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Answer given by Commissioner Kadis
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.6.2026)

Under the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU invested over EUR 38 million in five major research projects mapping deep-sea minerals, assessing environmental impacts, and developing technology¹. Horizon 2020 projects like Sea4Value² and SEArcularMINE³ aimed at developing advanced, sustainable, and economically viable technologies to recover valuable metals and minerals from seawater and reduce dependence on imported raw materials and enhance the circular economy in Europe. Under Horizon Europe⁴, the project TRIDENT⁵ (2022–2027) is focused on developing advanced technologies for continuous, real-time environmental monitoring of deep-sea industrial activities, like deep-sea mining.

The EU budget aims to maximise the benefit of public expenditure. However, direct support for deep-sea mining is not allowed under the Commission's proposal for the MFF given that research highlights the uncertainty over the effects of deep-sea mining on the ecosystem. The Commission maintains its precautionary stance, as stated in the Communication on the European Ocean Pact⁶ and stresses the need for more research into its potential environmental, biodiversity, and socio-economic impacts.

Technological innovation and mapping of the seabed could nevertheless be financed under Horizon Europe 2028-2034, the European Competitiveness Fund and under the National and Regional Partnership Plans⁷, if included in the priorities of Member States.

The Commission supports a rules-based multilateral order and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which governs all ocean activities. The Commission advocates for a rules-based approach at the International Seabed Authority and condemns any unilateral attempt to circumvent them.

¹ Within the context of GeoERA2, under the project MINDeSEA3, an extensive mapping of the mineral seabed deposits in the European seas was also carried out (<https://geoera.eu/projects/mindesea2/>). The Commission also commissioned a study to investigate the state of knowledge of deep-sea mining (https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/contents/study-investigate-state-knowledge-deep-sea-mining_en).

² <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/869703/reporting>.

³ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/869467/reporting>.

⁴ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en.

⁵ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101091959>.

⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Ocean Pact, COM/2025/281 final.

⁷ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/budget/eu-budget-2028-2034-explained/investing-people-member-states-and-regions_en.