INTERGROUP

SEAS, RIVERS, ISLANDS AND COASTAL AREAS

REPORT 2014 – 2019



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
INTERGROUP

Seas, Rivers, Islands & Coastal Areas

GESINE MEISSNER

PRESIDENT OF THE SEARICA INTERGROUP



When we succeeded in establishing the SEARICA intergroup in January 2015, I wanted it to be a good platform to discuss all maritime topics otherwise spread over different committees in the European Parliament. However, the great interest and success of this project came as a surprise even to us who initiated it. In only four years, we organised more than 50 events with about 13000 participants, ranging from high-level meetings with Commissioners to a big exhibition on marine litter. Thanks to its open approach, we managed to have all representatives of the marine community on board; from the maritime industry, to NGOs, researchers and politicians from national and regional levels as well as eight DGs of the European Commission.

We are living on a blue planet with a rapidly growing population. 70 per cent of the Earth's surface is covered with water. In the future, the ocean and its potential for a further development will be of an even greater importance. However, this development has to be sustainable. Every second breath we take comes from the ocean. Seas and oceans play an important role regulating our climate, and they can only feed us if they are healthy. That is why the European approach with its focus on integrated maritime policy, sustainable blue growth, maritime spatial planning, sustainable fisheries, and promoting marine research and innovation is that crucial. The EU is leading in green shipping, blue energy or fighting plastic pollution, but still needs to be more ambitious to create further marine protected areas and increase ocean literacy.

Our SEARICA-conferences covered a wide range of topics like underwater noise, blue energy, marine litter, energy on islands, blue careers or food from the ocean. It has been a pleasure to work with so many great colleagues from various parts of Europe and different political groups. Together we could give the seas, islands and coastal communities a voice by pushing for maritime initiatives and amendments. Without a MARE committee, it was on us to keep maritime topics high on the agenda in the EP.

I would like to thank my Vice-presidents and colleagues, all stakeholders and speakers, all participants, partners and co-organisers who helped us to raise attention for the maritime sector and the importance of our oceans. I thank particularly Commissioner Karmenu Vella for his great support throughout all the years, CPMR, our secretariat, and my assistant Klaas de Boer – without him, none of this would have been possible.

Gesine Meißner

KARMENU VELLA

EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR ENVIRONMENT, MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES



Europe is a maritime continent. One in three Europeans live within 50 kilometres of the sea. Our coastal areas provide a wealth of diversity and opportunity: from ancient maritime heritage to cutting-edge technology, from moments of leisure to exciting business ventures, from the popular beaches of the Mediterranean to the remote rugged cliffs along parts of the Atlantic coast.

For the past five years, this European Commission has been on a mission for clean, healthy, productive oceans and thriving coastal communities. Our European interest is to protect and preserve our rich natural environment, and the astonishing biodiversity our seas and coastlines host, while creating new economic opportunities for the future. And we have made progress on many fronts.

For example, we have tabled ambitious proposals to restrict certain single-use plastic products and thereby reduce plastic pollution. Our legally binding recycling targets make the EU a global leader in tackling marine litter. We have also designated more than 10 % of our marine and coastal areas as Marine Protected Areas, two years before the international deadline of 2020.

On the business side, we have continued to support traditional activities like fisheries and aquaculture, while putting emerging blue economy sectors firmly on the map. Take ocean energy, which has received substantial EU funding for research and testing, and is rapidly moving to the pre-commercial phase. Innovative maritime businesses can benefit from our local matchmaking events with investors, or from the blue investment platform that we plan to launch later this year.

Finally, for the first time ever, we have put in place a holistic approach to international ocean action. Our ocean governance agenda, adopted in 2016, has reinvigorated international ocean cooperation and cemented the European Union's reputation as a reliable international partner, a strong supporter of marine research, and a top provider of aid and technical assistance for sustainable ocean action and economic growth.

In all of this, the SEARICA Intergroup has been one of our strongest allies. Whether on ocean literacy, food from the oceans, or the link between oceans and climate change, SEARICA Members were always ready to speak up for a strong maritime dimension to the European Union's work.

In the past five years, I had many opportunities to meet with SEARICA Members, and to present the European Commission's work at some of their many conferences and events. I have greatly appreciated our exchanges. I would like to thank them – and in particular Gesine Meißner as President and since 2018 Parliament's Special Envoy for Maritime Policy – for their tireless efforts to give the oceans a voice in the European Parliament.

