Voice for the Ocean: an online platform

From 1 June 2018 to 20 January 2019, citizens were able to access the Voice for the Ocean online platform ([www.surfrider.eu/vfto](http://www.surfrider.eu/vfto)) to learn, understand and respond to the issues affecting the ocean. During the consultation, 8 priorities concerning each and every one of us were highlighted:



By taking part in the consultation, citizens expressed their wishes as regards the concrete action they wanted to see being taken by the European Union on each of these themes: do they want more restrictions? Information? Awareness-raising campaigns? Research?

For each theme, citizens were given an overview of the current situation in the form of a text, a video or infographics. The level of information varied according to the profile of the platform's user (expert, citizen, water sports participant or teacher) to ensure they were in a position to give an informed response.

We drew up a questionnaire with closed-ended questions - boxes to tick or proposals to rank - in order to make it easier to analyse the answers and to be able to determine clear trends. The last question was key: out of the 8 priorities, participants were asked to decide which they believed was the most urgent.

This report collects and analyses the priorities as expressed by European citizens: Surfrider Foundation Europe will represent the voice of the citizens and ask to political parties fielding candidates at the European Elections to include these concrete measures for the protection of the ocean in their manifesto.

### A platform combined with a European tour to interact with EU citizens!

Voice for the Ocean set out to meet stakeholders in 5 countries: students, engaged citizens, scientists, local, national and European elected representatives, etc. They debated the need for urgent action to protect the marine environment.

<p><b>On the 1st of June 2019</b> Surfrider Europe was in Burgas, in Bulgaria, during the European Maritime Days to officially launch Voice for the Ocean. Surfrider thereby reaffirmed its commitment to placing the ocean at the heart of the political agenda.</p>	<p><b>Then, on the 5th of June,</b> in partnership with UNESCO, Voice for the Ocean was in Paris : 200 students took part in a conference of experts on microplastics, the commitments already undertaken and those yet to be made by the EU on this topic. This event was supported by the General Secretariat for Citizens' Consultations and also aimed at stimulating collective discussion about Europe among the students attending.</p>	<p><b>In September,</b> several key events took place: a talk-show in a unique setting (Le Consulat), a conference at the French National Assembly and a civic dialogue at the Representation of the European Commission in Paris.</p>	<p><b>In October,</b> Voice for the Ocean and the IUCN brought together in Malaga local politicians, scientific experts and Spanish citizens to talk about the ecological transition of tourism and maritime transport.</p>	<p><b>In November,</b> the last stage was held in Porto. For two days, members of the European Parliament, professional surfers and citizens discussed the adaptation to climate change and water quality on the coasts, two issues of particular importance in Portugal.</p>
<p><b>1st of June</b> Burgas, Bulgaria</p>	<p><b>5th of June</b> Paris, France</p>	<p><b>September</b> Paris, France</p>	<p><b>October</b> Malaga, Spain</p>	<p><b>November</b> Porto, Portugal</p>

## A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Voice for the Ocean online questionnaire, was relatively long to fill (around 20 minutes). By raising the awareness of users of the platform about the main challenges facing the ocean, Surfrider Foundation was seeking qualitative feedback.

A communication kit including a presentation of the campaign, a communication schedule, a promotion video and logos adapted to each social network, were given to all the partners and volunteer chapters so that they could promote the consultation page.



More than  
**1,300**  
followers  
on Twitter



**37,840**  
visitors on  
the website  
[surfrider.eu/vfto](http://surfrider.eu/vfto)



More than  
**40**  
French, European  
and international  
communication  
partners



**59**  
countries  
represented



**7,400**  
views of the  
campaign  
promotion videos  
on YouTube



**950**  
people present  
at our events



**6,877**  
voices were  
raised for  
the ocean!



**21**  
belong to  
the European  
Union

*Surfrider Foundation Europe wants to mobilise as many people as possible around the European elections, in particular young people, among whom turnout was the lowest in 2014: only one quarter of Europeans under the age of 35 went to the polls.*

# 02

## Results of the Voice for the Ocean citizen consultation

Without borders and getting increasingly vulnerable, the ocean is everyone's concern. By putting in place policies and adopting binding measures, notably requiring Member States to take measures, the European Union is a key player in the protection of the environment, the ocean and the coastline.

