

# Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Costas Kadis, European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue: **Young Voices for the Ocean –  
Towards a European Ocean Pact**

Date: **3 March 2025**

Location: **Sparks, Brussels, Belgium**

## Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue brought together 15 young people coming from 15 different countries in the EU to discuss ocean policies, including the upcoming European Ocean Pact, with the European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans, Costas Kadis. Prior to the physical meeting, an online preparation meeting took place on 24 February 2025. The in-person dialogue took place on 3 March 2025 in Brussels, during the *Young Voices for the Ocean* event of the European Ocean Days and was moderated by a seasoned trilingual moderator Olivier Schalbroeck.

### Choice of topic

The upcoming European Ocean Pact, announced by President von der Leyen in her political guidelines for the next European Commission (2024-2029), will be a key deliverable of the European Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans in the current mandate. The Pact aims to foster a more integrated and holistic approach to ocean governance across all sectors, ensuring that ocean-related policies work together effectively. Given its significance, it is essential that the voices of young people are also considered in its development, as we cannot create a future-proof pact without their insights. The Youth Policy Dialogue was a valuable opportunity to involve young people in shaping this important policy initiative.

### Choice of venue

The 2025 edition of European Ocean Days was scheduled to take place from 3-7 March 2025 at Sparks in Brussels. Since the first day of the week of events was to be dedicated to youth engagement in ocean matters (*Young Voices for the Ocean*), we chose to integrate the Youth Policy Dialogue into the morning of this event. The 15 young participants were also enthusiastic about visiting Brussels, the city that hosts the official headquarters of many EU institutions, including the European Commission.

### Selection of participants

An [open call for expressions of interest](#) was launched in December 2024, inviting young people aged 18 to 30 with an interest in maritime affairs, fisheries, and ocean policy to apply. Applicants were asked to:

- (1) provide two questions they would like to ask the Commissioner; and
- (2) select a topic related to the upcoming European Ocean Pact that they would like to discuss and explain why it matters to them.

From the 150 applications received, 16 young individuals were selected based on the quality of their answers, ensuring gender and geographical balance. The selected participants represented a diverse range of profiles and countries from all sea basins, including landlocked countries (see Annex 1 for the list of participants). Unfortunately, one participant cancelled just two days before the event, and due to time constraints, it was not possible to find a replacement.

The questions and input provided by the 16 selected young people were used to define the six broad topics of discussion during the Youth Policy Dialogue (see topics of discussion below).

## Summary of the online preparatory meeting

The online preparatory meeting took place on 24 February 2025 via Teams, one week prior to the event, from 17:30 to 19:00. 15 out of the 16 young participants attended, along with the moderator, the event contractor (who had arranged travel and accommodation for the participants), and DG MARE.

During the meeting, DG MARE colleagues provided a detailed explanation of how both the informal breakfast (in a closed room) and the Youth Policy Dialogue (on stage) with the Commissioner would unfold. The young participants were informed of the panel discussion and topics they had been assigned to and the questions they would need to prepare for. The presentation followed the following structure:

1. Welcome and tour-de-table: who are you, what do you do, why are you here?
2. What is DG MARE and who is the Commissioner?
3. What is the European Ocean Pact?
4. What will happen on 3 March? The event choreography
5. What will happen on 3 March? The topics to be covered
6. Wrap-up and questions

After the meeting, we shared the presentation slides, along with the assigned preparatory questions and a recording of the meeting, with all 16 young participants.

## Summary of the (in-person) Youth Policy Dialogue

The Youth Policy Dialogue took place on stage as the highlight of the morning programme of the *Young Voices for the Ocean* event, which kicked off the 2025 edition of the European Ocean Days.

Prior to the on-stage dialogue, the Commissioner and the 15 young participants met during an informal one-hour breakfast (8:30-9:30). The aim was to create a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere before the discussions ahead.

The two-hour on-stage dialogue (10:00-12:00) opened with introductory remarks by Commissioner Kadis. He underlined the EU's commitment to a sustainable blue economy and ocean protection, noting that oceans cover 70% of the Earth's surface, regulate the climate, and provide vital resources for life. He also introduced the upcoming European Ocean Pact, aimed at ensuring coherent governance across ocean-related policy areas such as energy, security, transport, and fisheries.

The dialogue was followed by three panel sessions each featuring five young people. The moderator was seated at one end of the stage, the Commissioner at the other, with the youth participants in between. The format worked well: the group dynamic was lively, the stage layout was effective, and the interaction between the moderator, the Commissioner, and the young people was smooth and engaging.

After the dialogue, the young participants took part in the rest of the day's programme, which included ocean-themed workshops, art exhibits, and additional panel discussions with stakeholders from the blue economy. See Annex 2 for the full agenda.

## Topics of discussion

Each of the three panel sessions focused on one overarching theme and two sub-themes. All topics were linked to the upcoming European Ocean Pact, with the aim of gathering young people's perspectives and hearing their ideas and suggestions for shaping future actions.