At a time when our seas and oceans are facing a complex web of intense pressures – climate change, over-exploitation, biodiversity loss, plastic pollution, to name just a few – these are just the kind of allies they need. That is why I hope that the maritime dimension will feature prominently in the work of the next European Parliament, after the European elections in May 2019. C

reating a parliamentary committee dedicated solely to oceans and maritime affairs would be a big step forward in this regard.

TONINO PICULA

SEARICA VICE-CHAIR IN CHARGE OF ISLANDS



Over five hundred populated EU islands have an overall population of 15 million people. Yet, none of the European Parliament bodies were in particular focused on the island agenda. By joining forces with Gesine we finally gave islands the attention they seek for a long time and they deserve.

One of the main goals of our Intergroup was to help eliminate disadvantage factors of island life by supporting appropriate conditions for islanders to live and develop, while respecting environmental standards. Trough many events we gathered key stakeholders and offered our solutions. Together with our colleagues we managed to ensure European funding for the Clean energy for EU islands initiative and Island secretariat. The European Parliament adopted also a resolution on a special status of islands.

I believe we achieved some great results and showed that islands can be frontrunners and offer solutions for island problems. But there is still a lot to be done. SEARICA was one of the cornerstones of this mandate for me and I can only wish it continues to operate at an even greater pace in the years to come.

RICARDO SERRÃO SANTOS

SEARICA VICE-CHAIR IN CHARGE OF MARINE KNOWLEDGE



Members of the European Parliament constantly state that decisions and policies must be based on thorough scientific evidence. The fact is that scientific advising to policy is a complex and difficult issue and scientific evidences are not free of uncertainties. Science advice to policy is not an easy and straightforward task, it grew in complexity and thought, and nowadays involves a lot more than simply scientists and politics. Turning scientific evidence in good governance will not be successful solely with scientists and politicians; it also needs the involvement of representatives from all society.

Nurturing the dialog among these different sectors interested in contributing for a better governance of ours seas, rivers, islands and coastal areas was the mission of SEARICA. I must stress that my work as a co-legislator and a politician would not have been complete without the enlightenment of the discussions and exchanges of information, knowledge and points of view enabled by the SEARICA workshops.

With SEARICA we have worked in the need of an ocean literate society. For better policies, we need well-informed citizens.

ALAIN CADEC

VICE-CHAIR IN CHARGE OF THE ATLANTIC AND CHAIR OF THE PECH COMMITTEE



I have been Member of the Committee on Fisheries for ten years including five years as Chairman. Specialised in maritime affairs, I know that it is crucial to have more interconnections between all the policies that concern the oceans and the seas.

At the European Parliament, the maritime policies are divided between different committees such as the Committees on Transports, Environment or Fisheries. The SEARICA Intergroup has been the bridge that brought all Members interested in the maritime affairs together. We have been working together on different topics independently on the Committee we belong to and we managed to make a real difference. The other purpose of the SEARICA Intergroup was to raise awareness on the challenges the marine environment is facing.

The exhibition on marine litter was in that perspective a real success. For almost five years, the Intergroup has managed to fulfil its purpose: influence the decision-making process on European maritime policies.

ELENI MARIANOU

SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS (CPMR)



The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions has acted over the last two European Parliament mandates as Secretariat for the Searica Intergroup. European association of some 150 maritime region, we are strong supporters of territorial diversity and maritime affairs.

The Intergroup's initial objective of gaining recognition in Brussels in the maritime field and in support of islands challenges has been fulfilled. Engaging with maritime stakeholders across Europe and beyond, we have supported the members of the Intergroup in defending maritime policies, advocating for a strong Europe of the Sea, and to making sure no territory is left behind. We have shared ideas, successes and challenges with MEPs and Commissioners. The Intergroup is an important forum allowing to address key issues with MEPs and representatives of the European territories and their people. Given the results and the momentum created since its inception, I sincerely hope that the newly elected MEPs will renew the SEARICA Intergroup to make sure that the key issues addressed remain at the core of EU's priorities.

GILLES SIMEONI

PRESIDENT OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF CORSICA



Since the Intergroup took up the issue of insularity in 2015 with the support of the Islands Commission, it has been an important forum for initiating discussions with the European institutions.

