

Feedback from European Marine Board to [European Commission's roadmap for a European climate law](#) (27 January 2020)

All human activities conducted in Europe must comply to the upcoming Climate Law. Future climate change depends on current and future greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn depend on international policy. The only option to avoid catastrophic climate change is to make rapid and fundamental changes to our energy, industrial, transport, agricultural and consumption systems such that we move towards net-zero or negative carbon emissions within 20-30 years. This may sound dramatic, but compared to the potential human cost, it is essential.

Considering this, do not forget about the “blue” Europe! Europe has the world’s largest maritime territory (including outer regions), covering more than 11 million km². This is much larger than the land it holds and accounts for almost half of Europe’s GDP. The ocean drives climate: warmer oceans result in sea-level rise and climate-related extreme events, which affect coastal activities and affect millions of lives in Europe, due to, for instance, increased coastal erosion, hurricanes, meteotsunamis or catastrophic mass mortalities of organisms due to climate stress. Climate change also has a direct role in the loss of biological diversity. This loss contributes to the alteration of ecosystems, affecting essential services provided by these ecosystems, such as food provision and coastal natural protection.

It is imperative that global climate policy discussions are underpinned by the clear understanding that we are already committed to significant global warming and sea-level rise that will have profound impacts on future generations and on Earth’s ecosystems. Moreover, that continued emissions, even if reduced, will commit us to further warming and sea-level rise. The policy discussions must also recognise and support the critical role of climate and ocean science in ensuring an appropriate, evidence based response to the inevitable changes to come.

In addition, global frameworks need to be aligned, which require national-level reporting of, for example the voluntary national reviews of the SDGs. Member States will also have to comply both with their obligations at a regional level, such as EU legislations, and international obligations from e.g. treaties, and adjust their national legal and policy frameworks to meet their requirements. Do not allow achieving the objectives of climate-neutrality by 2050 at all costs, to avoid institutionalized destruction of the natural environment (e.g. windmills in natural reserves); and co-design an efficient enforcement of implementing measures at Member State level and at the European institutions (European Parliament, Directorate Generals, etc.). Other important aspects not mentioned in the text are the “just transition” and the “leave no-one behind” principles, pivotal for the success of the climate law, and to enable a sustainable behavioural change towards climate-neutrality.

Detailed recommendations on what to do are listed in the WWF’s Climate, Nature and our 1.5°C Future: A synthesis of IPCC and IPBES reports (WWF, 2019) and detailed IPCC Special Reports. In addition, the framework of the World Climate Research Programme Grand Challenge Weather and Climate Extremes is useful to outline the developments required for science at the European level.