Panel 1 – **Managing the ocean**, addressing the following sub-themes:

- Marine knowledge & Citizen science
- Maritime spatial planning & Marine renewable energy

Panel 2 – An **inclusive and sustainable ocean**, addressing the following sub-themes:

- Fisheries
- Engagement of all countries and voices

Panel 3 – A **future-proof ocean**, addressing the following sub-themes:

- Blue careers & Generational renewal
- Research and innovation & New technologies

Key issues raised included the need to improve ocean literacy by simplifying the language, making information more accessible, and involving the public through consultations. Participants stressed the importance of balancing ocean protection with a strong blue economy that creates jobs. To attract young people, better compensation and stronger promotion of blue careers were recommended. Priorities for the European Ocean Pact should include better maritime spatial planning, marine protected areas, and respecting traditional coastal communities. The role of AI in education, monitoring, and citizen science was also highlighted.

See Annex 3 for full dialogue notes and Annex 4 for a visual recording of the dialogue.

## Follow-up debate on the Citizens' Engagement Platform

*Once the Youth Policy Dialogue has taken place, the Commission's [Citizens' Engagement Platform](#) will be used as an online interactive and deliberative hub for continuing the debate, reaching out to citizens beyond the invited participants of the Youth Policy Dialogues and attracting their contributions. Summarise three concrete ideas by the young people to trigger lively debates on the platform.*

### 1. Empowering youth as drivers of ocean solutions

**How can we involve young people more meaningfully in protecting our oceans?** Young people should be seen not just as beneficiaries but as key contributors to ocean protection. They bring energy, critical thinking, and a sense of urgency. Participants called for more opportunities to engage youth directly in citizen science – such as coastal cleanups, field data collection, or acting as “ocean reporters”. Involving young people from an early age fosters a lifelong commitment to sustainability and can shift harmful

habits, like the use of single-use plastics. However, education systems often fail to cultivate this mindset. Schools should go beyond textbooks, incorporating field trips, exhibitions, and hands-on learning to build deeper understanding of pollution and waste. Better cooperation between policymakers, scientists, industry, and young people is also needed. Youth must be included in ocean policy decisions – not just consulted, but empowered to help shape the future of the blue economy.

## **2. Protecting the ocean while building a strong blue economy**

**How can we grow a strong blue economy without harming the ocean?** Youth participants argued this must start with robust environmental assessments before any ocean-based development, especially for renewable energy or mining critical minerals like cobalt and nickel. They warned against rushing into deep-sea mining without understanding long-term impacts and called for balance between economic opportunity and ecological preservation. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were also seen as crucial – but participants stressed they must allow for multiple uses, particularly near major harbours where space is shared by tourism, fishing, and recreation. Maritime spatial (and sustainable) planning is key to protecting the ocean while enabling future jobs and innovation.

## **3. Harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) to understand and protect the ocean**

**Can AI help bridge the gap between people and the ocean?** Young participants highlighted the potential of AI in ocean protection. They proposed using it to develop a digital twin of the ocean – an advanced model that combines global data to simulate and predict ocean changes. AI could help track fish stocks, forecast environmental impacts, and support smart, sustainable marine planning. AI also has a role in improving ocean literacy. It can make complex data understandable and widely available, sparking greater interest among citizens – especially in landlocked countries where ocean issues can feel remote. Making the ocean more “visible” to everyone through digital tools can empower broader civic participation and informed action.

## Follow-up activities

### **Communication and use of outcomes**

- A rapporteur documented the entire on-stage Youth Policy Dialogue. These notes will be shared with the participating young people and with the relevant units within DG MARE responsible for drafting the European Ocean Pact, to ensure that the key takeaways and recommendations are duly considered.
- Highlights from the event were shared on social media throughout the day, and a dedicated article summarising the main outcomes will be published on the [DG MARE website](#). This will help amplify youth voices and inform stakeholders involved in shaping ocean policy.

### **Media outreach and engagement**

Event coverage included social media posts, reels, and visual content created and shared during the day. The dialogue generated significant engagement across multiple social media platforms:

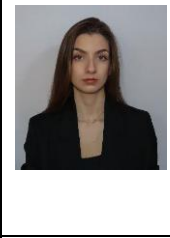
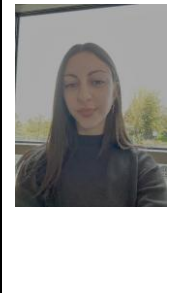


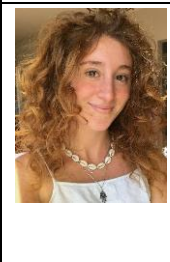
- [Instagram post](#): 170 likes
- [Instagram reel](#): 2.8K reach, 149 reactions (130 likes, 1 comment, 13 shares)
- [Facebook](#): 1.2K reach
- [Twitter thread](#): 1.7K reach
- [Twitter Commissioner Post](#): 1.5K reach
- [Web stream](#) (from 00:53:50 to 02:43:30): 1098 views
- Press: [IEU Monitoring](#)

### **Lessons learned**




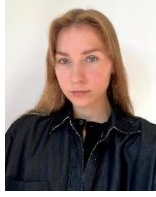

Collaborative posts involving the Commissioner's account significantly boosted reach and engagement. This suggests that cross-promotion with high-profile accounts is effective in expanding visibility.

