



LIFE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF LIFE

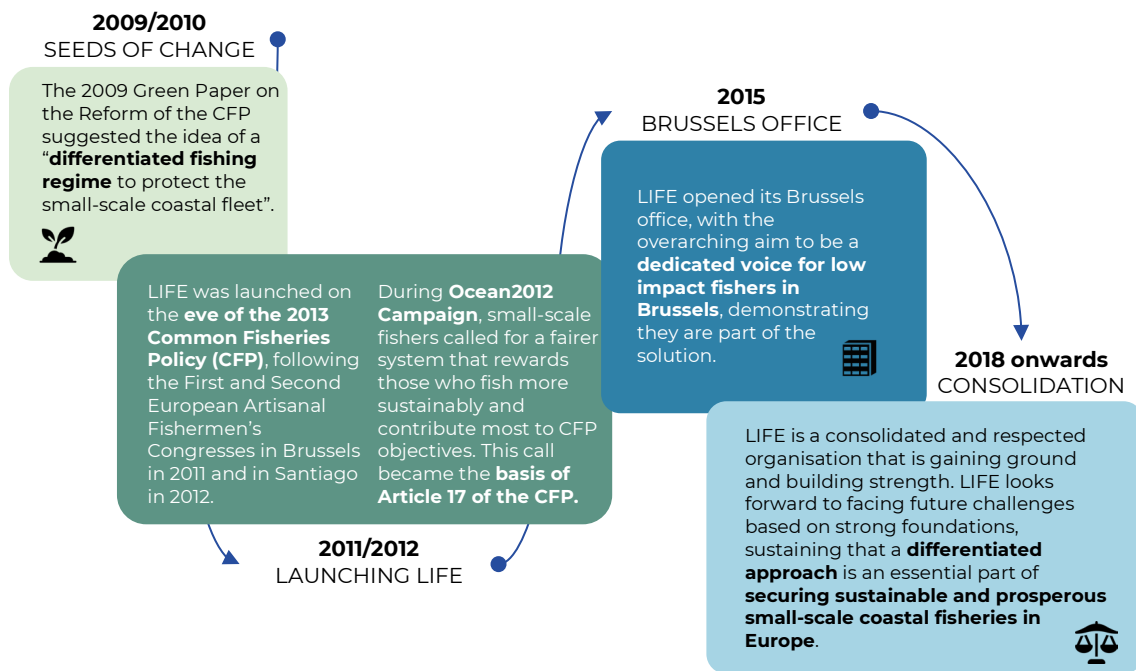
Uniting European Small-Scale Fishers
to Achieve Fair Fisheries, Healthy Seas
and Vibrant Fishing Communities

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INTRODUCTION: CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF LIFE

2025 marks **10 years since LIFE opened its Brussels office**. It's timely to look back at what's been achieved, and what's changed over that decade. In a sense, LIFE's evolution took place through 4 different stages: germination (2009/10), launch (2011/2012), start-up (2014-2018) and consolidation (2018 onwards). Since November 2018, LIFE has been registered in Belgium as a not-for-profit organisation (ASBL).



Fair Treatment of Small-scale Coastal Fisheries (SSCF)

From the start, LIFE has called for the fair treatment of SSCF, with fair access to resources, markets, sectoral support and the decision-making table.

To address the unfair quota system, LIFE has emphasised the need for the full implementation of Article 17 in the spirit of the law. This is embodied in Recital 33, which states that: "Access to a fishery should be based on transparent and objective criteria including those of an environmental, social and economic nature. Member States should promote responsible fishing by providing incentives to those operators who fish in the least environmentally damaging way and who provide the greatest benefits for society."

The other side of the fair fishing coin is fair access to markets, where the differentiation of SSCF products and sectoral support for SSCF Producer Organisations (POs) and other structures is vital. Fair access to the decision-making table includes fair access to Advisory Councils, consultation processes and European functionaries responsible for legislative proposals and oversight.

Main milestones along the road: 2015 to 2025

Along LIFE's journey up to 2025, several significant milestones have been achieved. It's worth highlighting a few here:

LIFE BECOMES ACTIVE IN ADVISORY COUNCILS

LIFE's work at regional and local levels strengthened LIFE Member's roles within the Baltic Sea Advisory Council (BSAC), supporting five Member Associations to join the BSAC Executive Committee (2016–18 and ongoing). LIFE then joined 2 other Advisory Councils (ACs): Markets Advisory Council (MAC) from 2016–2021 and the Mediterranean Advisory Council (MedAC) - 2016–2021 and 2025-ongoing, with LIFE members also engaging in the North West Waters (NWW AC) and South West Waters Advisory Councils (SWW AC).

LIFE IS A FOUNDING PARTNER IN THE GFCM FRIENDS OF SSF

In the Mediterranean, LIFE became a founding partner in the "Friends of Small-scale Fisheries Platform" within the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean and Black Seas (GFCM) to promote and support the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Small-scale Fisheries (RPOA SSCF), the first regional fisheries management instrument on small-scale fisheries adopted by a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO).

LIFE CO-LEADS A EU-WIDE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ELECTRIC PULSE TRAWLING

At European level, LIFE was one of the leaders in the EU-wide campaign against electric pulse trawling, exposing the lack of transparency, misuse of subsidies, and the social and environmental harm caused by this fishing method. The campaign resulted in the European Parliament closing the loophole in the Technical Measures Regulation, effectively banning the gear in 2018.

BLUEFIN TUNA QUOTA ALLOCATION RECOGNIZED AS UNFAIR

The unjust Bluefin tuna quota allocation system in France was recognised as such by the French courts. In 2021, the Montpellier Administrative Court ruled that "the Bluefin tuna quota allocation mechanism falls short of requisite European

standards, is neither transparent nor objective, and fails to take proper account of Article 17". The case, initiated by LIFE-associated French small-scale fishers and LIFE in 2017, remains unresolved following a final appeal by the French authorities.

LIFE DRIVES CO-MANAGEMENT AND MARINE PROTECTION

LIFE's work on the ground was instrumental in creating four co-management schemes (2 in Catalunya, 1 in the Balearic Islands, and 1 in Malta), as well as one fisher-led No-Take Zone in Cyprus (endorsed by law), and two scientific reports recommending future NTZs/MPAs in Spain and Italy. The Maltese Government has taken the North East MPA as a successful pilot case with plans to scale it up nationally.

MARKETING SCHEMES LAUNCHED BY LIFE TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AND FAIR FOOD SYSTEMS

Two direct marketing schemes were launched (Empesca't) or strengthened (Peix Nostrum), and three local communities of practice were developed to support the transformation of local food systems through roadmaps towards sustainable and fair food systems.

LIFE TAKES INTERNATIONAL ROLES IN SSCF EVENTS

At international level, LIFE has taken a key role in strengthening the small-scale fisheries global movement, co-organising with TBTI, ICSF and other relevant parties workshops at the 4th World Small-Scale Fisheries Congress for Europe (Malta, 2022), the IYAFA Regional Europe Workshop (Spain, 2023) and joining, in 2023 and 2025, a coalition of small-scale fishers' associations from Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and Asia in a codeveloped Call to Action for governments based on five areas for action and rules of conduct to support small-scale fisheries.

LIFE PAVES THE WAY FOR ARTICLE 17 AND THE EC'S VADEMECUM

LIFE's advocacy work in the European Parliament (EP) was instrumental in the PECH Committee organising the workshop "A Fair Deal for SSCF in the allocation of fishing opportunities" (2019), paving the way for the Parliamentary Resolution on Article 17 (2022), the EC's Vademecum on Article 17 (2025), and the Resolutions on Small-scale Fisheries and Co-management.

What's Changed?