By placing the ocean at the heart of the debate, Surfrider is highlighting the need for ambitious policies and wants to convince all citizens concerned of the importance of voting.

Conscious of these challenges, 6,877 European citizens responded to Voice for the Ocean consultation. Who are they? What do they expect from the new European mandate? What are their priorities for the ocean?

## WHO ARE THE PARTICIPANTS?

Voice for the Ocean reached out to citizens from

**59 COUNTRIES**

Among these countries,

**21**

belong to the European Union



10



**60%**  
of women



**40%**  
of men

The influence of the actions of Surfrider and its partners is growing everywhere in Europe with a strong historical French interest. This explains that almost half of visitors to the Voice for the Ocean platform were French. Among the users of the platform, there was a strong representation from **Portugal, Spain and Germany.**

**37%**

of citizens aged between 25 and 34

All groups of age are represented in the consultation results. However, we note that women (60%) and citizens aged between 25 and 34 (37%) are the most involved. This generation born in the 1980s and 1990s are gradually transforming the social model towards more sustainable development. With Voice for the Ocean, they clearly expressed a desire for a healthy ocean. Surfrider undertakes to ensure their voices are heard by candidates for the European elections.

**Only 16%**

of first-time voters

However, since the appeal by Greta Thunberg in December of last year, tens of thousands of young people have been demonstrating in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, in favour of an ambitious environmental policy. A beacon of hope, Surfrider supports this movement and calls on all the young generation to exercise for the first time their right to vote, to take part in the decisions that will affect our planet.

## CITIZENS' TOP 3 PRIORITIES FOR THE OCEAN

Surfrider Foundation Europe put forward 8 priorities which concern all of us, each deserving urgent action from European decision makers. Offshore platforms, marine renewable energies, water quality, plastic pollution, maritime transport, sustainable tourism, Ocean Literacy and climate change are the themes addressed by Voice for the Ocean.

Among the 8 themes, 3 priorities were chosen by Europe's citizens :



**Number 1**  
Microplastic pollution

**35%**

This pollution is generated by the abrasion of tyres, the washing of synthetic clothes, the microplastic ingredients intentionally added in products such as personal care products and cosmetics, the loss of pellets used to make plastic objects or the breakdown of larger pieces of plastic. An estimated 5000 billion microplastics are currently floating in the ocean. If this continues, the collateral damage on the marine ecosystem will be irreversible. Citizens are worried and want urgent action. Indeed, a majority of citizens (35%) rank microplastic pollution as their number one priority. This was the case whatever the age or gender of the respondents. The extensive media coverage of the issue is raising global awareness of plastic pollution and is reflected in the results of the consultation. The first priority expressed, citizens expect concrete measures from decision makers to fight this plague.



**Number 2**  
Fossil fuel offshore exploitation

**18%**

After microplastic pollution, the second-ranked concern is the question of fossil fuel offshore exploitation with 18% of the votes. The pollutants associated with fossil fuels, greenhouse gas emissions and oil leaks worry citizens. This trend is clearly reflected in the results of the Voice for the Ocean consultation. Fossil fuel phase-out is a desire expressed by citizens. It is clear that measures in favour of an energy transition are expected for the next European mandate.