It has enabled the European Island Regions to exchange with Members of the European Parliament that are sensitive to their challenges, to expose the difficulties they face due to the combination of territorial discontinuity / smallness of internal markets and also to propose and think together about solutions. I had the opportunity, with members of the Intergroup and other European islands, to present these proposals to Mrs Cretu, Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy. This meeting strengthened our working relationship with the members of the Intergroup who follow island issues.

The islands will still need the Intergroup during the next legislature and will be there to support European Parliamentarians.

THE MISSION

A SHORT STORY OF THE SEARICA INTERGROUP

On 11 December 2014, SEARICA was adopted as one of the 28 European Parliament Intergroups. This decision was the result of a very successful campaign collecting the signature of 88 MEPs to support the establishment of an Intergroup on Seas, Islands, Rivers and Coastal Areas. From the very beginning, the Intergroup was one of the largest and most active. Having Members from seven political groups and 21 countries, its aim was to build on but also broaden the work of the previous Seas and Coastal Areas Intergroup.

With the support of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) as its secretariat, SEARICA organised more than 50 events since its first meeting in January 2015 in Strasbourg. A key success factor is the twofold structure of thematic and geographical focus areas reflected by its board consisting of one President and eleven Vice-Chairs covering topics from islands and outermost regions to marine knowledge, maritime industries and the Atlantic or Baltic Sea.

SEARICA events became quickly an important platform for the maritime community. EU funded projects and programmes such as AtlantOS or BONUS as well as important stakeholders and initiatives such as the European Marine Board or the Waterborne Technology Platform could present and discuss their work. Its more than 500 speakers addressed crucial topics for the blue economy such as banking on a sustainable blue economy, the decarbonisation of shipping or skills and young talent for blue careers. The Intergroup worked closely with the European Commission, in particular DG MARE, DG RTD, DG MOVE, DG REGIO and DG ENV to discuss European initiatives and legislation such as International Ocean Governance, the Birds and Habitats Directive, Motorways of the Sea and Cohesion Policy.

At High-Level meetings with Commissioners and leading stakeholders such as the Secretary General of the IMO, Members of the Intergroup and regional politicians could discuss the potential and importance of the blue economy providing food from the ocean and jobs through emerging sectors such as blue biotechnology. However, considering the critical state of the marine biodiversity, the intergroup also dedicated a lot of attention to environmental challenges such as climate change, marine litter or underwater noise.

Finally, SEARICA positioned itself at the science-policy-society interface, promoting ocean literacy to educate young citizens about the importance of our seas for our daily life and connecting scientists and politicians to discuss the future and benefits of marine and maritime research for a knowledge-based decision making process.

Thanks to the efforts of SEARICA, a Clean energy for EU islands initiative and secretariat were established and funding for a pilot project on ocean literacy was granted. SEARICA was also on the forefront to fight for a Mission: Healthy Ocean in the next research and innovation framework programme Horizon Europe, pushed for the maritime activities among the eligible areas of InvestEU and advocated for a sufficient budget under direct management of the next EMFF to ensure the financial support of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the future.

SEARICA PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN RAISING OCEANS AND SEAS ON THE EU'S POLITICAL AGENDA AND CONNECTING POLICY MAKERS, SCIENTISTS AND STAKEHOLDERS. WE HOPE THE NEXT EP WILL BUILD ON THEIR GOOD WORK AND BECOME A TRUE CHAMPION FOR CLEAN AND HEALTHY SEAS.

ANN DOM, DEPUTY DIRECTOR SEAS AT RISK

THE SEARICA GROUP HAS ENABLED SO MANY EXPERTS AND DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS TO DISCUSS, TO SHOWCASE, TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND FORMULATE OPINIONS ABOUT THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF OUR OCEANS AND SEAS FOR OUR CITIZENS , ECONOMIES AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. THE URGENCY TO ACT NOW AND CONTINUE THE COMMITMENT FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE PLANET IS NOT ANYMORE AN OPTION IT IS A MUST!

SIGI GRUBER, HEAD OF MARINE RESOURCES UNIT, DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

THE SEARICA GROUP HAS RAISED THE CONCERN FOR OUR OCEANS AND SEAS HIGH ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA. ITS VISION HAS BEEN CLEAR: OUR OCEANS ARE A PRIORITY WE CANNOT AFFORD TO NEGLECT. WE ARE COMMITTED TO BUILDING ON THAT VISION.