Whilst the key challenges of fair access for SSCF remain, 4 new challenges arisen and became ever more acute:

COMPETITION FOR COASTAL SPACE

The rise of the blue economy, with ever increasing competition for coastal space with other blue economy sectors, raising concerns of the spatial squeezing of fishing areas.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ever more apparent impacts of climate change in the coastal zone in the form of marine heatwaves, marine acidification, scarcity of traditional species, booming populations of invasive species, and significant declines in plankton.

GENERATIONAL RENEWAL

Generational renewal of both the fishing fleet and the fishing population have become an acute problem. Young fishers are reluctant to enter the profession, and those that are interested to enter face considerable barriers to do so.

ENERGY TRANSITION

While small-scale fisheries already provide low-carbon food, pressure is mounting for an energy transition from fossil fuels to cleaner, cheaper, and more secure alternatives amid growing supply chain vulnerabilities.

Milestones of 2025

OCEAN PACT PUBLICATION

which commits the EU to prioritising support for SSCF and to exploring the creation of a dedicated SSCF Advisory Council.

VADEMECUM ON ARTICLE 17 PUBLISHED BY THE EC

establishing a framework to guide Member States toward transparent, objective, and socially responsible quota allocation. It emphasizes "the spirit of Article 17... [to] promote responsible fishing by providing incentives to those operators who fish in the least environmentally damaging way," inviting Member States to reallocate unused fishing opportunities in a timely, transparent, and active manner.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SSCF UNDERScoreD IN EU BUDGET 2028-32

which calls on Member States "to take into account in their National and Regional Partnership (NRP) Plans the specific needs of fisheries, aquaculture and coastal communities and in particular of small-scale coastal fishing".

PUBLICATION OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION PARTNERSHIP (ETP) RECOMMENDATIONS

integrating SSCF-specific requirements into the forthcoming EU Energy Transition Roadmap. LIFE's coordination of the SSCF Working Group ensured that proportionality, feasibility, and tailored pathways for SSCF were formally reflected in the final recommendations..

ADVANCES IN REFORMING THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF EU FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

with LIFE's advocacy contributing to a renewed institutional focus on recovery-oriented, ecosystem-based advice and improved biological reference points.

STRONG CALL FOR AN EUROPEAN PLAN OF ACTION FOR SSCF

by the Make Fishing Fair Campaign, with the Make Fishing Fair Roadmap being formally presented to the European Commission, signed by 37 SSCF organisations and endorsed by 14 NGOs.

LIFE ELECTS NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

with Gwenaël Pennarun confirmed as President, reinforcing organisational stability and leadership capacity for the next phase of EU policy engagement.

PUBLICATION OF RETHINK FISHERIES: A SHARED VISION FOR FAIR AND LOW-IMPACT FISHERIES IN EUROPE

positioning LIFE as a key contributor to the Commission's forthcoming 2040 Fisheries and Aquaculture Vision and shaping long-term EU policy direction.

Together, these milestones represent **substantive progress**: a stronger case for bespoke legal and policy frameworks for SSCF, improved institutional recognition, clearer pathways for fair access to resources, and a more prominent position for SSCF in Europe's energy, climate, and ocean governance agendas.

This Annual Report documents LIFE's work throughout 2025: the policy work, the initiatives and actions, the alliances, and the collective engagement of Small-scale Fishers to defend their livelihoods, obtain fair treatment and restore Europe's seas.

SHAPING THE FUTURE: LIFE'S MAIN ADVOCACY DEMANDS

At the start of the new EU political cycle, LIFE set out a clear vision for the Xth Legislature and 2024–2029 Commission mandate: a Europe where small-scale, low-impact fisheries are recognised as a strategic asset for food sovereignty and livelihood security, climate resilience, and coastal community vitality. This was rooted in LIFE's Manifesto for the Xth Legislature (*Fair Policies for Fair Fisheries: Fair for the Fishers, Fair for Future Generations and Fair for Nature*) published in September 2024, and articulated in the Make Fishing Fair Roadmap (November 2025).

Throughout 2025, LIFE's main advocacy demands included:

- A **dedicated Small-Scale Fisheries Action Plan**, ensuring binding, coherent EU-level measures tailored to SSCF and embedded in the forthcoming **Ocean Act**.
- Restoring fish stocks using better science and traditional knowledge, including **reforming scientific advice** with improved biological reference points to rebuild ecosystem health, and transparent and inclusive decision-making processes.
- Fair allocation of fishing opportunities based on social, economic and environmental criteria, with **full implementation of Article 17**, to reward environmental and social responsibility.
- A **regenerative 12-mile zone** under co-management, prioritising low-impact coastal fishing activities, ecosystem restoration, and fair access for SSCF.
- Fair access to sectoral support and markets, including **recognition of SSCF Producer Organisations** and a modernised, accessible funding architecture under the new MFF and national/regional Partnership Plans.
- Recognition of **SSCF to be at the forefront of the energy transition**. Proportionality in the energy transition, ensuring that decarbonisation measures remain feasible for small-scale operators.
- Stronger monitoring and enforcement for industrial fleets, closing loopholes and ensuring a **fair implementation of the Control Regulation**.

- Apply **adaptive co-management** systems across all coastal areas within the 12-mile zone, strengthening community-led governance.
- Foster **generational renewal**, removing barriers for young fishers and providing training, mentorship, and pathways to decent livelihoods.
- Build **climate-resilient coastal communities**, supporting adaptation and long-term socio-ecological resilience.
- Achieve **gender equity** in fisheries, ensuring equal participation and opportunities for women.
- Improve the functioning of Advisory Councils, including establishing a **dedicated SSCF Advisory Council** to strengthen SSCF participation in EU decision-making.

These advocacy calls guided LIFE's interventions throughout the year — in Parliament, in Commission dialogues, in international fora, and on the ground with fishers.

HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMISSIONER COSTAS KADIS

LIFE met Commissioner Costas Kadis and his Cabinet multiple times over the year:

February: LIFE's President Gwen Pennarun intervened at the High-Level Ocean Pact Dialogue.



(LIFE's interim President Gwen Pennarun takes the floor at the High-level "Ocean Pact" meeting with Commissioner Kadis, Brussels 2025)

March: LIFE Swedish members met Commissioner Kadis in Simrishamn to address the Baltic crisis.



(LIFE Swedish Members Urge EU Commissioner to act on the Baltic Sea Crisis. From left to right: Bengt Larsson, Costas Kadis and Stefan Nordin. Sweden, 2025)

April: LIFE held a unilateral meeting with Commissioner Kadis and his Cabinet to discuss Art. 17, scientific advice, and SSCF Producer Organisations.



(LIFE Exchanges with Commissioner Kadis on Fair Policies for Small-Scale Fishers. From left to right: Claudia Orlandini, Brian O'Riordan, Marta Cavallé, Costas Kadis, Gwen Pennarun and Christian Tsangarides. Brussels, 2025)

May: The Energy Transition Partnership met Commissioner Kadis to highlight main demands of the working groups.



(The Energy Transition Partnership group meets with EU Commissioner Costas Kadis Brussels, 2025)

May: LIFE members in Ireland met Commissioner Kadis to highlight generational renewal and quota barriers.



(LIFE Members from Ireland – IIMRO - meet with EU Commissioner Costas Kadis. Ireland, 2025)

June: LIFE participated in UNOC3 events in Nice, where Commissioner Kadis was also in attendance and the Ocean Pact was officially launched.



(Advancing the Global Agenda for Small-Scale Fishers: LIFE at UNOC3. From left to right: Marta Cavallé, Sandrine Thomas, Gwen Pennarun and Seamus Bonner. Nice, 2025)

July: LIFE attended the implementation dialogue on the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD), presided by Commissioner Kadis.

November: LIFE and Blue Ventures organised the Make Fishing Fair Forum, addressed by Commissioner Kadis.



(From left to right: Gwen Pennarun, Marta Cavallé, EU Commissioner Costas Kadić, Muireann Kavanagh from IIMRO - Photo Credits @Matt Judge/Blue Ventures)

November: LIFE participated at the Implementation dialogue on SSCF, being the first speaker of

the session after the former Commissioners' (Damanaki and Vela) speeches.