**Number 3**  
Maritime transport

**13%**

In our globalised world, 90% of goods are transported by sea. Oil spills, loss of containers and toxic emissions are just some of the consequences of this mean of transport. In third place, with 13% of the votes, the question of the ecological transition of maritime transport represents a real priority for citizens. Despite the technical aspect of the subject, Surfrider notes that citizens are demanding greater transparency and sustainability in this globalised sector. With Voice for the Ocean, maritime transport must be on the agenda of future members of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

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# CONCRETE MEASURES EXPECTED



## MICROPLASTICS

### BAN MICROPLASTIC COMPONENTS AND ENCOURAGE INNOVATION

Plastic packaging, exfoliators, toothpaste, etc: these consumer products are responsible for an invisible forms of waste, microplastics. These plastic microparticles, measuring less than 5 mm, represent 90% of the plastic waste found in the sea.

Microplastic pollution is notably caused by our consumption of industrial products containing intentionally added microplastic ingredients. They escape water treatment filtration systems. The decomposition of waste containing plastic also pollutes the water. Microplastic pollution is a particularly worrying form of pollution as microplastics enters the food chain and human bodies.

#### What measures do European citizens want to see implemented?

##### Intentionally added microplastics

Representing the voice of the citizens, Surfrider Foundation Europe is appealing to the election candidates and future MEPs to take measures to ban this invisible plague.

**35%**

**of European citizens are calling on the EU to ban microplastics intentionally added to products (cosmetics, paints, detergents, etc.).**

##### Microplastics unintentionally released in plastic products' use

With regard to microplastic waste resulting from the wear of products containing plastic such as tyres or clothes - of which 173,000 tonnes are released into the environment every year - citizens hesitate between tighter controls and more technical innovations.

**33%**

**of participants in the consultation want to encourage innovations within the industry to develop products which no longer release plastic fibres.**

**32%**

**of participants wish to tighten controls on companies producing and/or processing plastic pellets.**

The remaining respondents favour research into the impact of microplastics on health and the marine ecosystem.



## FOSSIL FUELS

### A MORATORIUM ON OFFSHORE EXPLOITATION

Did you know that the ocean was the biggest supplier of the world's oxygen? However, every day our activities are threatening its role in regulating the climate. Global warming, mainly caused by the extraction of resources such as oil, gas and coal, has irreversible consequences on our oceans and coastlines.

Oil extraction poses numerous problems in terms of marine pollution: accidents and oil slicks have serious consequences on ecosystems. EU countries are responsible for the emission of 10% of the world's greenhouse gases. To reduce these emissions by 40% compared to 1990 by 2030, the EU needs to act.

#### What are the solutions for fighting against the pollution caused by offshore explorations and or exploitation?

The second most urgent concern as expressed by respondents, fossil fuels are a key priority.

**27%**

**call for a moratorium at least in marine protected areas.**

The rest demand an extension of companies' liability in the event of environmental crime and stricter controls.

**3/4**

**citizens demand a total or partial moratorium on oil and gas exploitations and explorations.**

The explosion of the BP Deep water Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico, in April 2010, sent shock waves through the world, facilitating the adoption of the EU Offshore Directive in 2013. This directive established a framework for the safety of operations at sea, but in no way limited the exploitation of offshore fossil fuels, a measure desired today by respondents. While the Directive is expected to be revised during the upcoming mandate, Surfrider is calling on future members of the European parliament to listen to the EU citizens' voices and to take measures for a moratorium on offshore exploitations and explorations.

**50%**

**of respondents voted in favour of phasing out fossil fuels and imposing a worldwide ban on all offshore exploitations and explorations.**

#### How can we encourage the energy transition?

The energy transition requires coordination on a European level. In 2014, the European Commission suggested raising the share of renewable energy in the consumption of primary energy to 27% by 2030. This objective was further increased (32%) by the European Parliament and the Council, notably to take into account the objectives of the Paris Agreement of 12 December 2015.