## Annexes





### Annex 1. List of participants

	<p><b>Simona Emilova Mileva   Bulgaria   21</b></p> <p>I am 21 years old, from a city called Varna, located by the Black Sea coast and I have lived here my whole life. I graduated First Language School and I am currently studying “renewable energy sources” at the Technical University. My life has always been closely related to the sea, my father has a fishing business (wild catch and trade) and I am also very involved in the whole process. In between all of my interests, work and studies I am also volunteering in an organisation called “for our sea”, whose goal is to preserve and protect our Black Sea.</p>
	<p><b>Stella Christou   Cyprus   29</b></p> <p>Stella is a PhD student in Environmental Engineering at the University of Surrey, UK. She holds a BSc in Biology from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece and an MSc in Biotechnology from TU Delft, Netherlands. Her research focuses on the role of sewers in the transmission of antimicrobial resistance and other emerging pollutants in the environment through wastewater. Committed in safeguarding access to clean water, she is involved in environmental organizations in the UK such as ‘Water Rangers’ and Southeast Rivers Trust. Currently, she is a PhD placement student in the water policy team of the Welsh Government while she is also a member of the Environment Committee of the Cyprus Youth Parliament.</p>
	<p><b>Nelly Vondrova   Czechia   22</b></p> <p>My name is Nelly Vondrova, a first-year master’s student in Economic Law at Sciences Po Paris, with a strong focus on environmental and legal issues. Although I come from a landlocked country, I am deeply concerned about the current challenges related to fisheries and oceans. Alongside my bachelor’s degree, I was awarded a “Seas and Oceans” certification, which provided me with a multidisciplinary, international perspective on maritime issues with their impact on societies. Through my civic learning experience, I collaborated with Greenpeace on ocean conservation campaigns, and as part of the Millennium Fellowship programme, I launched the “Ocean Conservation Through Art” project advocating for ocean protection, aligning with SDGs 14, 13, and 6.</p>
	<p><b>Aava Onerva Holopainen   Finland   19</b></p> <p>My name is Aava Holopainen, I am 19 years old, and I am from Helsinki, Finland. I am currently studying Global Sustainability Science at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, where I focus on governance and societal change in environmental and social sustainability. My studies explore policies, decision-making, and community engagement to drive positive change. Beyond academics, I am passionate about making a difference through volunteering. In my free time, I enjoy running, reading, and engaging in projects, most often with the European Youth Parliament. These activities allow me to expand my knowledge, and simultaneously contribute to causes I care about.</p>
	<p><b>Inès Hamila   France   25</b></p> <p>I grew up along the coasts of California and southern France, where I developed a deep passion for the ocean. I have a master’s degree in Environmental Policy with a focus on ocean governance from Sciences Po Paris, and have worked as an Ocean Policy officer at the Oceanographic Institute of Monaco, advocating for MPAs in the Southern Ocean and coordinating scientific partnerships for our polar program. I am also involved in the EU funded Youth Together for Arctic Futures initiative. I now aspire to pursue a PhD in ocean governance, researching conflicts between local resource users and conservation projects that mirror wider socio-economic and environmental policy challenges.</p>