(Official picture of the implementation dialogue. Source EC - Audiovisual Service; Cooperators Producer: CE - Service audiovisuel; Photographer: Lukasz Kobus; Copyright European Union, 2025)

SSCF LEADERSHIP AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

The International agenda started in February with LIFE attending the International Workshop on “Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-building in Small-scale fisheries” held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, providing the perspective of European small-scale fisheries challenges and needs into the global agenda.



(Marta Cavallé attends the International Workshop on "Strengthening Collaboration and Capacity-building in Small-scale fisheries" held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2025)

In June, at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, LIFE joined a global delegation of small-scale fishers, ensuring that their perspectives were represented at the highest level. The organisation co-hosted screenings of *Sea Change*, using the film as a platform to spark dialogue on ocean justice and the future of coastal communities. LIFE also participated in high-level panels addressing funding, data, and governance, contributing its expertise on equitable and inclusive approaches to marine policy.

A major highlight of the conference was the side event in the Blue (official) Zone co-organised by LIFE and other small-scale fisher organisations from across the globe, and hosted by the governments of Costa Rica and Germany, which brought together forty fishers from twenty-five countries to raise their voices and build solidarity across regions. Through this collective effort, LIFE helped secure commitments from several governments, including Costa Rica, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Ghana, on preferential access and co-management for small-scale fisheries. LIFE's active presence throughout the conference, with more than 10 occasions to speak at the different events, ensured

that European small-scale fishers were firmly embedded within the global movement for ocean justice and sustainable coastal livelihoods.



(LIFE members and staff, and Blue Ventures attend the United Nations Ocean Conference - UNOC 3 in Nice, France, 2025)

EU POLICY & ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS 2025

2025 marked a period of heightened political engagement for LIFE. Across a plethora of high-level meetings, parliamentary debates, Commission Implementation Dialogues, international conferences, workshops and public consultations, LIFE pushed to position small-scale fishers at the centre of EU fisheries and ocean governance.

Below is a consolidated account of LIFE's policy and advocacy achievements over the period.

The Make Fishing Fair Campaign

The Make Fishing Fair campaign became the defining advocacy initiative of 2025 for LIFE and Blue Ventures. A key milestone was the event *"Fairness for the Forgotten Fleet: MEPs and Small-Scale Fishers Challenge a Distorted Sea"*, held at the European Parliament in March. The event brought together a delegation of SSCF from five countries (Ireland, Sweden, France, Spain and the United Kingdom), Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission and civil society organisations. Hosted by MEPs Isabella Lövin (Greens/EFA), Emma Fourreau and Luke Ming Flanagan (The Left), with contributions from MEPs Paulo do Nascimento Cabral (EPP) and Eric Sargiacomo (S&D), the event provided a rare opportunity for fishers to

share first-hand experiences of how current fisheries management and quota allocation systems affect their livelihoods, with supporting statements from all political parties.

Discussions focused on the unequal distribution of fishing opportunities, the concentration of access rights, the challenges faced by low-impact fishers in accessing key stocks, and the failure of Member States to fully implement Article 17 of the Common Fisheries Policy. Participants called for stronger EU leadership through the establishment of clear guidelines to ensure transparent and equitable allocation systems that reward environmental and social performance and support the viability of small-scale fisheries.



(LIFE members and Marta Cavallé speak at the event “Fairness for the Forgotten Fleet: MEPs and Small-Scale Fishers Challenge a Distorted Sea” at the European Parliament, 2025)



(LIFE members, LIFE staff and Blue Ventures in front of the European Parliament building, 2025)

The campaign's messages gained international visibility at the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice, where a LIFE delegation (including fishers from France and Ireland) joined a global coalition of small-scale fishers in reaffirming the *Small-Scale Fishers' Call to Action*, advocating for stronger recognition of the sector within the European Oceans Pact and global ocean governance processes. See all details on the Ocean Pact on page 18.



(Gwen Pennarun presents at the United Nations Ocean Conference - UNOC 3 panel "Sea Change: the future of fishing" in Nice, France, 2025)

A watershed achievement came in November with the Make Fishing Fair Forum in Brussels, which brought together more than 40 small-scale fishers from 16 European countries, representing fisheries from the Baltic, North Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Seas. Participants presented a collective Roadmap for Fair Fisheries to Commissioner Costas Kadiş, Members of the European Parliament and other key stakeholders, calling for the adoption of an European Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries by 2026. Signed by 37 small-scale fisheries organisations, and supported by 15 other organisations, the roadmap called upon the European Institutions to establish a Plan of Action for Small-scale fishing in Europe by 2026, based on a differentiated policy and management approach to SSCF and larger-scale fisheries and incorporating the principles of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries (SSCF Guidelines), and. The key priorities to be addressed

by this plan include, restoring fish stocks and ecosystem health, fair allocation of fishing opportunities, preferential access to coastal waters, co-management, generational renewal, gender equity, climate resilience, improved market access and sectoral support. Together, these actions reinforced a united European and international movement advocating for fisheries policies that reward responsible fishing practices, strengthen coastal communities and ensure that public marine resources deliver public benefits.

In September, LIFE sent [a letter](#) to Commissioner Costas Kadis on the upcoming publication of the Vademecum on Article 17, highlighting the key issues that the Vademecum should contain.

In November, the Commission finally published the long awaited Vademecum on Article 17, to guide Member States toward transparent, objective, and socially responsible quota allocation. LIFE welcomed the document highlighting it as a key milestone achieved but stressed that Guidelines are not enough without binding implementation. Quota justice must be central to the upcoming Ocean Act. This will be a key issue to work on going forward.

A week after the Make Fishing Fair Forum, the Implementation Dialogue on Small-scale Fishing took place, in which LIFE was invited to participate. Marta Cavallé, was the first speaker after Commissioner Costas Kadis and the two former Commissioners Maria Damanaki and Karmenu Vella. She presented the *Make Fishing Fair Roadmap* and its call for action as the main content for her 3 minutes intervention.



("Make Fishing Fair" event where LIFE's Board of Directors, staff, members and partners discussed a fair future for fisheries. Brussels, Belgium, 2025)

CFP Evaluation

In 2025, LIFE played an active role in the upcoming evaluation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), ensuring that the perspectives of small-scale, low-impact fishers were fully represented. Although the final evaluation would only be published in 2026, LIFE worked throughout the year to influence its direction. LIFE contributed extensively to the process, submitting a detailed response in April to a Public Consultation. This was complemented by interviews with evaluators, exchanges with Commission officials, and coordinated input with NGO partners to highlight long-standing implementation gaps - particularly around **Article 17, access to space and resources, and the need for more recovery-oriented scientific advice.**

Based on these engagements, LIFE anticipated several key shortcomings that it expected the evaluation to address: the persistent failure to deliver on the CFP's social and economic objectives, the lack of progress on fair allocation of fishing opportunities, the absence of

differentiated management for small-scale coastal fleets, and the structural imbalances in Advisory Councils. LIFE also warned that the weaknesses of the Landing Obligation could not be understood without addressing the inadequate implementation of Article 17 - an issue we consistently raised throughout the evaluation process.

The Next EC Budget (MFF) in the CFP Evaluation Context

A major development running in parallel to the CFP evaluation in 2025 was the publication of the European Commission's proposal for the **2028–2032 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**. The proposal introduced a significant restructuring of EU funding for fisheries, merging the EMFAF into a broader National and Regional Partnership Fund (NRPF). This shift raises important questions about how future financial support would align with the objectives of the CFP, particularly its social and environmental commitments.

For LIFE, the MFF proposal became a central part of its engagement in the evaluation process: the organisation stressed that any new funding architecture must remain accessible to small-scale fishers, support low-impact practices, and ensure that coastal communities are not sidelined as fisheries compete with larger national priorities. LIFE therefore used the evaluation discussions to underline the need for a funding framework that reinforces - rather than weakens - the CFP's ambition to deliver fair, sustainable, and resilient fisheries across Europe.