The results of Voice for the Ocean highlight the strong mobilisation of citizens in favour of renewable energy:

**70%**

**of citizens out of almost 7,000 responses, want the EU to divert investments from fossil fuels towards renewable energy. A strong signal sent to our decision makers and the financial sector!**





## MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY

## PRIORITISING MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY

In response to the challenge of global warming, Europe's energy policy is gradually shifting towards renewable energy. This includes a sector which is still relatively unknown but which nevertheless offers considerable potential, 'blue' energy: offshore wind, tidal currents, waves, temperature gradients are all sources of energy which are still under exploited!

The sector is still in its early stages, with technologies in the experimental phase. Nevertheless, the EU aims to meet 10% of its energy needs thanks to renewable energy by 2050. Even better news: the sector could create around 20 000 jobs by 2030.

To develop renewables, it is important to be informed of their potential impacts on the environment and to take part in consultations on the subject to avoid any conflicts between sea users.

In 2016, the European Union drew up a strategic road map for the development of marine energy. The key priorities to emerge from the discussions include research and development, identification of potential risks for marine biodiversity, planning of the maritime space to facilitate the anticipation of conflicts between sea users and redefinition of marine traffic rules.

The EU is the biggest global maritime area and must be the leader in the sector of marine renewable energy. The citizens have spoken: it is time to support this sector and thereby trigger a real ecological transition, while respecting the principles of an ecosystem-based approach to the planning of the maritime space.

almost

**60%**

of participants in Voice for the Ocean want to make marine renewable energy a priority, contributing towards the ecological transition.

**70%**

of citizens demand that the EU diverts investments from fossil fuel towards renewable energy.

**1/3**

citizens is also asking the EU to develop research and development to boost the marine renewable energy sector.



## MARITIME TRANSPORT

## ECODESIGN OF SHIPS AND TRANSPARENCY OF PRACTICES

Although it emits less pollution than planes, maritime transport nevertheless has considerable social and environmental impacts: oil slicks, loss of containers and toxic emissions are all consequences of this form of transport. The exponential growth of the maritime trade has led to an increase in accidental pollution and bad practices.

As 90% of consumer products are transported by sea, we must move towards improved regulations to reduce and sanction the impacts of maritime transport on ecosystems.

The results of the consultation indicate that European citizens place maritime transport in the top 3 of their concerns for the ocean. It is time for the EU to work more closely with the stakeholders of the ecological transition of maritime transport.

**The concrete measures supported by citizens include the creation of a label to be displayed on consumer products.**

In 2008, the EU set itself an ambitious sustainable development target: towards 'zero waste, zero emissions' transport. The European maritime transport strategy which aimed to 'increase the competitiveness of the sector' comes to an end in 2018. As a new strategy is developed, Surfriider is ensuring that citizens' voices are heard and is demanding a policy of sustainable development in the area of maritime transport.

**98%**

would be prepared to change their shopping habits if an 'environmentally-friendly transport' label was displayed on products.

To support the transition of the sector, only

**1/3**

would like to see more innovation and improvements to the ecodesign of ships.

Almost

**1/4**

of respondents desire the regulation of the loss of containers.





## CLIMATE CHANGE

### PROVIDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE RISKS LINKED TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN COASTAL AREAS

Between economic, social and environmental impacts, the consequences of climate change are already visible. In addition to the urbanisation of the natural environment, the phenomena of erosion, flooding and poor soil permeability are set to intensify over time. Faced with the growing challenges around the preservation of the coastline, it is important to create synergy and dialogue between stakeholders to share best practices and support a process of knowledge sharing.

#### Respondents want better access to information

To respond to the challenge of the adaptation of the coastline to climate change, EU member states are adopting different strategies depending on the specificities of the territory. Now, the European Union must play a role of mediator by centralising information and circulating information to the States concerned.

**41%**

relating to the phenomena of rising water levels and the risks of flooding

**26%**

relating to the consequences on biodiversity



## WATER QUALITY

### IMPROVED INFORMATION ON WATER QUALITY OF WATER IN NAUTICAL ACTIVITIES AREAS

In summer, bathing can sometimes be disrupted by episodes of water pollution. One of the main causes are emissions from water treatment plants or factories, which once in the water can be dangerous for health. Across Europe, almost 350 bathing sites are still considered to be dangerous for health.