	<p><b>Stella Mavropoulou   Greece   27</b></p> <p>My name is Stella Mavropoulou and I am the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Coordinator of Goldsmiths, University of London. Originally from Greece, I moved to the UK 3.5 years ago to pursue my master's degree in Human Rights and Politics at the London School of Economics. Throughout my career, I have been actively involved in numerous human rights projects and training programmes. I am one of only 20 certified Human Rights Educators in the UK, accredited by the Council of Europe in non-formal human rights education while I also volunteer for the UN Women UK. Since relocating to the UK, I have been deeply engaged in the pro-European sphere, gaining both lived and academic insight into the impacts of Brexit, particularly on migrants and women.</p>
	<p><b>Mark McDonnell   Ireland   19</b></p> <p>Mark McDonnell is an IB-graduate (graduating in Oslo, NO) and legal scholar (studying currently in Dublin, IE). With a deep passion for Human Rights, he has published his thesis, "Proud Whispers: Coptic Nationalism Coinciding with Coptic Quietism", an anthropological piece detailing the persecution of the Coptic Indigenous group in Egypt. Additionally, Mark has worked with Amnesty International for several years on a number of vital campaigns, focused in Amnesty's European headquarters in Oslo. He has worked on children's rights and on the growing issue of "Voluntourism" with SOS-Barnebyer, and represented Amnesty International at the Oslo Freedom Forum, a conference focusing on finding solutions for prisoners of conscience.</p>
	<p><b>Nicolò Di Tullio   Italy   30</b></p> <p>Young leader of the International Olympic Committee. Launched the Got-To social project to fight climate change through sport. Its research and activities are oriented towards the integrated management of coastal zones, with the aim of improving the environmental, social and economic standards of the Italian and Mediterranean coasts. President of the Genova Ocean Agorà Benefit Consortium. He is a doctoral student in Management - Sustainability, Innovation, Healthcare at the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa. He is World Champion and European Champion of surf lifesaving and several times national champion of lifesaving and paddle boarding. He served as sustainability manager for The Ocean Race Genova - The Grand Finale 2022-23. Collaborates with sports organizations and scholastic or academic institutions in the field of natural and sports sciences.</p>
	<p><b>Urtė Vakarė Drungilaitė   Lithuania   23</b></p> <p>I am a 23-years-old master's student in marine biotechnology. Growing up in Klaipėda, a port city in Lithuania, I was always surrounded by the aquatic environment, which inspired my early interest in marine well-being. During my bachelor's studies, I not only explored various natural processes in aquatic ecosystems but also worked at a Baltic Sea Animal Rehabilitation Centre, helping injured wildlife affected by human activity. Now, I focus on ethical and efficient ways to utilise ocean resources for the rapidly growing biotechnology sector, with my main research interest centred on the examination and application of natural marine products in pharmaceuticals.</p>
	<p><b>Benjamin Mifsud Scicluna   Malta   22</b></p> <p>Hi, I'm Benjamin! I hold a B.Sc. in Earth Systems and an M.Sc. in Applied Oceanography. My fascination with the ocean comes from its vast processes, diverse life, and the many mysteries still waiting to be uncovered. I'm passionate about understanding the intricate ecosystems and connections between flora and fauna, the impacts of climate change, and what we as humans can do to create a more sustainable world. I'm especially interested in integrating advanced technologies like GIS, AI, and machine learning into environmental research. Lastly, I believe that we, as the younger generation, will be key to driving meaningful change for our oceans and the planet!</p>



	<p><b>Ghizlan Rebbah   The Netherlands   25</b></p> <p>I am currently a Blue Book trainee at the European External Action Service (EEAS) in the Green Transition division, working on environmental diplomacy. I hold a master's degree from the College of Europe, where my thesis examined the EU's Ocean Diplomacy by assessing the EU's effectiveness in the BBNJ Treaty negotiations. Previously, I interned at the Dutch Embassy in Oman, supporting trade promotion with a focus on environmental sectors, including water management. I also participated in the Dutch National ThinkTank fellowship, addressing biodiversity loss in the Netherlands by analyzing its root causes and developing innovative solutions. I am passionate about green diplomacy, (marine) biodiversity and international ocean governance.</p>
	<p><b>Catarina Abril   Portugal   27</b></p> <p>Catarina Abril's love for sharks began at age 8, sparking a lifelong passion for the ocean. In 2019, she earned the Women in Shark Science scholarship from the South African Shark Conservancy. She is on the board of SEI Portugal, runs @catarina.abril for shark education, and is a Sustainable Ocean Alliance Youth Leader. As former Co-President of Ocean Hub Portugal, she produced the MARÉ podcast. Passionate about intergenerational justice, she advocates for youth to have a seat at the table in ocean policy. Currently works with Sciaena, a marine conservation NGO in Portugal, continuing her mission to protect marine life.</p>
	<p><b>René Dominik Gašpar   Slovakia   23</b></p> <p>I am a 23-year-old male from Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. I am currently completing my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies at a university in Brno, Czech Republic. During my studies, I spent one semester on an Erasmus exchange in Warsaw. Additionally, I worked for six years in the PR department of the Bratislava Municipal Office. I view nature as a space where humans carry out their activities and where cooperation with it is essential. The role of policies is to establish an institutional framework based on the existing consensus derived from our European values.</p>
	<p><b>Joan Saurina Ricós   Spain   21</b></p> <p>My name is Joan Saurina and I'm a 21-year-old student pursuing a degree in Artificial Intelligence. As someone concerned about climate change, I'm particularly interested in how AI can help address environmental challenges and create sustainable solutions for our planet. Outside of my studies, I find joy in connecting with nature through hiking, which has made me even more aware of the importance of preserving our natural environment. Through my work in AI, I hope to contribute to climate change mitigation efforts and make a positive impact on our planet's future.</p>

