



for environment and sustainability  
www.vardagroup.org

Stichting Varda  
Dufaystraat 8  
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The Netherlands

# Annual Report 2021

Following start-up delays as a result of the Corona pandemic, Stichting Varda was able to support two projects in 2021.

## Our Fish

Our Fish is working to end overfishing and restore a healthy ocean ecosystem. By collaborating with others, and deploying robust evidence, Our Fish is calling for an end to overfishing as a critical and significant action to address the biodiversity and climate crises.

### Activities 2021:

Our Fish hosted a Symposium with 2 science seminars, 1 policy-makers workshop, and a high-level fireside chat with decision makers. The Symposium was highly effective at engaging a range of stakeholders including industry, scientists, interested citizens, government policy makers /advisors and decision makers. 1,450+ registrants for the seminars, and 80 registrants for the workshop. <https://our.fish/press/symposium-delivering-on-climate-biodiversity-targets-through-better-fisheries-management/>

1. Save the ocean, save the climate: End overfishing – petition delivery – 19/7/21  
The Our Fish campaign presented a petition signed by 17,296 people to the European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius, calling on the EU to take urgent action to prevent and reverse the climate and nature crisis by ending destructive overfishing, and to support a just transition to ecosystem based fisheries management. The commissioner also received a colourful beach towel <https://our.fish/press/before-commissioner-heads-for-beach-eu-citizens-provide-him-with-demand-to-save-the-ocean-save-the-climate-end-overfishing/>
2. Dive Into Climate Action I, Marseille, 4/9/2021  
Our Fish led the organisation of this joint NGO event (with Seas At Risk, Oceana and WeMove EU) where dozens of people dived into the Mediterranean Sea during the IUCN World Conservation Congress to celebrate the power of the ocean to fight climate change, and to call on political leaders to take climate action by ending destructive fishing. Big-wave surfing champion Maya Gabeira and European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and

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Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius were present. <https://our.fish/press/save-the-ocean-to-save-the-climate-swimmers-tell-leaders-in-marseille/>

3. In Germany, Our Fish's partner DUH worked with other NGOs on the "Meeresoffensive" - conducting several meetings with representatives of the members of the German parliament from different parties, covering topics related to ocean conservation and fisheries. The objective was to influence the parties' election programmes to include the importance of healthy oceans for climate change mitigation. Successfully, at least three parties were mentioning healthy oceans as important in their programmes (Grüne, Linke and FDP). Additionally, strategy talks about fisheries in marine protected areas with the department for marine conservation of BMU, together with the director of nature conservation and later with the corresponding division of the BfN.
4. Save the Ocean to Save the Climate – COP26 activities, Glasgow 11/2021  
Our Fish organised a chilly swim in the North-East Atlantic Ocean at Ardrossan Beach, near Glasgow during the UN Climate Change Conference COP26, to demonstrate the importance and value of the ocean in mitigating the effects of climate change. [Photo event](#)  
Blue Carbon Breakfast Briefing 11/11/2021 - Our Fish partnered with local NGO Open Seas in Glasgow to host a Breakfast Briefing during the UNFCCC COP26, with international scientists and experts. The briefing was in person and successfully engaged a diversity of NGO, government and science representatives on the need to start counting blue carbon. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-saxdUoVqk&t=17s>
5. Save the Ocean to Save the Climate – Heartbeat of the Ocean 3/12/21  
Our Fish commissioned a stunning mural painted on a nine-floor apartment building in Vilnius, Lithuania by the world-renowned team of Spanish artists Boa Mistura – to remind the European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus Sinkevičius that the health of the ocean is in his hands, and he must deliver a strong ocean Action Plan. The mural received widespread media coverage in Lithuania and abroad, and the Commissioner has posted on his social media pages numerous times about it <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YCARRDbgSM>
6. Our Fish collaborated with key EU NGO partners Seas At Risk, Oceana and WeMove EU to create a petition to stop bottom trawling in the EU, starting with MPAs, to halt the biodiversity and climate impacts of destructive fishing, which generated 150,000 signatures and was delivered to Commissioner Sinkevičius on 20th Dec 2021: <https://our.fish/news/video-more-than-150000-europeans-call-on-eu-to-ban-bottom-trawling-to-protect-ocean-and-climate/>
7. On 21 January 2022, the German Presidency of the G7 announced their Program for 2022, which includes a G7 Ocean Deal: <https://www.bmuv.de/pressemitteilung/klimaschutz-und->



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praesidentschaftsprogramm-2022

## Blue Food for Thought:

Under the title Blue Food for Thought, Stichting Varda developed throughout 2021 a series of innovative ideas for protecting the ocean which were published in different formats by the [Monaco Ocean Week 2021](#), the International Institute on Sustainable Development ([IISD](#)), and in the journal Ideas from Barcelona (the latter in [English](#), in [Spanish](#) and in [Catalan](#)).

The innovative ideas developed triggered a constructive debate within the international ocean policy community which we expect will continue in 2022 in the run-up to the UN High-Level Ocean Conference which is scheduled to take place at the end of June 2022.