

# SOS MEDITERRANEE

EUROPEAN CIVIL ASSOCIATION  
FOR SEA RESCUE

[www.sosmediterranee.com](http://www.sosmediterranee.com)




**2019 Annual Report**

**SOS MEDITERRANEE France**

# CONTENTS

<b>A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT</b> .....	<b>5</b>	Designating a Place of Safety: four standoffs at sea.....	23
A great chain of humanity .....	5	Who are the survivors?.....	24
<b>2019 IN FIGURES</b> .....	<b>6</b>	Medical care on board .....	25
<b>SOS MEDITERRANEE</b>		Ad hoc disembarkations and long standoffs at sea.....	26
<b>IN A FEW WORDS</b> .....	<b>8</b>	<b>RAISING AWARENESS</b>	
Citizens who save lives at sea.....	9	<b>AND GALVANIZING SUPPORT</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Our vision, mission, and values .....	10	The year in review .....	28
Human resources.....	11	Citizen action: the <i>Ocean Viking's</i> fuel .....	28
Governance .....	11	The #BackAtSea campaign .....	28
The European network: four NGOs working as one .....	11	17 Branches, 600 volunteers.....	29
Awards and distinctions.....	12	More than 400 events: diversifying our audience .....	29
<b>THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN</b>		Raising awareness in schools .....	31
<b>CONTEXT</b> .....	<b>13</b>	Advocacy for respect of maritime law .....	31
The year in review.....	14	Media coverage: a catalyst for raising awareness and disseminating information .....	32
Standoffs at sea: the new "standard" .....	14	Social networks: informing in real time .....	34
Withdrawal of ships of Operation Sophia .....	14	123 well-known figures on the Support Committee .....	35
First steps toward a European disembarkation mechanism, Italian ports "reopen".....	15	<b>2019 FINANCIAL REPORT</b> .....	<b>36</b>
Lack of SAR coordination and forced returns to Libya .....	15	The year in review .....	37
The Central Mediterranean: the world's deadliest migration axis .....	16	Operations management .....	37
<b>HIGH-SEAS RESCUE OPERATIONS</b> .....	<b>17</b>	Resources: funded primarily by citizens .....	37
The year in review .....	18	Other private funds (companies, foundations, and charitable organizations) .....	38
Our missions at sea.....	18	Main partners in 2019 .....	38
SAR teams specializing in offshore mass rescue.....	19	Institutional grants .....	39
From the <i>Aquarius</i> to the <i>Ocean Viking</i> .....	19	Expenses.....	39
Development and training .....	20	Revenues .....	39
Converting the <i>Ocean Viking</i> into an ambulance vessel.....	20	Balance sheet as of December 31, 2019 .....	41
The <i>Ocean Viking</i> : equipped to rescue, protect, and treat.....	21	<b>OUTLOOK FOR 2020</b> .....	<b>42</b>
The return to sea: 1,373 people rescued in five months .....	22	Search and rescue at sea during a pandemic .....	42

 Anthony Jean /  
 SOS MEDITERRANEE

**“I spent four days at sea before being rescued.”**

*The night we left Libya, the bottom of the boat split. No one got any sleep at all, because we had to bail out the water with an empty fuel can. By the second day, we'd run out of food and water. One man even became so desperate that he jumped overboard. We had to help him get back into the boat. We were so scared – all we could think about was dying, everyone was convinced we were all going to die.”*

**ABDOU, AGE 17\***  
 rescued by the *Ocean Viking* in August 2019.

\* The name and photo of the person sharing this testimonial have been changed to protect that person's identity and ensure their safety.



David Orme /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE

David Orme /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE



## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT A GREAT CHAIN OF HUMANITY

**W**hen I became President of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France in June 2019, I was confronted with both the terrible reality of the drama taking place in the Central Mediterranean at the very gates of Europe and the tremendous outpouring of solidarity and humanity from everyone I met, from near and far, the people who remain so generously committed to **SOS MEDITERRANEE**. The year 2019 saw our return to sea with the *Ocean Viking*. The launch of this new vessel on August 4 was a tremendous relief for those who mobilized to ensure that rescues in the Mediterranean Sea continue, despite obstacles and illegitimate - even illegal - false information.

**SOS MEDITERRANEE**'s primary mission remains sea rescue, meaning we are witnesses to both the most acute human distress and the most exquisite acts of kindness. The work we do on board is only possible thanks to the great chain of humanity of **SOS MEDITERRANEE**.

