Saving the sea through recycling
The ECOALF Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Spain. By developing and applying new scientific and technological knowledge it promotes the selective recycling and valorising of waste in order to avoid its harmful effects on the environment. Its History is the story of Upcycling the Oceans, an unprecedented global adventure born in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015. The aim is to clean the oceans of marine waste with the help of the fishing industry and to give plastic waste a second life through recycling processes, closing the loop. For this purpose, Upcycling the Oceans collaborates with entities interested in using marine debris as a resource. Such is the case with the sustainable fashion brand ECOALF that converts the plastic bottles recovered from the seabed into high quality products.

Currently, the ECOALF Foundation collaborates with local partners to carry out Upcycling the Oceans in Spain, Greece, Italy and Thailand, while likewise working on its implementation in other parts of the world. It also collaborates on other projects in the fields of waste management, environmental awareness or research and development with institutions sharing common values and objectives.

The Julius Baer Foundation is supporting the ECOALF Foundation’s expansion of Upcycling the Oceans into France. This is a bottom-up project. The general objective is to motivate up to 2,000 French fishermen based in 30 ports in 8 regions to remove marine debris from the oceans. Once the debris is collected, it is separated, and reusable materials including plastics are recycled to produce, among others, a special yarn, with which jackets, bags, sneakers, and other products will be produced and sold by commercial partners in Europe.
The Julius Baer Foundation’s support is key to get the project off the ground by analyzing the initial situation, engaging the main stakeholders and replicating this successful initiative in several pilot ports, located both in the Mediterranean and along the Atlantic coastline.

Fostering the Blue Economy
Through Upcycling the Oceans — France local fishermen are involved firsthand and a waste management system is established capable of providing raw materials for potential partners. This procedure follows the first successful initiatives carried out in Spain, where, since 2015, more than 2,600 fishermen from 40 ports have collected about 150 tonnes of marine litter per year. This inclusive approach has proven sustainable in the long-term.

Taking into account the huge amount of trash that ends up in the oceans every year, initiatives like this cannot solve the problem but can help to clean the seabed, demonstrate the recycling possibilities and raise awareness to reduce and prevent marine litter.

Facts and figures
• By 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.
• 8 million tonnes of plastic enter the ocean every year.
• This serious environmental impact is burdening the whole society, but especially the fishermen in their day-to-day work.
• France has 4,788 km of Atlantic coast and 1,730 km of Mediterranean coast in its European territory.
• France is the fourth largest fishery producer in the European Union. In 2017, French fishing and almost 556,000 tonnes of seafood products generated 13,540 jobs.
• France is the largest producer of plastic waste in the Mediterranean region, with 4.5 million tonnes of plastic waste produced in 2016.¹
• Despite the positive efforts, it is estimated that France contributes to the rejection of 80,000 tonnes of plastics in nature each year, from which more than 10,000 go to the Mediterranean Sea.
• Upcycling the Oceans was created in Spain in 2015. So far, the project has recovered more than 500 tonnes of marine litter thanks to fishermen.
• ECOALF Foundation is currently collaborating with local entities to replicate Upcycling the Oceans in Thailand, Italy and Greece.

For more information about the ECOALF Foundation, please visit: www.ecoalf.com/en/p/foundation-33

¹ Source: www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/4277862?sommaire=4318291&q=p%C3%A9che
² Source: www.wwf.fr/vous-informer/actualites/daque-annee-600-000-tonnes-de-plastique-ont-rejetees-dans-la-mer-mediterranee

“Where others see trash, we see premium quality raw materials.”
Javier Goyeneche, Founder of ECOALF and President of the ECOALF Foundation