BERNHARD FRIESS, DIRECTOR MARITIME POLICY AND BLUE ECONOMY, DG MARE

SEARICA NEVER FAILS TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT, AT LEAST IN MY OPINION. THEIR EVENTS ARE ALWAYS ON TOP OF THE BLUE GROWTH WAVE.

NOÉMIE WOUTERS, CEO AT GREENBRIDGE NV.

THE SEARICA INTERGROUP MADE A UNIQUE DIFFERENCE IN FACILITATING ENGAGEMENT WITH OCEAN ISSUES BETWEEN THE PARLIAMENT AND OCEAN STAKEHOLDERS. I PERSONALLY AM GRATEFUL TO THE SEARICA INTERGROUP FOR ADVANCING THE VISIBILITY OF OCEAN OBSERVING, OCEAN SCIENCE AND ALL THE WORK DONE TO PROMOTE A MISSION: HEALTHY OCEAN IN THE NEW HORIZON EUROPE FUNDING FRAMEWORK.

PROF MARTIN VISBECK, PRESIDENT OF THE OCEANOGRAPHY SOCIETY AND HEAD OF THE RESEARCH UNIT PHYSICAL OCEANOGRAPHY, GEOMAR

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, SEARICA HAS BECOME THE PREEMINENT FORUM FOR DISCUSSING MARINE AND MARITIME RELATED TOPICS IN BRUSSELS. THE INTERGROUP HAS BEEN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS AS A PLATFORM FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS AT EU-LEVEL TO EXCHANGE IDEAS, INFORMATION AND OPINIONS ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AND THE FUTURE OF MARINE AND MARITIME EUROPE.

STEFAN FRITZ, HEAD OF THE BRUSSELS OFFICE OF THE GERMAN MARINE RESEARCH CONSORTIUM (KDM)



SEARICA conferences are a unique opportunity for the maritime community to meet at the European Parliament. Local and regional politicians, scientists, students, representatives of NGOs, maritime industries and MEPs discuss here about the Research and Development for the European Waterborne sector.

Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of CPMR, has supported the SEARICA Intergroup since its establishment in 2015 and has given the opportunity to regions and islands throughout Europe to engage in maritime topics.



The SEARICA Intergroup has been at the forefront in the European Parliament to fight plastic pollution of the ocean. Together with the Sky Ocean Rescue Campaign and WWF the intergroup organised on 15 May 2018 a Pass on Plastic Pledge signed by almost 100 MEPs and the European Commissioners Frans Timmermans and Karmenu Vella.



Without a Maritime Committee in the European Parliament, the SEARICA Intergroup has been working very closely with DG MARE to keep maritime affairs high on the political agenda. At a High-Level Meeting on 30 January 2017 the SEARICA Members Ricardo Serrão Santos, Tonino Picula, José Inácio Faria and Gesine Meissner discussed with Commissioner Karmenu Vella about the importance of an International Ocean Governance.



On 7 March 2019 the SEARICA Intergroup welcomed the IMO Secretary General, Kitack Lim, at the European Parliament to talk about low-carbon shipping. The event was co-organised with the Chair of the TRAN Committee, Karima Delli.



To develop the blue economy sustainably is key. Ann Dom, Deputy Director of Seas at Risk, raised her concerns about economic activities in the deep sea at a SEARICA conference about deep sea mining in November 2016.





On 5 May 2015, SEARICA kicks off with a conference on 'How to develop a stronger Europe of the Sea?' President of the SEARICA Intergroup Gesine Meissner and Commissioner of DG Mare Karmenu Vella and CPMR Vice-President George Alexakis deliver the opening speeches about how to achieve a sustainable blue growth.



The SEARICA Intergroup cooperated very closely with the scientific community organising science-policy briefings together with EU funded research projects like Blue-Action or AtlantOS. Stefan Fritz, Head of the Brussels Office of the German Marine Research Consortium (KDM), discussed on 4 September 2018 with Members of the SEARICA Intergroup and researchers from Denmark, Norway, the UK, Germany and the Faroe Islands about potential impacts of a slowing Gulf Stream.