The European Ocean Pact & Ocean Act

LIFE was happy to see how the Ocean Pact stressed the importance of SSCF and considered LIFE's demand for a dedicated SSCF Advisory Council. In the lead up to the publication of the Ocean Pact, LIFE had engaged in a number of activities and high-level events, including:

- Published [LIFE's position on the Ocean Pact](#) at the [call for evidence on the Ocean Pact](#)
- Participated in the High-Level Round Table "Fisheries & Oceans Dialogues - Helping to Design the Ocean Pact".
- Panelist at Politico's high-level event "Walking the Talk on the European Oceans Pact".

- In a [compelling open letter](#) addressed to the College of Commissioners, the Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) called on the European Commission to strengthen its proposed European Ocean Pact by placing small-scale, low-impact fishers at its core.
- Contributed to the Committee of the Regions consultation on the “Common Fisheries Policy, the European Ocean Pact and of the Union’s maritime and aquaculture policy as part of the National and Regional Partnership Fund”.
- Attendance at the UNOC-3 and formal launch of the Ocean Pact, in Nice.

LIFE welcomed the Pact’s recognition of SSCF as a priority but warned that political recognition without binding measures will not save the sector.



(Marta Cavalle takes part in a panel with EU Commissioner Costas Kadić at Politico’s high-level event “Walking the Talk on the European Oceans Pact”, 2025.)

Reform of the Scientific Basis for Fisheries Management

A major theme of 2025 was LIFE’s push to reform the scientific basis for fisheries management within the EU–ICES advisory framework. Throughout the year, LIFE called for a shift towards recovery-oriented

advice grounded in precautionary and ecosystem-based principles to rebuild depleted fish stocks. The organisation sent multiple letters to DG MARE urging the adoption of such an approach and consistently highlighted systemic failures in current ICES assessments that prevent effective stock recovery.

LIFE advocated for the introduction of eDNA monitoring of industrial catches, particularly those destined for fishmeal and fish oil production, as a means to improve transparency and data accuracy. It also proposed limiting fishing pressure to 50% of the theoretical maximum annual yield (0.5F_{msy}) for lower trophic level prey species with relatively low biomass, alongside revised biomass thresholds of at least 40% of their original size and more sustainable biological reference points.

In addition to its written interventions, LIFE participated in ICES stakeholder meetings (MIACO), responded to Baltic quota proposals, and co-signed a joint letter with NGOs and recreational fishers calling for improved, precautionary advice that support stock growth and recovery. Across all these efforts, LIFE emphasised that the current system fails to rebuild collapsed stocks and must be fundamentally redesigned to deliver abundance rather than merely manage scarcity.

Energy Transition Partnership (ETP)

LIFE continued to play a central role in the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) initiative led by the European Commission as Coordinator of the Small-Scale Fisheries Working Group. Tasks included actively organising meetings of the working group, engaging in the Support group discussions and participating in all workshops ensuring that the voice of small-scale fishers and their perspectives remained at the heart of Europe's energy transition agenda. Highlights of this process included:

- On 7 April 2025, the Energy Transition Partnership, hosted two hybrid workshops focusing on the energy transition and decarbonisation of EU fisheries involving representatives and stakeholders from the three key sectors. Find the [report of the Small-Scale Fisheries \(SSCF\) workshop](#) here
- On 21 May 2025, during the European Maritime Day (EMD) in Cork, Ireland, the Energy Transition Partnership (ETP) hosted an in-person workshop focusing on "Taking stock of the Energy

Transition Partnership towards the roadmap". Here you can find the [report of the workshop](#).

- During the EMD in Cork, the Support Group coordinators also had a meeting with Commissioner Costas Kadić in which LIFE was tasked to raise SSCF perspectives and the key issues agreed on behalf of the whole group.
- Later in the year, LIFE participated in the Helsinki Conference (Energy Transition in Fisheries – From Visions to Actions - November 4-5, 2025), where it reiterated the call for tailored approaches and realistic timelines for the energy transition

In October, as a result of the four meetings of the ETP SSCF Working Group and discussions, LIFE submitted the final approved recommendations of the SSCF Working Group to DG MARE. They emphasized that the Small-scale Fishing sector (SSCF) has reached a tipping point in decline. Therefore, issuing a binding Plan of Action to support SSCF in Europe is needed to provide the necessary certainty for a brighter viable future which will act as a key enabler not just for the Energy Transition but also for its generational renewal. If that is done, SSCF are well placed to keep leading the energy transition thanks to their already very low carbon footprint, creating an opportunity to revitalise the sector and provide better working conditions. Prioritising public funding for the energy transition of this sector (which is ring-fenced, meaningful, accessible and tailored to them) is essential to achieve a fair level playing field. See here [the full document](#).

At the end of the year and based on the outcomes of the different working groups, the 10 working group coordinators attended several meetings to agree on Joint Considerations of the ETP Support Groups on EU Fisheries and Aquaculture so they could be ready to be published in early 2026. See the [final document](#) here.



(Marta Cavallé presenting at the Energy Transition Partnership event held at the European Maritime Days in Cork, 2025)



(Marta Cavallé together with other working group coordinators of the Energy Transition Partnership meeting with Commissioner Costas Kadis in Cork, during European Maritime Days, 2025)

Control Regulation & Listed Ports Derogation

Throughout 2025, LIFE raised strong concerns about the new Control Regulation implementation, particularly the derogation allowing industrial vessels to land unsorted catches in “Listed Ports”. LIFE warned

that this creates serious transparency risks and places an unfair burden on small-scale fishers, who must comply with strict 10–20% tolerance limits and other demanding reporting obligations. LIFE continued to call for eDNA monitoring of industrial landings to ensure proper oversight.

These issues came into sharp focus as small-scale fishers across Spain mobilised in demonstrations and a general strike. While supportive of effective control, they highlighted the disconnect between the regulation and the realities of coastal fishing—such as the impractical requirement to give four hours’ notice before entering port, or to weigh catches on board with impractical means, narrow margins of error, and most worrying risking their safety. Concerns also grew around the rollout of digital tools, with fishers warning that poorly tested tools and systems that were not co-designed could replicate the failures and miscarriages of justice seen in the UK’s iVMS experience.

Throughout the year, LIFE stressed that control measures must be fair and proportionate, with industrial fleets subject to the same if not increased level of scrutiny as the small-scale sector due to the higher risk of their potential infringements. On the other hand, digitisation should be co-designed with fishers, focusing on empowering and supporting their needs, not only focused on their control.

Maritime Spatial Planning and the 12-Mile Regenerative Zone

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) has become a central pillar of European ocean governance, aiming to balance competing uses of marine space—from fisheries and conservation to offshore energy and transport. As coastal zones grow increasingly crowded, the challenge lies in ensuring that spatial planning supports ecological regeneration and social equity, rather than accelerating industrial expansion. For small-scale fishers, MSP decisions directly affect access to traditional fishing grounds, the health of coastal ecosystems, and the viability of community-based livelihoods. LIFE has therefore worked to ensure that the voices of low-impact fishers are heard in these processes and that their knowledge informs policy design.

Throughout 2025, LIFE participated actively in a dedicated MSP Implementation Dialogue, MSEG meetings, Ocean Week events, and UNOC3 discussions on ocean governance. Across these forums, LIFE

consistently advocated for the establishment of a 12-mile regenerative zone reserved for low-impact small-scale fisheries, a space where ecological recovery and community stewardship can coexist. The organisation promoted co-management frameworks that empower fishers to participate directly in decision-making and called for recognition of the cumulative impacts of offshore energy development on marine ecosystems and coastal communities, with the need for rigorous independent assessments of environmental and socioeconomic impact. LIFE also urged policymakers to define clear trade-offs between food and energy security, ensuring that Europe's transition to renewable energy does not come at the expense of sustainable fisheries or coastal resilience.