In most European countries, bathing areas' water quality is monitored solely during the summer season. People who swim or practice water sports all year round and/or outside these areas and periods of control are consequently exposing themselves to risks, especially after heavy rain or bad weather.

**20%**

of citizens desire raising awareness among European citizens of a real public health issue : the little known and invisible dangers of chemical and bacteriological pollutants.

Acting as a spearhead since the creation of the association, Surfrider will continue to communicate the demands of our community to European institutions. The Directive relating to bathing water is due to be reviewed in 2020, we will ask MEPs to adopt measures to ensure reliable monitoring of water quality all year round and on all beaches and to provide suitable information to users.

**30%**

of the Voice for the Ocean respondents practise water sports. All year round, they surf, row, dive, or swim, they are directly concerned by the water quality.

Almost

**1/4**

of citizens demand an improved access to information. This is the priority action demanded.

The expansion of the monitoring zones and year-round controls must be included in the improvement of the information relating to the quality of bathing water.



## OCEAN LITERACY

### SUPPORTING OCEAN LITERACY PROGRAMMES

Did you know that we know more about the surface of the moon than the bottom of the ocean? This poor knowledge of the marine environment is without doubt one of the reasons why it is in danger. This lack of information is felt in the Voice for the Ocean results. However, knowledge is a driving force for change: an enlightened citizen is an engaged citizen. It is only over recent decades that we have become aware of the environmental impacts of industrial development on our planet.

In order for the whole of society to become involved in the promotion of sustainable development, and for the protection of the marine environment to become a priority, the different stakeholders must continue to raise awareness and share their knowledge with the society as a whole.

At a time when new technologies and social medias are an integral part of our lives, the EU must allow the circulation of information about the marine environment and support education programmes to raise awareness and educate all citizens, as well as encouraging them to contribute to the debate around new knowledge.

**36%**

of citizens feel that they are poorly informed about the ocean.



## SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### CREATING A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM LABEL

Although the impacts of tourism on the coastline are now visible, it is still difficult to prevent them. By opting for sustainable holiday options, we are encouraging good practices from hoteliers, restaurateurs and other tourism service providers. Aside from the need to raise awareness, the promotion of cultural heritage also plays a major role in encouraging us to change our behaviour and respect our environment.

The European Union has limited powers when it comes to issues related to heritage or tourism. However, it can favour the development of tourism and the showcasing of European heritage through various policies, such as the creation of a sustainable tourism label or the recognition of certain sites as 'European heritage sites'. This measure is particularly supported by respondents to the consultation.

**32%**

of the respondents would like to see the creation of a European sustainable tourism label, encompassing a wide number of sectors and activities on the coastline.



## VOICE FOR THE OCEAN: THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES

2019 will be a crucial year for the future of the ocean: a new European Parliament will be elected and a new European Commission will take office. With Voice for the Ocean, Surfrider undertakes to ensure that candidates to the 2019 European elections hear the concerns of the EU citizens.

On the basis of this report, Surfrider Foundation Europe will make the voices of citizens heard and will challenge political parties involved in the European elections to include in their manifesto concrete measures to protect the ocean.

With Voice for the Ocean we will also remind all citizens of the importance of these elections. The ocean has no borders, likewise the impact of the decisions concerning it. The EU adopts binding measures for Member States, which will then have a direct or indirect effect on a local level. More than ever, the European Union and the ocean need us to use our voices in May 2019!

After the election, we will go and meet the new MEPs through events and artistic performances to remind them that we are counting on them to push through legislation to protect the ocean.

Thanks to social medias and our website, you can follow the Voice for the Ocean campaign before, during and after the elections. It is time to make citizens' demands heard and place the ocean at the heart of future European policies.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OPERATIONAL PARTNERS