Water and maritime challenges don't stop at borders. To tackle the issue of marine litter in the Mediterranean, European countries have to work closely with the other neighbouring countries. On 21 November 2018 SEARICA Members Gesine Meissner, Davor Skrlec and Michela Giuffrida welcomed Members of the Moroccan, Lebanese, Tunesian Parliaments, NGOs and the Head of Corporacte Communications and key stakeholders to discuss how to achieve a plastic-free Mediterranean Sea.



Islands and coastal areas are popular holiday destinations. To ensure they remain attractive, Giuseppe Sciacca, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Islands Commission explains initiatives taken by Islands and Mediterranean communities on how to manage waste and reduce litter caused by marine and coastal tourism.

Maritime education and ocean literacy has been one of the priorities for the Searica Intergroup. Julia Schnetzer, Scientific Coordinator of the Ocean Plastic Lab, explains an exhibit about microplastic pollution to SEARICA president Gesine Meissner.



Thanks to a close cooperation between the SEARICA Intergroup, DG Research and Innovation, the Konsortium Deutsche Meeresforschung (KDM) and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Ocean Plastics Lab exhibition opened its container doors for 10 days at the European Parliament in Brussels in April 2018. Back to back with the exhibition, SEARICA organised a series of events with speakers like James Honeyborn, executive producer of the BBC series Blue Planet II, Irene Diéz Ruiz, founder of the Fundación Ecoalf – Upcycling the Oceans, Prof. Martin Visbeck, Head of the Research Unit on Physical Oceanography at the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research, and Parliamentary State Secretary Michael Meister.





In 2015, the SEARICA board members Ricardo Serrão Santos, Sofia Ribeiro, Ulrike Rodust, Gesine Meissner and Tonino Picula sent a Call for Oceans and Climate to the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 21. Frank Schweikert, founder of the German Ocean Foundation, stopped with the Aldebaran, a marine research & broadcast ship, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg to take it with him to Paris where he handed it over to the French Minister of the Environment Ségolène Royal.

Gilles Simeoni, President of Corsica Region and of the CPMR Island Commission wants to unlock the potential of island regions for the benefit of the EU as whole.





In the end, there is only one ocean. International cooperation and governance was a frequently discussed topic. During a roundtable discussion on marine litter SEARICA president Gesine Meissner and the German MEP Tiemo Woelken discussed with the Indonesian Deputy Chief of Mission in Brussels, Dupito Dorma Simamora, about the global challenge of marine litter.



A big challenge for the maritime industry is the shortage of skilled labour. SEARICA Members Gesine Meissner, Sergio Cofferati and Dariusz Rosati discussed in March 2016 with Christophe Tytgat, Secretary General of SEA Europe, and Lowri Evans, Director-General Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, about skills for the future maritime technology.



On 11 April 2018 SEARICA President Gesine Meissner and the Croation MEP Davor Skrlec signed the Charter of commitments for sustainable material resource management and circular economy to support the INTERREG BLUEISLANDS project and ACR+ in their efforts to promote a more sustainable tourism on Mediterranean islands.



The SEARICA Intergroup was also a platform to present new maritime initiatives at European level. On 27 January 2016 SEARICA organised a conference on Ships in need of assistance where stakeholders like EMSA, ECSA, ESPO, IUMI presented a Joint Declaration on the EU Operational Guidelines on Places of Refuge (PoR) to the Commissioner for Transport, Violeta Bulc, Isabelle Ryckbost, Secretary General of the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) and SEARICA President Gesine Meissner.



In June 2016 the Irish MEP, Deirdre Clune and Ricardo Serrão Santos from the Azores discussed with the Director for the Bioeconomy in DG Research & Innovation about how to activate the Atlantic Action Plan. The conference was a common initiative of SEARICA President Gesine Meissner and the Atlantic Strategy Group.

Corina Cretu, Commissioner for Regional Policy, emphasizes on key areas where Cohesion Policy support to island regions could be improved.