Through this work, LIFE positioned small-scale fishers as essential partners of the Blue Economy in shaping a fair and regenerative maritime future for Europe.

Rethinking fisheries: a vision for low-impact fisheries in Europe

Over the last 2 years, LIFE partnered with Seas at Risk (SAR) to form and organise the Rethink Fisheries group, constituted by a wide range of stakeholders which includes fishers, fishmongers, scientists and civil society. Together, through face to face and online meetings, the group co-shaped “the vision for fair and low-impact fisheries in Europe”, incorporating environmental, social, cultural, economic and governance elements to put forward a future vision for a fisheries sector that respects both planetary boundaries and social standards.

The process concluded in 2025 with the publication of the [final vision document](#) and its communication package ([website](#), [vision summary](#), [brochure](#), and [photo album](#)) which was launched at the European Parliament on December the 2nd, hosted by the MEP Thomas Bajada.

The document is now open for new endorsements and support. This, together with the previously published “[Fisheries for a new era](#)” report on alternative small-scale low-impact fisheries business models that are good for people and planet, provides a key policy and best practices advice to influence the future 2040 European fisheries and aquaculture vision, which the European Commission is tasked to present in 2026.



REGIONAL ACTIVITIES: LIFE AT THE WATER FACE

Despite limited resources, 2025 was a year of intense regional engagement for LIFE. Across Europe's sea basins, small-scale fishers faced mounting ecological pressures, shrinking access to resources, and increasing competition for maritime space. LIFE worked closely with members to defend their rights, amplify their voices, and promote sustainable, low-impact fisheries adapted to local realities.

Strengthening Representation in Advisory Councils (all regions)

LIFE continued to expand its participation in the different Advisory Councils (ACs) and advisory groups. Concretely, in 2025 we gained observer status of the Member States Expert Group on Maritime Policy (MSEG), which is added to our continued participation in BSAC and MEDAC. Also we attended Inter-Ac meetings. There, we support our members to coordinate and strategically engage to raise their voices on issues of interest to them and in accordance with our agreed general positions (mentioned above).

In many ways 2025 marked a tipping point in the way we engage in ACs due to the fact that while small-scale fishery stakeholders in the under 12 metre vessel fleet using non-towed gear (SSCF) may be theoretically represented through various associations in a range of advisory councils, mainly through mixed fleet member organisations, in our experience, the actual dedicated representation of SSCF interests and SSCF stakeholder engagement is very limited. Following a LIFE Board of Directors agreement at the beginning of 2025, LIFE started to call for the establishment of a dedicated small-scale fisheries Advisory Council, following the logic of other non-regionally oriented ACs. In the same way

that a Pelagic Advisory Council or Aquaculture Advisory Council are able to focus stakeholder engagement on a particular fleet segment or fishery interest, the SSCF AC would enable small-scale fishers to have a forum in which their specificities can be discussed through relevant SSCF agenda items, providing relevant advice to the Commission and Member States and improving outcomes for fishery management and conservation objectives.

Following up on a letter sent to Julia Rubeck and the DG Mare unit dealing with the ACs, LIFE presented and discussed the idea in a meeting with Commissioner Kadis. It's noteworthy that this idea appeared in the Ocean Pact, which notes that the Commission will also consider the establishment of a dedicated (SSCF) Advisory Council.

This elicited a strong negative reaction from many stakeholders, including several ACs. LIFE continues to uphold its demand, through correspondence and communications.

Baltic & North Sea Region

Baltic Sea Crisis & Quota Negotiations

2025 was a challenging year for the Baltic region. LIFE denounced the unfair burden-sharing that places disproportionate pressure on small-scale fishers in the EC's 2026 proposal on Baltic Sea Fishing Opportunities. We highlighted that SSCF, representing 92% of the Baltic fleet, bears the steepest cuts and we called for reductions to be made instead to industrial pelagic fisheries. LIFE also warned against the proposed 45% increase in the sprat quota, which risked further undermining ecosystem balance.

Throughout the year, LIFE participated actively in Baltfish, BSAC, and ICES drafting groups, advocating for the inclusion of Bothnian Sea herring in Sweden's presidency work plan and stressing the need for cod bycatch access for passive gears. It also promoted the use of eDNA monitoring for industrial landings destined for fishmeal and oil production.

The Council's final decision — allocating 97% of Baltic Sea catches to herring and sprat, the vast majority destined for industrial reduction — confirmed LIFE's concerns about structural inequity. The decision was

not unanimous, and LIFE welcomed the commitment from all Council Member States from the Baltic together with the Commission to request scientific advice from ICES aimed at rebuilding stocks.

A region in crisis — and a year of relentless advocacy

The Baltic Sea remained at the centre of LIFE's regional work in 2025. With cod, herring, and salmon stocks at historically low levels, and with ICES forecasts increasingly disconnected from fishers' observations, LIFE intensified its efforts to secure fairer management and to protect the viability of coastal communities. As part of these efforts, LIFE's advocacy on the Bothnian Sea (Bottenhavet) crisis led MP Malin Larsson to submit [Skriftlig fråga 2024/25:1416](#) to Minister Peter Kullgren. The intervention used LIFE's information to pressure the government to stand firm behind the proposed 62% quota reduction, safeguarding small-scale coastal fishers against industrial interests.

- **March:** LIFE members met with Commissioner Kadis in Simrishamn. They, Bengt Larsson (SYEF) and Stefan Nordin (Kustfiskarna Bottenhavet PO), urged the Commissioner to address the ecological collapse of the Baltic and the disproportionate burden placed on small-scale fishers. They stressed that “we can survive low quotas, but not more closures,” highlighting the iniquities of the cod closure in place since 2019.
- **May:** LIFE participated as an observer at the ICES Advice Drafting Group raising concerns that the scientific advice — which recommended continued closures for key stocks — could not support recovery under current conditions. LIFE warned that the proposed 70,000-tonne increase in catches would overwhelmingly benefit fishmeal factories, not coastal communities.
- **June:** LIFE challenged the proposed increases in sprat quotas in the Baltfish Forum, calling for guaranteed cod bycatch access for passive gears, the introduction of eDNA monitoring of industrial landings, and the inclusion of Bothnian Sea herring in Sweden's presidency work plan.
- **September:** The Baltic Quota Proposals 2026 were published, and LIFE publicly criticised the Commission's proposal for placing the steepest cuts on SSCF — despite SSCF representing 92% of the

fleet and suffering a 36% drop in catch value over the period 2018-2022.

- **October:** LIFE expressed deep disappointment at the decision of the Council of Ministers decision on Baltic Quotas to allocate 97% of the total catch to herring and sprat, the majority of which is used for the production of fishmeal and oil, reinforcing structural inequities and undermining stock recovery.
- **October:** LIFE' Baltic Coordinator was interviewed on Swedish radio about the issue of salmon bycatch in the industrial fisheries. He highlighted the need for modern monitoring tools such as eDNA to assess salmon bycatch and protect vulnerable populations.
- **November:** LIFE participated at the Conference on the Future of the CFP organised by the S&D political group. LIFE stressed the need for science that “puts more fish back in the sea” and highlighted the mismatch between current scientific models and the realities of small-scale fisheries.

Working towards improved access to markets in the Region

In October, a LIFE member's catches of herring were rejected by a processor due to the market barrier caused by the MSC - allowing only MSC-certified trawler-caught herring to be sold. This incident underscored the urgency and relevance of LIFE's work on a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for SSCF.

Through LIFE's work with supply chains and restaurants, which has PGS at its core, we have supported a restaurant to develop sustainability guidelines on how to acquire fish that include the perspectives of small-scale fishers so that their market access is not restricted by 3rd party certification like the MSC. The restaurant, Seafood Gastro in Stockholm, chose its own more pragmatic sourcing criteria incorporating the local knowledge of fishers. LIFE also connected them with small-scale fishers among our Swedish members, which led to the restaurant to start buying directly from them and to establish ongoing partnerships without intermediaries.

