

# Blue Speeds

- ▶ a win-win solution for shipping companies, european citizens and marine life.



going at the right pace  
to improve fuel efficiency  
of shipping, help clear  
the air we breathe  
and protect marine animals.

**ifaw**

# the need for healthier shipping

Maritime transport is the cornerstone of international trade. Over the last several decades, the increased efficiency of shipping has made it even easier to buy and sell goods very quickly and over long distances. Today, thousands of commercial ships are travelling all over the globe,



connecting international economies with one another. However, this growth of larger and faster ships does not come without unintended consequences. Above the ocean's surface, the global shipping sector and maritime trade contribute significantly to the production of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide<sup>[1]</sup>.

[1] Total shipping GHG emissions increased from 977 million tonnes in 2012 to 1,076 million tonnes in 2018 (9.6% increase). In 2012, 962 million tonnes of these emissions were CO<sub>2</sub>, while in 2018 this amount grew 9.3% to 1,056 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. (Fourth IMO GHG Study 2020)

The number of ships and the speeds at which they are able to travel have increased in the last few decades and this brings increased risk to whales, dolphins and porpoises (known as cetaceans) through collisions with vessels. These 'ship strikes' can kill or severely injure cetaceans, and research suggests that for every whale we see that has been fatally injured by a strike up to 20 whales with the same fate go undetected.

Under the sea, noise from shipping adversely impacts marine life. Sound is the primary cue upon which a wide range of marine animals rely, from the largest whales to tiniest plankton. Sound is essential to communicate with one another, find food, navigate and avoid predators. Scientific studies undeniably show that underwater noise pollution is detrimental to marine species both temporarily and in the long-term, particularly marine mammals but also fish, crustaceans and invertebrates<sup>[2], [3]</sup>. Half of this noise is produced by the commercial shipping sector<sup>[4]</sup>.

These threats need to be addressed at global level, through coordinated international action. IFAW has worked with a number of shipping companies to re-route ships away from critical whale habitats, but this is not

[2] Weilgart, L. (2018). The Impact of Ocean Noise Pollution on Fish and Invertebrates. Report by OceanCare

[3] Erbe et al. (2019). The Effects of Ship Noise on Marine Mammals - A Review. Front. Mar. Sci., 11 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2019.00606>

[4] Hildebrand, J.A. (2009). Anthropogenic and natural sources of ambient noise in the ocean. Marine Ecology Progress Series, 395(5).



a complete solution when cetacean populations are widely dispersed with unpredictable movement patterns.

**As a champion of environmental conservation, the European Union now has the opportunity to chart**

**a new course.** A straightforward option exists that makes economic sense for the shipping industry, positively impacts biodiversity and climate goals, and creates a cleaner future for all.

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## **Blue Speeds: an impactful and practical solution to protect whales and reduce emissions, while benefiting the maritime economy**

**Blue Speeds represents a speed ceiling for ships at 75% of their maximum design speed** (how fast a ship is designed to travel) as a condition for entry into EU Member State ports for all intra- and extra-European Economic Area (EEA), incoming and outgoing, voyages.

**This is a solution that can be implemented immediately and works with existing ships, leading to a permanent industry-wide change for slower ship speeds.**

A Blue Speeds regulation is the most viable and easily achievable operational practice the shipping industry can implement to reduce underwater noise pollution, decrease the risk of ships colliding with whales and lower greenhouse gas emissions, while aligning with the EU's environmental priorities and recent commitments, like the ones included in the EU Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy to 2030.



## Blue Speeds = 75% ship design speed limitation applied to ships berthing in European ports

A recent study found that achieving Blue Speeds in the EU would reduce noise pollution and the risk of ships colliding with whales by around a quarter, and lower fuel consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and air pollution from shipping by around 8% each.

Blue Speeds would be achieved in Europe with a very modest ship speed reduction of around 5% on average!<sup>[5]</sup>

Critically, Blue Speeds can benefit the Blue Economy without negatively impacting the Green. In fact, the Green Economy benefits from Blue Speeds in a standalone way.

**Blue Speeds would result in significant economic and environmental gains for the maritime industry and society as a whole: depending on fuel prices, the total benefits of Blue Speeds in Europe are estimated to be between EUR 3.4 billion and 4.5 billion per year<sup>[5]</sup>.**

**A recent analysis<sup>[5]</sup> indicates that, on average, almost half of all ship**

**categories are already sailing at Blue Speed, in Europe** (e.g., small and middle-size container ships). Existing measures like the efficiency of global trade chains, the optimisation of port logistics and the management of overcapacity are complementary to Blue Speeds and can further increase the economic benefits. **The EU's implementation of Blue Speeds has the potential to grow the movement internationally with even greater results.** If global shipping fleets were to implement Blue Speeds, which equates to an average speed reduction of 10%, underwater noise from shipping could be reduced up to 40%, the risk of ships colliding with whales by half and shipping greenhouse gas emissions by around 13%<sup>[6]</sup>.

<sup>[5]</sup> CE Delft (2022) Blue Speeds for shipping: Economic analysis and legal framework to achieve environmental benefits. Report – publication code 22.210439.096

<sup>[6]</sup> Leaper, R. (2019). The Role of Slower Vessel Speeds in Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Underwater Noise and Collision Risk to Whales. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 6:505. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2019.00505



# making Blue Speeds a reality

**To make Blue Speeds an EU-wide reality, IFAW calls on the EU institutions to adopt supplementary legislation for the implementation of a maximum speed limit at 75% of ship design speed as a condition for entry into Member State ports by commercial ships for all intra- and extra-EEA, incoming and outgoing, voyages.**

By supporting Blue Speeds, the EU can reassert its efforts in building a more sustainable future and lead international action on these issues. Blue Speeds have the potential to result in a far-reaching structural change by supporting a transformation of the shipping industry, helping the EU to honour international obligations as laid out in UNCLOS for the protection of the ocean, in line with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) *Guidelines for the Reduction of Underwater Noise from Commercial Shipping to Address Adverse Impacts on Marine Life*, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 14<sup>[7]</sup>.

Slower shipping is safer and quieter for marine life, and healthier for people. Making Blue Speeds a reality would be a small change with big outcomes. Now is the right time to choose the right pace to make a real impact - EU action can make fuel more efficient for shipping, the air cleaner for Europeans, and the ocean safer for marine life.

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[7] <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

**#StopTheNoise**

# about ifaw

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, the ocean, and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate, and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we're up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organisations, and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish.

## further information

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