The rescuers, medical teams, and crew form the last link in this chain. Each time a hand reaches out to save someone stranded at sea, it is a tremendous victory over a humanitarian disaster. For those who survive, it is an open door to a potential future, a different life after months, even years, of suffering in the hellish realities of Libya.

Thank you to the employees of **SOS MEDITERRANEE**, who continue to adapt, with firm commitment, to the many unforeseen events we face, and who are a boundless resource of creativity.

Thank you to our volunteers for your dedication, generosity, enthusiasm: you are the vital links in this chain that stretches all across France, as we saw in 2019 with the opening of our 17<sup>th</sup> branch.

Thank you to our donors for your messages of support and your kind words and exchanges at

our various events: Your contributions have made it possible for rescuers to save thousands of lives and for survivors to find new hope.

The tangible and intangible investments from everyone made it possible for us to go back to sea. On the *Ocean Viking*'s first search and rescue operation in August 2019, 356 people were rescued. It took 14 days for a handful of European States to agree on a Place of Safety for them to disembark. Since that time, a fragile agreement for the distribution of those rescued among States began in Malta in September 2019 and was signed by eight out of the now 27 States of the European Union.

Nevertheless, in the face of this continuing tragedy, the responses have been reticent, even fearful. This is evidenced by the name given by the commission in charge with overseeing the issue of the Mediterranean crossing "Promoting our European way of life", a disconcerting statement in this context soon after the May 2019 European elections. Operation Sophia has ended and Operation Iriini is now underway with the intention of avoiding the deadliest migration routes. By refusing to come to an agreement on the concrete meaning of "solidarity," which they never cease to trumpet, European States are looking the other way. European citizens, however, serve as positive examples each day and show us the path to follow through their donations and support. The drama continues in the Central Mediterranean and we will be there to address it as long as the European Union is absent.

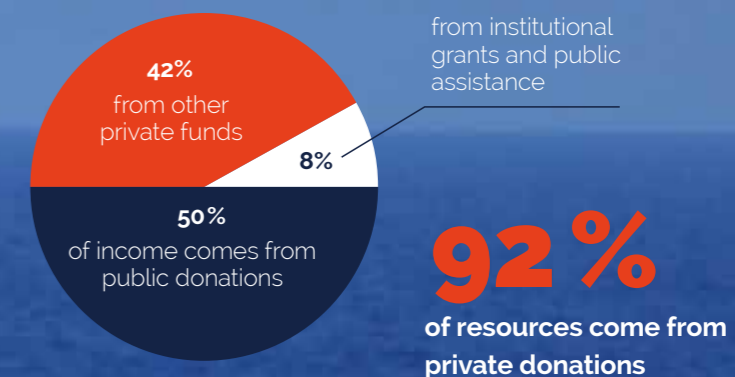
**François Thomas**  
President, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France  
since June 2019

# 2019 IN FIGURES

**1,885** people died in the Mediterranean, of which

**1,262** died in the Central Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>

## FUNDING SOURCES



## ON LAND

(These figures relate only to France. See page 12 for the European network)

### STAFF ON LAND (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019)

**18** in Marseille  
**6** in Paris  
**1** in Rennes

**600** active volunteers in **17** branches across France

**123** well-known figures on the Support Committee

**16,640** students reached (elementary, secondary, and higher education)

**400** events

**9,993** media articles/stories (total cumulative reach of **979.4 million** people)

### FOLLOWERS (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019)

**f** **74,115** (13,400 new subscribers in 2019)  
**t** **30,056** (6,500 new subscribers in 2019)  
**i** **2,300** (account opened in May 2019)

## AT SEA

### OUR TEAMS AT SEA (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019)

#### TOTAL SAR TEAM MEMBERS AND MEDIA STAFF ONBOARD THE OCEAN VIKING IN 2019

**31** Rescuers  
**2** Research and Evidence Officers  
**3** Onboard Communications Officers  
**13** Independent journalists

#### 13 PEOPLE ONBOARD THE OCEAN VIKING FOR EACH ROTATION.

**1** Search and Rescue Coordinator (SARCo)  
**1** Deputy Search and Rescue Coordinator (Deputy SARCo)  
**9** Rescuers (SAR Team)  
**1** Onboard Communications Officer (CO)  
**1** Research and Evidence Officer (REO)

**1,373** people rescued by the *Ocean Viking*, of **31** different nationalities

during **18** rescue operations **+ 1** transshipment<sup>2</sup>

**384** minors (**28%** of survivors), **80%** unaccompanied

**137** women (**11%** of survivors)

In total, between February 26, 2016, and December 31, 2019,

**30,896** people were rescued over **37** months of *Aquarius* and *Ocean Viking* operations

<sup>1</sup> Statistics from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on the "Missing Migrants Project" website, which accounts for figures that can be considered low due to boats that disappeared without witnesses and leaving no trace.  
<sup>2</sup> Transshipments entail transferring the people rescued from the first boat to arrive on the scene and carry out the rescue to a second vessel that receives instructions from the Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) to bring the survivors back to land to a "Place of Safety."