Mediterranean & Black Sea Region

Strengthening traditional governance and defending coastal livelihoods

Mediterranean and Black Sea small-scale fishers continued to face intense pressure from climate change, spatial competition, and industrial fishing practices. LIFE worked closely with members to promote co-management, protect polyvalence, and secure fair access to resources.

We continue to be engaged as a formal stakeholder in the co-management committees in Catalunya (Spain), especially the committees of the cuttlefish (fisheries based) and Cap de Creus (area based). Also, we participated in the yearly meeting of the co-management committee of the Pitiusas islands in the Balearic Islands (Spain).

Finally, we continue to take part of the organisation committee of the [SSCF Forum](#) of the GFCM, an initiative that responds to the recommendations within the Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea (RPOA-SSCF) to offer support to small-scale fishers and fish workers to further develop their capacities and skills with regard to sustainable small-scale fisheries and livelihoods.

Atlantic Region

- **May:** LIFE's Irish members met Commissioner Kadis to raise urgent concerns being voiced by Atlantic small-scale fishers. They highlighted the need for generational renewal, the devastating impact of the pollack closure on inshore livelihoods, barriers to accessing Producer Organisation funding, and the lack of fair quota access for young fishers entering the sector.
- **June:** LIFE and IIMRO welcomed the revised ICES advice on pollack, which recommended a TAC of 3,310 tonnes — a major shift from the previous zero-TAC recommendation that had effectively shut down the inshore handline fishery. This change represented a significant step toward restoring viability for coastal communities dependent on this stock.
- **September:** At *Les Assises de la Pêche et de la Mer*, LIFE President Gwen Pennarun raised concerns about weaknesses in ICES assessments for sea bass, the growing use of high opening “four-panel trawls” operating under the guise of demersal trawls,

- whilst acting like pelagic trawls (which are banned) in coastal waters, and the need to empower fishers to co-manage their traditional grounds.
- the Irish Sea Fisheries Board published a report revealing key paradoxes in the Irish SSCF sector: although SSCF represent 84% of vessels, they account for only 7% of engine power; they provide 56% of national employment in fisheries (measured by FTEs); and they remain the most fuel-efficient fleet segment. Despite declining revenues, gross profit increased largely due to unpaid family labour. LIFE used these findings to advocate for targeted support and formal recognition of SSCF's socio-economic contribution.

PROJECTS & INNOVATION

2025 was a year of significant progress across LIFE's project portfolio. From digitalisation to dealing with invasive species, from energy transition to regenerative fisheries, LIFE advanced practical solutions to support low-impact fishers and strengthen coastal resilience.

Fish-X: Digitalisation for Fair and Sustainable Fisheries

Throughout 2025, LIFE contributed actively to completing the Fish-X project, which aimed to develop digital tools for vessel monitoring and catch reporting in line with the revised Control Regulation. At the final workshop held in the European Parliament in April, LIFE emphasised that digitalisation must serve fishers rather than burden them, underscoring the importance of user-friendly systems that reflect the realities of small-scale operations and provide multiple benefits.

Earlier in the year, at the Fish-X Conference and Expo in March, LIFE welcomed the Fish-X Roadmap for Digital Transformation and highlighted the need for inclusive, fisher-led design processes. The organisation stressed that effective innovation depends on collaboration with those who use the tools at sea.

Fish-X ultimately demonstrated that small-scale fishers are not lagging behind in Europe's digital transition — they are leading it, when technology is designed with their needs and experiences at its core.

Round Goby: Turning an Invasive Species into an Opportunity

In 2025, LIFE joined a project aimed at assessing the commercial potential of the invasive Round Goby species for small-scale coastal fishers in the Baltic Sea. A major part of this work involved managing test fishing operations between April and June with contracted fishers in Sweden and Germany, which showed promising catch rates and minimal bycatch. Following the season, LIFE handled data collection, noted market interest as a high-end restaurant included round goby in its tasting menu, and organized the transport of frozen samples from Germany to the Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment (BIOR) in Latvia for contaminant analysis before handing field datasets to Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

Beyond logistics, LIFE investigated the market development and economic viability of a permanent fishery. In collaboration with the Submariner Network, LIFE launched a questionnaire for fishers, wholesalers, and chefs to map out value chain requirements. To gather further insights, LIFE participated in a study visit to Lithuania in November to examine coastal fisheries, processing facilities, and business models, and presented preliminary findings during the webinar series *"The Business Case of a Blue Economy"*.



(Photo of the study visit @Aksel Ydrén/LIFE, Lithuania, 2025)

These activities provided data on the practical aspects and market barriers of a potential round goby fishery. By documentation of fishing logistics and value chain requirements, LIFE's work in 2025 serves as a baseline for further evaluation of both the ecological management and the economic viability for small-scale coastal fishers.

LIFE plays a central role in the Interreg project on commercial round goby fishing and marketing in the Baltic Sea.

Seaglow: Innovation for Climate-Resilient Fisheries

In 2025, LIFE continued its strong engagement in the SEAGLOW project, leading communication and dissemination activities while playing an active role in both the policy and business model work packages. As leader of the communication work package, LIFE coordinated outreach through the project's multilingual website, social media channels, media engagement and participation in events, helping to raise awareness of innovative solutions to reduce fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in small-scale fisheries.

LIFE also contributed significantly to the development of a policy and regulatory framework to support the energy transition of small-scale fisheries in the Baltic and North Sea. Through stakeholder consultations and engagement with fishers, LIFE helped identify the technical, human and regulatory barriers to decarbonisation and contributed to the development of policy recommendations to facilitate the uptake of low-emission technologies.

In addition, LIFE and its partners started preparing the work towards supporting the development of viable business models for the adoption and replication of innovative technologies in small-scale fisheries. This will be a task to be completed in 2026 and will include engaging fishing communities and stakeholders in discussions on market opportunities, investment needs, technology uptake and the long-term commercial viability of decarbonisation solutions. Through these activities, LIFE will help to ensure that the project's innovations are not only technically effective but also economically feasible and transferable to other fishing communities across Europe.

Together, these efforts are helping to strengthen Seaglow's visibility, support stakeholder engagement and contribute to a fair and practical pathway towards the decarbonisation of Europe's small-scale fishing fleet.



(Seaglow partners during the project's second consortium meeting. Sweden, 2025)

Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for SSCF

Supported by Patagonia, LIFE advanced on a Strategic Roadmap document towards establishing a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) for Low Impact Fishing.

A drafting committee met multiple times and worked towards producing the necessary documentation for such a scheme, including: a shared vision and basic principles, operational aspects of a PGS, business plan and timeline.

A proposal was presented to the LIFE General Assembly and approved. However, further work is required in adding further details of the operational aspects of the PGS, to the business plan and the verification mechanisms, which we plan to finalise during 2026.

In the meantime, LIFE secretariat continues to fundraise for this project so we can advance to the testing and implementation phases. This is a strategic initiative to support our members to improve market access, support fair and sustainable food systems and provide a credible, accessible alternative to third party certification schemes that are designed for industrial fleets.

COMMUNICATIONS, EVENTS & MEMBERSHIP

2025 was a landmark year for LIFE's visibility, outreach, and member engagement. Through high-level events, international conferences,

targeted communications, and strategic alliances, LIFE strengthened its role as the leading voice for Europe’s small-scale, low-impact fishers.

Press & Media Engagement

WORK FEATURED IN

Fish Focus
The Skipper
Fisker Forum
La Nazione
The Fishing Daily
Mundus Maris
Through the Gaps
Industrias Pesqueras
Europa Press
La Vanguardia
Teleprensa
Cantabria Liberal
Diario Siglo XXI

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Baltic quotas
Article 17
Make Fishing Fair
Scientific advice reform
Bluefin tuna allocation
Energy transition
Market exclusion of SSF

INTERNAL PROCESSES & GOVERNANCE

Membership Growth & strengthened governance

2025 was a year where LIFE’s governance structures demonstrated their fitness for purpose, playing a key role in LIFE’s strategic development. While our membership continues to grow in terms of the number of organisations and countries represented, LIFE also strengthened its governance by celebrating the elective assembly and renewing the board of Directors.