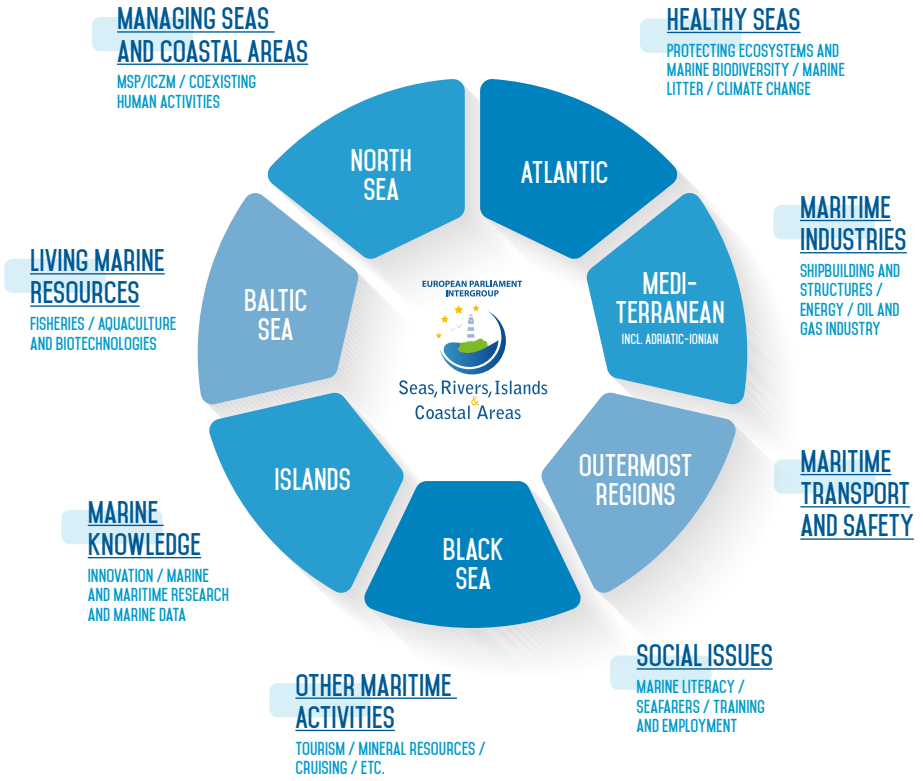
For a conference on a Mission: Plastic Free Ocean, SEARICA invited on 10 April 2018 Melati Wijsen, 17 years old co-founder of Bye Bye Plastic Bags in Bali. SEARICA President Gesine Meissner met with her before to speak about how to reduce plastic waste on the Indonesian island and how to engage young people in ocean protection.

CPMR's Nick Brookes discusses together with MEPs Tonino Picula and Sofia Ribeiro, how to treat islands in Cohesion Policy on 10 March 2016.



THE STRUCTURE

ORGANISATION OF THE INTERGROUP



THE TEAM

BOARD MEMBERS OF THE INTERGROUP



GESINE MEISSNER
PRESIDENT OF THE INTERGROUP, MANAGING SEAS AND COASTAL AREAS



ALAIN CADEC
ATLANTIC



SERGIO COFFERATI
MARITIME INDUSTRIES



ROSA ESTARAS FERRAGUT
MEDITERRANEAN



GERBEN-JAN GERBRANDY
HEALTHY SEAS



MICHELA GIUFFRIDA
SOCIAL ISSUES



MASSIMO PAOLUCCI
ADRIATIC & IONIAN



TONINO PICULA
ISLANDS



SOFIA RIBEIRO
OUTERMOST REGIONS



ULRIKE RODUST
BALTIC SEA



RICARDO SERRÃO SANTOS
MARINE KNOWLEDGE



ISABELLE THOMAS
MARITIME TRANSPORT AND SAFETY

THE EVENTS

A SELECTION OF OUR POSTERS

The SEARICA Intergroup organised more than 50 events in the European Parliament.
At more than 30 conferences about 500 speakers and more than 5000 participants discussed the ecological, economic and social dimensions of the ocean and the blue economy.





THE FACTS

SEARICA IN NUMBERS

EVENTS
MORE THAN 50

PARTICIPANTS
MORE THAN 13000

DGS INVOLVED
8
MARE, RTD, ENV, GROW, MOVE, REGIO, ENER, CLIMATE

COMMISSIONERS
3
KARMENU VELLA (MARE & ENV)
VIOLETA BULC (MOVE)
CORINA CRETU (REGIO)

REGIONS
20+

SPEAKERS
ABOUT 500

DOWNLOADS
2284
DOWNLOADS OF MOST POPULAR PRESENTATION BY PATRICK ANVROIN, CPMR

IMPRINT

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YOU PROTECT WHAT YOU LOVE. LET US MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO LOVE OUR SEAS AND OCEANS – FOR A SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY AND A BETTER FUTURE OF OUR PLANET!

GESINE MEISSNER

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