## Annex 2. Programme of the *Young Voices for the Ocean* event

**YOUNG VOICES  
FOR THE OCEAN**



**MONDAY, 3 MARCH 2025**

**VENUE: SPARKS | 60 RUE RAVENSTEIN, BRUSSELS**

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: OLIVIER SCHALBROECK & LAVINIA GIULIA POMARICO

09:00	<i>Registration &amp; Coffee</i>	
09:30	<b>OPENING ACT BY SOUNDS OF THE OCEAN</b>	
09:45	<b>WELCOME REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER KADIS</b>	
10:00	<b>YOUTH POLICY DIALOGUE WITH COMMISSIONER KADIS</b> A conversation between Commissioner Kadis and young people to help shape the European Ocean Pact.	
12:00	<b>ART EXHIBITION OPENING, NETWORKING AND WORKSHOPS</b>	
	<b>Rooms 3 &amp; 6</b>	<b>NaturArchy exhibition</b> by the JRC SciArt project
	<b>Room 1</b>	<b>Sounds of the Ocean</b>
	<b>Room 8</b>	<b>Ocean literacy island</b>
	<b>Room 2</b> Workshop A	<b>Strengthening blue education in Europe: how can EU Mission Ocean &amp; Waters deliver high(est) impact?</b> by BlueLight5, Probleu and SHORE projects
	<b>Room 4</b> Workshop B	<b>Exploring blue careers pathways</b> by BonoLab and Submariner
	<b>Room 5</b> Workshop C	<b>Ocean &amp; Art: anticipating the future while engaging the present!</b> by EU4Ocean
	<b>Room 7</b> Workshop D	<b>Ocean Literacy &amp; Blue Thread: a path towards UNOC3</b> by IOC-UNESCO
13:00	<i>Lunch</i>	

14:00	<p><b>SESSION 1: SKILLS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF OCEAN PROFESSIONALS</b></p> <p>This session will explore how to ensure the necessary capacity and skills for a sustainable blue workforce in the future, from ocean education in schools to the support needed to foster and develop blue careers.</p> <p>Keynote: Manuela Geleng, Jobs and Skills Director, DG EMPL, European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valentina Lovat, Associate Programme Specialist - Ocean Literacy, IOC-UNESCO</li> <li>Alessandro Pititto, Director at COGEA &amp; Coordinator of EMFAF Study on Blue Skills</li> <li>Philip Easthill, Secretary General at European Boating Industry &amp; Partner in EMFAF Next BlueGeneration project</li> <li>Roos Swart, Course Leader at ProSea Marine Education &amp; Partner in EMFAF Turning Blue project</li> </ul>
14:45	<p><b>SESSION 2: MISSION OCEAN &amp; WATERS ENGAGING YOUTH IN OCEAN RESTORATION</b></p> <p>This session will explore the critical role of young people in ocean restoration and achieving EU Missions objectives. It will highlight successful Mission projects that emphasize ownership, empowerment, and participation of youth.</p> <p>Keynote: John Bell, Healthy Planet Director, DG RTD, European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Florian Henkel, Youth Solidarity Corps Volunteer at Avril Association</li> <li>Elisa Conti, Project Manager at National Research Council of Italy &amp; BlueMissionMed</li> <li>Luca Jendrek, Partner in HE BlueLights project &amp; Youth Delegate at World Water Council</li> <li>Bendeguz Bachrathy, Young Plastic Pirates Ambassador</li> </ul>
15:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:00	<p><b>SESSION 3: YOUNG BLUE CITIZENS SHAPING OUR OCEAN'S FUTURE</b></p> <p>This session will explore challenges and solutions for strengthening blue citizenship in Europe, focusing on ocean literacy, youth engagement, and the role of elected representatives in advancing ocean policies.</p> <p>Keynote: Charlina Vitcheva, Director-General, DG MARE, European Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fotigui Camara, Deputy Mayor, Den Helder Municipality</li> <li>Nina Dienst, Young Ocean Advocate &amp; Project Manager of Young Citizens' Council for the Ocean</li> <li>Lana Pasic, Youth Research and Policy Manager at EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership</li> <li>David Whyte, Senior Postdoctoral Researcher at MaREI - SFI Centre for Energy, Climate and Marine</li> </ul>
16:45	<b>ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN LAUNCH: #MAKEEUBLUE: CITIES IN ACTION!</b>
17:00	<b>CLOSING BY CHARLINA VITCHEVA</b>
17:15	<i>Networking cocktail</i>
18:00	<b>END OF THE EVENT</b>



### **Annex 3. Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue**

The Youth Policy Dialogue began with an introductory speech by Costas Kadis, the EU's Commissioner for Fisheries and Oceans. He explained that the European Ocean Days reflect the EU's commitment to the sustainable blue economy and the protection of our oceans, which account for 70% of the earth's surface, regulate the climate and provide essential resources sustaining life. He also referred to the upcoming European Ocean Pact, which aims to ensure coherence across all policy areas (e.g. energy, security, transport, fisheries) linked to the ocean via a form of governance.

For the discussion, a moderator sat at one end of the stage and the Commissioner at the other end. The young people sat in chairs between the moderator and the Commissioner. In general, the group dynamics seemed lively, the choreography worked well (e.g. the atmospheric music and images of the ocean before the start of the event) as did the interactions between the moderator, the Commissioner and the young people. The setting looked good and the discussion overall went smoothly.

There were three panel sessions of five young people, with each addressing one main overarching theme and two sub-themes.