New Members: Norway and Portugal join LIFE

In October, LIFE welcomed Norges Kystfiskarlag, representing over 400 low-impact vessels. Their membership strengthens LIFE’s presence in Northern Europe and reinforces cross-border cooperation in the North Sea.

In December, LIFE also welcomed Marsempre, representing xx small-scale fishing vessels from Portugal. We welcome them to be the first member organisation from this country, raising LIFE’s membership to be present in 18 member states.

Renewal of the Board of Directors and appointment of new president

In November the elective assembly took place in Brussels, back-to-back with the Make Fishing Fair Forum. It was enthusiastically attended, receiving a high interest with a large number of elective applicants.

A new Board of Directors was elected, representing all sea basins and it's now composed as follows:

Name	Role	Association	Country
Mediterranean and Black Sea			
Federico Gelmi	Director	Associazione Pescatori di Pantelleria	Italy
Kazimir Bogović	Director	Udruga malih priobalnih ribara Jadrana	Croatia
Macarena Molina	Treasurer	Pescartes	Spain
Baltic and North Sea			
Bengt Larsson	Secretary	SYEF	Sweden
Kasia Stepanowska	Director	Darłowska Group of Fish Producers and Shipowners	Poland
Erik Meyer	Director	Fischereischutzverband Schleswig-Holstein	Germany
Atlantic			
Gwen Pennarun	President	Brittany Handliners Association	France
Seamus Bonner	Shared-seats director (North Atlantic)	IIMRO	Ireland
Bally Philp	Shared-seats director (North Atlantic)	SCFF	UK
Sandra Amezaga	Shared-seats director (South Atlantic)	Mulleres Salgadas	Spain
David Pavon	Shared-seats director (South Atlantic)	Cofradia el Hierro	Spain

The election of a new Board of Directors is to be welcomed, reflecting as it does a well-balanced mix of both historic and new associations, with an improved gender balance (30% women), and with each sea-basin having one female Director.

With a refreshed Board, LIFE looks forward to continuing its mission to empower small-scale fishers and champion sustainable, low-impact fisheries with a high socio-economic value across Europe.

LIFE Secretariat increases the capacity

In 2025, LIFE reinforced its Secretariat to better support members and respond to growing operational and policy demands. The team welcomed **Aksel Ydrén, Baltic Sea Project Officer**, bringing hands-on experience with artisanal fisheries, notably on product certification. He will support activities in the Baltic and North Sea, with a particular focus on the Round Goby Project.

At the same time, LIFE completed the search for a full-time **Administrative and Financial Officer**, appointing **Claudia Cantele Silva** to strengthen internal systems and ensure robust financial and administrative management from the Brussels office. She is to take up the position in 2026.

These additions significantly enhance LIFE's ability to deliver high-quality support, coordination, and advocacy across Europe.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2025 AND BUDGET 2026

LIFE Financials 2025

In 2025, LIFE's finances showed steady progress in diversifying income and building new partnerships. **€216,328 was carried over from 2024** in multiannual budgets. During 2025, LIFE received an **additional €319,856 of income**, with the largest share coming from our 5-year grant with Velux Fonden (€170,000). New support from Patagonia (€46,000) towards our Youth Network marked an important step in engaging socially responsible companies, while EU funds (€41,000) for the Round Goby project and Telos funding (€40,000) helped strengthen LIFE's

administrative and financial capacity. Altogether, combining the carry-over and income received, **LIFE had €536,184 available** to deliver its activities throughout the year.

Expenses in 2025 totalled **€419,315**, remaining in line with LIFE's growth and activities. **Staff costs** rose compared to 2024 due to increase in capacity, with the recruitment of a Baltic Project Manager for the Round Goby project (fully funded by EU resources) and a full-time Administrative and Financial Officer supported through Telos. **Overheads and running costs** increased slightly, mainly because of meeting-room rentals for interviews, payroll service fees, and equipment for new staff. **Spending on project activities** grew significantly as LIFE expanded its work through initiatives such as Round Goby, Seaglow and PGS, while the Make Fishing Fair campaign added extra travel and interpretation costs.

After accounting for all income, expenses, and the funds carried over from 2024, LIFE closed 2025 with a bank balance of **€116,869**.

Budget 2026

As LIFE enters 2026, continued investment in income diversification remains essential. Much of this progress stems from new and strategic relationships, such as with Tanka, and renewed collaborations with long-standing partners like Waterloo. A significant share of LIFE's 2026 income is expected to come from EU funds, reflecting the organisation's strong engagement with current funding opportunities and projects that support the transformation of small-scale fisheries across Europe.

At the same time, this reliance highlights the need to further broaden the funding base to ensure access to flexible core resources. With Velux funds concluding in 2026 - historically a key source of adaptable support - LIFE is actively developing proposals that prioritise **core funding and long-term financial resilience**, laying the foundation for sustainable growth and reduced concentration risk.

Income is expected to grow by +80% from 2025 to 2026, while **expenses are expected to grow by +23%**. The higher growth rate in income is mainly explained by timing mismatches: for some projects, funds received in 2026 cover expenses already incurred in previous years

(e.g. Round Goby, Seaglow), while others reflect anticipated contributions from funders for multi-year expenses that will come through the next few years (e.g. Velux, Tanka).

Below is a comprehensive **overview of the 2025 financials**, as well as the **2026 budget**:

Profit & Loss	Actuals 2025	Budget 2026	YoY
(a) Total Income	319,855.68	540,868.04	69%
Grants / Donations	317,556.68	537,768.04	69%
Patagonia	45,574.24		-100%
Only One	21,220.61	27,312.61	29%
Velux fonden	85,000.00	85,000.00	
Velux fonden II	85,000.00	85,000.00	
Round Goby Project	40,761.83	202,772.87	397%
Collecte Localisation Satellites		1,998.09	
Seaglow		67,126.23	
FLMD	40,000.00		-100%
Tanka		35,000.00	
Waterloo		18,558.24	
OAK		15,000.00	0%
Membership Fees	2,299.00	3,100.00	35%
Membership Fees	2,299.00	3,100.00	35%
(b) Total Expenses	(419,314.71)	(514,669.28)	23%
Salaries	(286,694.37)	(353,996.77)	23%
Brussels Office	(104,285.20)	(149,618.74)	43%
Mediterranean Office	(69,640.41)	(69,540.05)	0%
Swedish Office	(112,768.76)	(134,837.98)	20%
Overheads and Running Expenses	(39,183.64)	(42,880.04)	9%
OH Brussels Office	(12,612.15)	(11,034.04)	-13%
OH Mediterranean Office	(4,265.32)	(5,530.00)	30%
OH Swedish Office	(3,293.88)	(6,626.00)	101%

General Overheads	(19,012.29)	(19,690.00)	4%
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Project Activities	(93,436.70)	(117,792.47)	26%
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Fieldwork, Data Collection & Research	(10,605.00)	(9,391.96)	-11%
Personnel Expenses	(11,118.03)	(13,000.00)	17%
Communication & Outreach	(4,998.01)	(6,535.12)	31%
Advisory Councils	(2,757.73)	(1,440.00)	-48%
Stakeholder Engagement & Co-Creation	(16,173.49)	(47,227.82)	192%
Travel and Subsistence	(47,784.44)	(40,197.57)	-16%

Net result of the year (a + b)	(99,459.03)	26,198.76	-126%
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	Actuals 2025	Budget 2026	YoY
Cashflow			
Net Result for the year	(99,459.03)	26,198.76	-126%
Available cash from prior periods	216,328.14	116,869.09	-46%
Available cash at year end	116,869.11	143,067.85	22%

