



SEA4FUTURE PROJECT LAUNCHES TO DRIVE A “BLUE TRANSFORMATION” OF MEDITERRANEAN FISHERIES

4 February 2026 – A new Horizon Europe project, **SEA4FUTURE**, officially launched on 1 January 2026 with the ambition to catalyse a “blue transformation” of the Mediterranean seafood sector. The project addresses key challenges facing the region, including environmental degradation, overexploited fish stocks and socio-economic vulnerability in coastal communities. SEA4FUTURE held its official kick-off meeting in Alicante on 29–30 January 2026, bringing together organisations from across Europe to plan the first phase of activities.

Funded by the [European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency](#) (CINEA) under the [Horizon Europe Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”](#), SEA4FUTURE will run for 48 months, until 31 December 2029, with a maximum EU contribution of €7.99 million. Coordinated by the [University of Alicante](#) (Spain), the project brings together 22 partners from eight countries — Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, France, Germany, Türkiye and the United Kingdom. The consortium includes universities, national marine research institutes, SMEs, NGOs, a regional authority and a fishers’ cooperative. It is complemented by the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (NIOF) in Egypt, which contributes as an external expert research organisation, supporting pollution hotspot mapping and regional capacity building.

SEA4FUTURE places fishers at the heart of innovation, turning them into active data collectors, co-designers of new fishing gears and co-managers of local measures. The project combines citizen science approaches — including eDNA and genomics surveys — with at-sea trials of more selective trawls and nets, as well as bycatch reduction devices for sharks, rays, sea turtles and dolphins. These technical innovations are paired with decision-support models that allow scientists, decision makers and fishers to test management scenarios together. In parallel, the project will assess and improve certification schemes and help build new markets for sustainable seafood, including products derived from invasive species.

Organised into eight interconnected work packages, SEA4FUTURE will test its tools and approaches in seven “living labs” located across the Mediterranean and adjacent regions. These include the Mediterranean coasts of Spain and France, Sicily, Crete, the Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, and Madeira Island. Together, these sites cover a wide range of fishing gears, from trawlers to small-scale nets and longlines. Each living lab will be used to co-develop and refine practical, locally adapted solutions before scaling them up across the Mediterranean and beyond.

By combining science, technology and the experience of those who work at sea every day, SEA4FUTURE aims to demonstrate that Mediterranean fisheries can be both a driver of local livelihoods and a guardian



of marine biodiversity. The project seeks to show, in practice, that a fairer, low-impact seafood system is not a distant vision, but something that can be built net by net.

More information coming soon at sea4future.eu

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