#### **Panel 1: Managing the ocean**

##### **Sub-theme: Marine knowledge & Citizen science**

###### ***Knowledge of the oceans***

Our lack of knowledge of the oceans was a major topic of discussion. This is very relevant because knowledge is important to develop specific policies relating to the ocean. An idea suggested here was to use an ecosystems-informed approach to gain a better understanding of the interconnected nature of the oceans to help with climate resilience. Commissioner Kadis noted that the Commission is trying to adopt this approach and underlined the need to have sound knowledge of the ocean to ensure its preservation.

Simplifying jargon words, making knowledge about the oceans more digestible/accessible to the public and allowing people to have their say via public consultations were all recommended. There was an example of how to spread knowledge in Malta. There, an app has been developed to help local fishermen identify different species, particularly useful in Malta as there are many 'invasive' species in the seas around the island. The fishermen take a picture of the app and are then given information about it, such as if it is edible or not. In connection with ocean literacy, using the media as a way to bridge the gap between citizens and the EU instruments was suggested.

Commissioner Kadis stressed the need to promote awareness and knowledge about the ocean, starting with the educational system. He pointed out that some EU member states have programmes about the ocean and its importance for our daily lives, adding that the Commission will scale up the European coalition for ocean literacy (EU4Ocean) through the European Ocean Pact. He also noted that policies are more effective when people, including young people, make use of free tools such as the European Marine Observation Data Network (EMODNet) and its wealth of information plus instruments such as the Digital Twin Ocean (a digital model to simulate the ocean).

##### **Sub-theme: Maritime spatial planning & marine renewable energy**

###### ***Striking a balance between protecting the ocean and developing a strong blue economy***

This is very relevant because developing a strong blue economy creates jobs, but it is also important not to damage the oceans. For example, it was noted that wind farm type renewable energy projects can help with biodiversity as areas around them are protected from ships and 'oyster hotels' (areas where oysters can grow) are a positive feature. However, it was also pointed out that they damage the environment. It was recommended that comprehensive environmental assessments are a requirement for site selection. Given that there is a race towards

deep sea mining and exploiting critical minerals for the future (e.g. cobalt, nickel), the importance of balancing that with protection of the oceans was noted.

On deep sea mining, Commissioner Kadis said that the EU has a precautionary approach whereby, if it is not sure about the impact of an activity on the ocean, it will not allow the activity. In connection with renewable energies, he noted that a new principle in the EU's Competitiveness Compass is to reduce dependency on fossil fuels. He also explained that the Commission will be evaluating the Maritime Spatial Planning plans of EU member states with coastal areas. He described, for example, using a given maritime area for renewable energies and fishing as a good example of this. One speaker noted how important multiple uses of the ocean area is for big cities with big harbours (e.g. for tourism, sports activities and fishing).

## **Panel 2: An inclusive & sustainable ocean**

### **Sub-theme: Fisheries**

#### ***Biodiversity protection, maritime spatial planning and governance***

To deal with overfishing and competing interests to biodiversity protection and maritime spatial planning, it was argued that the European Ocean Pact needs to prioritise well-designed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It was also noted that international agreements need to take into account the longstanding relationship of local people to the sea. Key in this respect is to connect ocean health with people's health.

It was pointed out that indigenous people and coastal fishing needed to be protected as opposed to large-scale fishing. Here, it was argued that the European Ocean Pact says that people who are traditional custodians of the coast should be prioritised.

It was also noted that there have been incidents when trawlers have encroached into exclusive protected zones around the coast. There was a call for penalties/repercussions when this encroaching takes place.

In response, Commissioner Kadis said that international ocean governance was a main pillar of the European Ocean Pact. He stressed that global governance was a priority area. On the idea of penalties, he said that provisions such as penalties can be added to international agreements.

### **Sub-theme: Engagement of all countries and voices**

#### ***Building alliances and governance***

This is an important topic as progress can only be made in making oceans healthier and with the blue economy if alliances are built and a form of shared governance is developed. Collaboration between different stakeholders (e.g. between governments, local governments, the private sector and youth) was highlighted as being key in determining how to develop a sustainable blue economy.

Commissioner Kadis referred to global governance for the oceans as a priority area and noted the need to build alliances with the rest of the world, for example at the UN Oceans Conference in Nice in June this year. He pointed out that international governance and ocean governance are main pillars of the European Oceans Pact and referred to an aim to reach bilateral and multilateral agreements in this context. The Baltic seas were noted as an area where fishing stocks have collapsed and problems include changes in salinity and overfishing. He said that the European Oceans Pact would address this sort of problem, adding that the Commission will meet ministers from the Baltics to discuss how to bring about the recovery of fish stocks.

The importance of youth being involved in future discussions was also highlighted, for example at the local government level.

### **Panel 3: A future-proof ocean**

#### **Sub-theme: Blue careers & generational renewal**

##### ***Accessibility to funding/training and attracting people into the blue economy in the future***

This is a relevant topic as it is about job creation. The complexity of bureaucracy in applying for funding plus problems with accessibility (training mainly being in big areas and not always in small coastal areas/islands plus local languages (as people speak in dialects too)). Commissioner Kadis noted that the Commission is looking to identify where bureaucracy can be reduced.