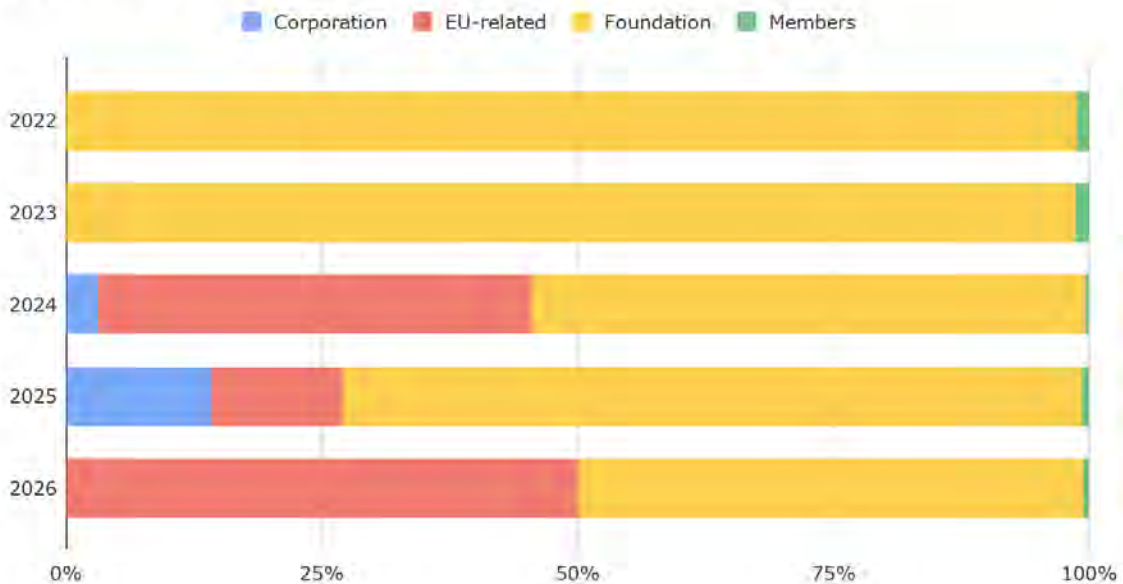
Note: These figures reflect management accounting and may differ from LIFE's statutory accounts. The official financial accounting follows Belgian rules on revenue recognition and deferrals, whereas this overview presents operational income and expenses for internal management purposes and might not be recorded according to the same rules.

Funding

Over the past decade, LIFE has significantly diversified its funding base. In its early years, the organisation relied primarily on philanthropic foundations for core support. Since then, LIFE has successfully expanded into new funding streams, tapping into EU programmes, corporate partnerships, and member contributions. This broader mix of funders strengthens LIFE's financial resilience and underpins its long-term strategic ambitions.

As shown in the graph below, **(a) Funding sources per type of funder**, LIFE now benefits from a more balanced portfolio that includes EU funds and contributions from socially responsible corporations such as Patagonia.

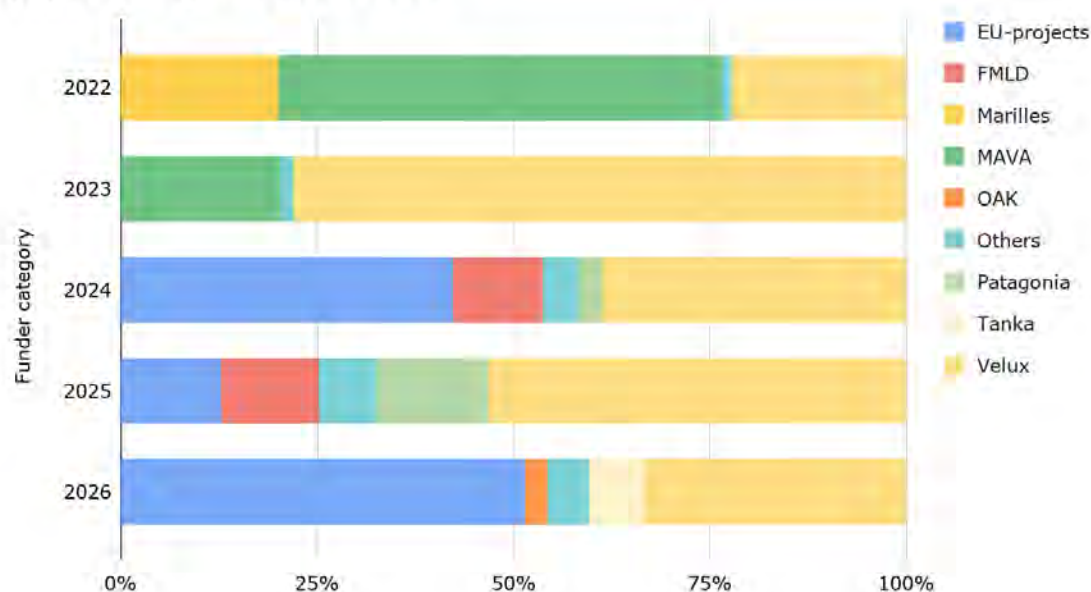
(a) Funding sources per type of funder



The funding mix as seen in the graph **(b) Funding mix per funder** continued to evolve positively, reflecting LIFE's sustained efforts to diversify its income sources and strengthen access to core funding. In 2026, although around half of LIFE's income is still expected to come from EU grants - typically less flexible and tied to specific projects - the organisation is actively expanding its network of partners and supporters.

By cultivating new relationships with philanthropic foundations, corporate donors, and aligned partners, LIFE is laying the groundwork for a more balanced and resilient funding structure. These efforts aim to secure a stable base of core funding and reduce concentration risk, ensuring long-term financial sustainability and independence.

(b) Funding mix per funder



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

2026 will be a defining year for the future of small-scale fisheries in Europe. The convergence of the CFP evaluation, the 2040 Vision for Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Ocean Act, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive revision, the Energy Transition Roadmap and negotiations on the next EU budget will shape the regulatory, financial and environmental framework for the sector over the coming decade.

LIFE's top priority is securing an EU Action Plan for Small-Scale Fisheries. The organisation will advocate for the Action Plan to be embedded within the Ocean Act, supported by a binding implementation timeline and measurable outcomes to ensure concrete progress for the sector.

Fair access to fisheries resources remains a central objective. LIFE will push for the implementation of Article 17 as originally intended, including binding ring-fenced fishing opportunities for small-scale fishers and a more equitable allocation of access rights.

Maritime spatial planning must protect space for low-impact fisheries. LIFE will advocate for regenerative fisheries areas, preferential access to the 12-nautical-mile coastal zone for small-scale fisheries, and

measures to prevent the increasing spatial displacement of the sector by competing Blue Economy activities.

Strengthening co-management will improve fisheries governance.

The organisation will continue promoting the formal recognition and reinforcement of Prud'homies and other traditional co-management systems as effective governance models for sustainable fisheries.

The energy transition must support, not burden, small-scale fisheries.

LIFE will monitor the implementation of the Energy Transition Roadmap and the revised Fisheries Control Regulation, promoting innovation while ensuring that new requirements remain proportionate and financially viable for the sector.

A Participatory Guarantee System will improve market opportunities.

Delivering the Strategic Roadmap and securing funding for pilot implementation will be a key milestone towards providing an accessible alternative to industrial certification schemes and strengthening sustainable food systems.

Generational renewal is essential for the sector's future. LIFE will continue advocating for better access to training, finance and fishing opportunities for young fishers, while launching the LIFE Youth Network to strengthen leadership, knowledge transfer and long-term sector resilience.

Stronger partnerships will increase the sector's influence. Expanding membership and building alliances with civil society, scientists, foundations and other low-impact primary producers will reinforce advocacy capacity and promote a more resilient and sustainable primary sector.