

SEARCULAR Consortium**EU Horizon 2020 NO: 101112852**info@searcular.eu

Director-General Charlina Vitcheva
Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)
Rue Belliard 28 / Belliardstraat 28, 1000 Bruxelles / Brussel, Belgium

Dear Director-General Vitcheva,

Subject: Policy recommendations for reducing fisheries-related marine litter and implementing a circular economy for fishing gear under the European Green Deal

We are writing to you to share our recently published **policy recommendations** for helping European fisheries achieve a circular economy and address targets as set out in the European Green Deal, the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Directive, and the Circular Economy Action Plan.

As you will no doubt be aware, marine plastics, including those derived from fisheries, pose a significant health threat to our ocean ecosystems, food systems, and society. In the long term, they threaten the sustainability and economic viability of the fisheries sector that the gear supports. In recent years, regulatory targets have set the course for the transition away from the use of non-biodegradable materials to prevent long-lasting plastic pollution.

SEARCULAR has worked on **four solutions**, including three alternative materials for fishing gear and a port-based model for improved end-of-life management and recycling. Investing in and incentivising a circular economy for fishing gear can provide tangible benefits to the fisheries sector and food security in the long term. Reducing the volume of marine litter and microplastics at sea can help reach Good Environmental Status for our seas and contribute to the safeguarding of future stocks, and in time, increase the quality of European seafood.

SEARCULAR has shown an alternative future for fishing gear and the fishing sector – one where we can prevent marine litter at source and at port. I encourage you to please take the time to read our set of policy recommendations and to take concerted action to support the industry in playing their part in transitioning to a circular economy.

Yours sincerely,

Oihane C. Basurko (Project Coordinator) and Benedict Wilson (Communications Lead)

On behalf of the SEARCULAR Consortium