It was pointed out that young people see the fishing communities as impoverished. As such, better levels of compensation and better promotion of the blue economy were highlighted as ways to attract young people to the sector. Commissioner Kadis said that generational renewal is one of the biggest challenges in the fisheries sector, that development of the blue economy is one of the main pillars of the European Oceans Pact and that skills and support for young people will be a priority in the Pact.

#### **Sub-theme: Research and innovation & new technologies**

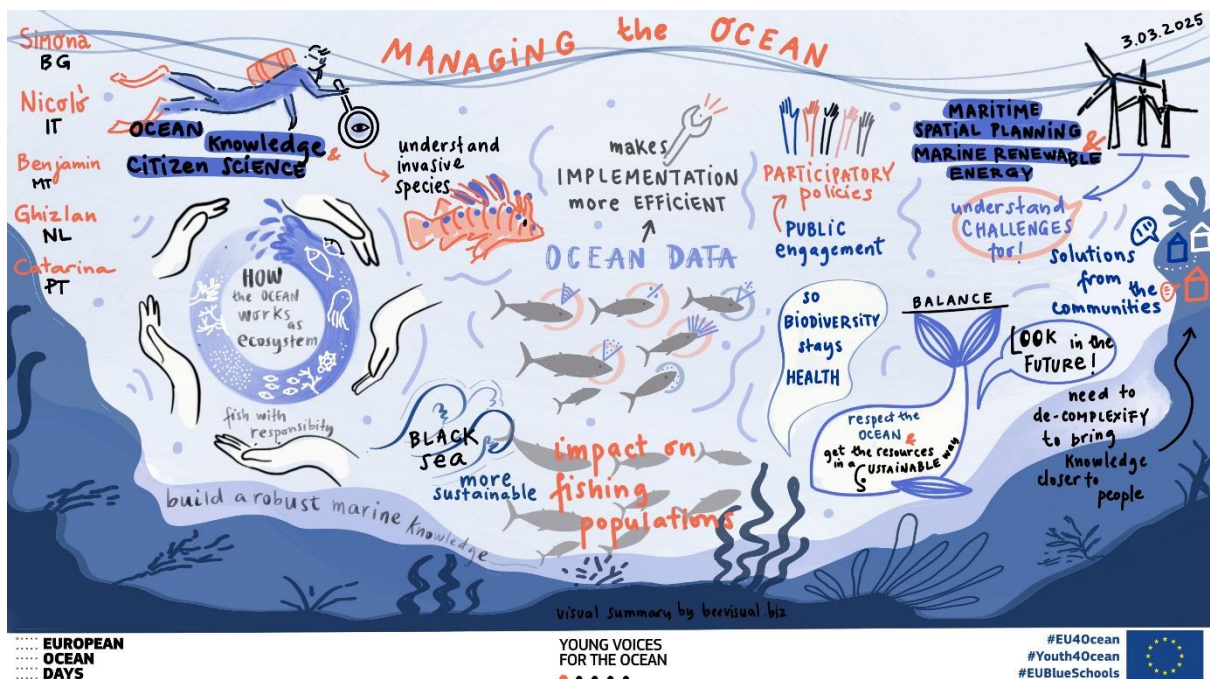
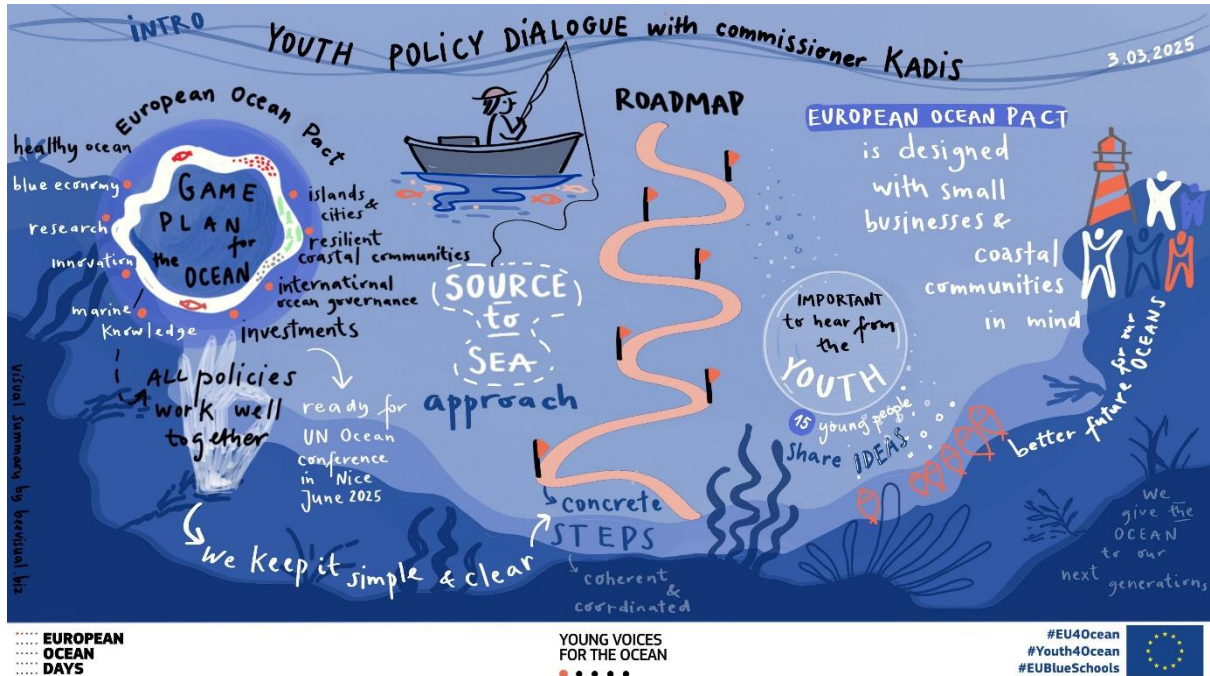
##### ***The use of Artificial Intelligence***

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was discussed too. This is relevant as it is linked to the previous topic, knowledge of the oceans. In terms of AI, it was noted that a digital copy of the whole ocean can help us make reliable predictions in the future. That would require a combination of data collection from the EU and institutions across the world to build models based on a big data set. Fresh data from the data collected can also be built up, i.e. synthetic data. The importance of involving landlocked countries as well as EU countries with coastlines was noted. Here, AI could be used to promote ocean literacy, giving everyone access to information about the ocean. It was also noted that AI could be used to make calculations for monitoring systems to track fish stocks.

There was a suggestion to involve the public in research, for example by their providing data for AI models. Commissioner Kadis said that care would need to be taken with data to avoid data biases and that using anonymous data was important.



#### Annex 4. Visual recording of the Youth Policy Dialogue



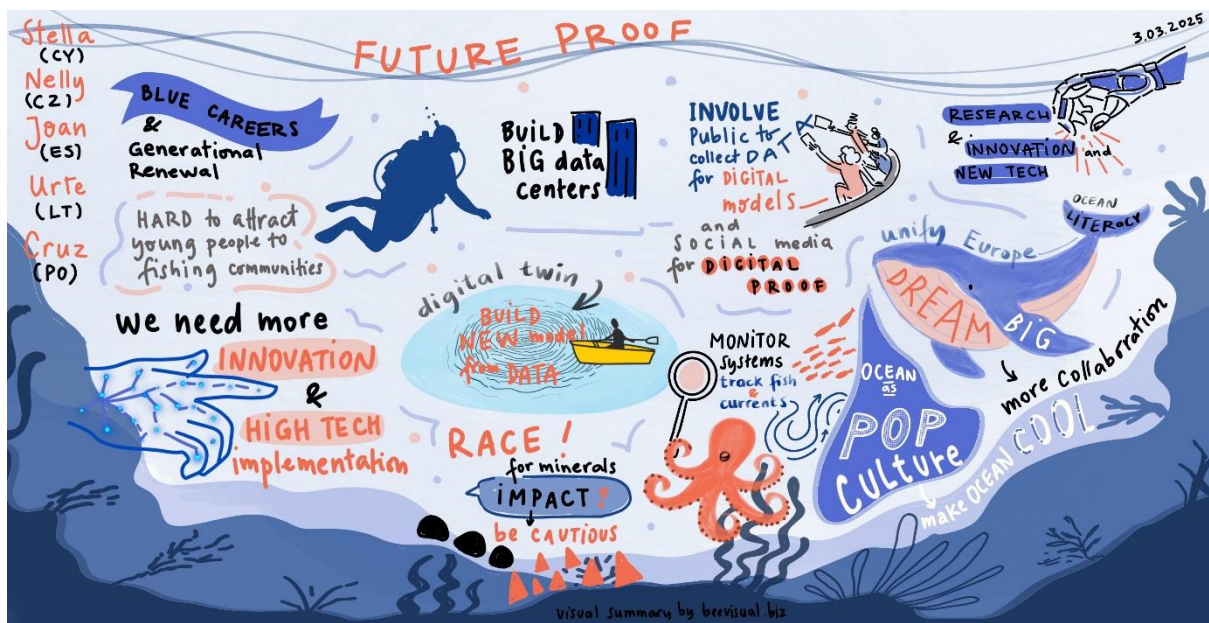




EUROPEAN  
OCEAN  
DAYS

YOUNG VOICES  
FOR THE OCEAN

#EU4Ocean  
#Youth4Ocean  
#EUBlueSchools



EUROPEAN  
OCEAN  
DAYS

YOUNG VOICES  
FOR THE OCEAN

#EU4Ocean  
#Youth4Ocean  
#EUBlueSchools