# SOS MEDITERRANEE IN A FEW WORDS

 Isabelle Serro /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE



## CITIZENS WHO SAVE LIVES AT SEA

SOS MEDITERRANEE IS A NON-PROFIT CIVIL EUROPEAN RESCUE ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN SPRING 2015 BY CITIZENS DETERMINE TO ACT IN RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN TRAGEDY UNFOLDING IN THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN. SOS MEDITERRANEE, A FRANCO-GERMAN INITIATIVE BEGUN IN 2015 AT THE END OF THE MARE NOSTRUM SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION (SEE INSET), NOW HAS HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, AND SWITZERLAND.

### THREE OBJECTIVES

Letting thousands of people drown before our very eyes within reach of the shores of Europe is unacceptable. This simple premise is the foundation of the three principal objectives of the **SOS MEDITERRANEE** staff:

- > save lives at sea;
- > protect the survivors;
- > inform others of the situation at sea.

### 31,000 PEOPLE RESCUED BY THE AQUARIUS AND THE OCEAN VIKING

Since February 2016, by virtue of the extraordinary support received from civil society, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** has been rescuing boats in distress in international waters off the Libyan coast. Between February 2016 and December 2018, the organization first chartered the *Aquarius*, with which it later had to separate due to serious constraints on rescue initiatives at sea and harassment against NGOs. The sturdier, Norwegian-flagged *Ocean Viking* took over operations in August 2019.

**SOS MEDITERRANEE** has developed distinctive expertise in sea rescue in strict compliance with international maritime law. Its rescue staff, in collaboration with the medical partner on board – first Médecins du Monde and, later, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) – have thus managed to rescue, protect, treat, and disembark in a Place of Safety nearly 31,000 people (as of end December 2019).

For **SOS MEDITERRANEE**, the duty to assist is a moral and legal imperative that must take precedence over any other concerns. Since its founding, the organization has urged the European Union (EU) to establish a rescue mechanism in the Mediterranean to effectively assist boats in distress while respecting human dignity.

## INSUFFICIENT STATE-LED RESCUE MECHANISMS

The founding of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** in Germany and France in the spring of 2015 is a direct consequence of the end of the Italian naval and air rescue operation Mare Nostrum, which made it possible to rescue some 150,000 people between November 2013 and November 2014. Since then, helping people in distress at sea seems to have become of secondary concern to the European States, which are focusing their efforts mainly on border protection, managing migration influx, and fighting arms trafficking, as demonstrated by Operations Triton, EUNAVFOR MED Sophia then Irini (the latter having replaced Sophia in March 2020).

### CITIZEN DNA

At the end of 2019, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France, funded primarily by private donations, had 25 employees and 600 active volunteers spread across 17 branches. The staff members manage operations at sea and carry out awareness-raising, communications, and fundraising initiatives.

## OUR VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE

IN APRIL 2017, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** DRAFTED A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES THAT SETS OUT THE EUROPEAN NETWORK'S FUNDAMENTAL VALUES.



All people in distress at sea must be rescued and treated with dignity. Civil society takes action in the maritime space to protect them.

- protect those rescued and guide them to appropriate resources;
- inform others about the realities and many faces of migration.



As a civil, humanitarian, and maritime organization, **SOS MEDITERRANEE**'s mission is to:

- rescue people in distress through its search and rescue activities at sea;

**SOS MEDITERRANEE** promotes and ensures respect for these values and principles:

- humanity
- transparency
- independence
- civic engagement
- non-discrimination
- solidarity



Anthony Jean\_ / SOS MEDITERRANEE

## HUMAN RESOURCES

At the end of 2019, the staff of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France numbered 25 employees (compared to 19 at the end of 2018) working full-time in operations management, citizen mobilisation initiatives, events, communications, fundraising, and financial and administrative management – interns and civil servants included.

The French headquarter is in Marseille and the organization also has branches in Paris and Rennes. The joint operations department is based in Marseille, as well. For each of its sea-rescue missions, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** places eleven rescuers on board the vessel, along with an Onboard Communications Officer and a Research and Evidence Officer. In 2019, Thirty-one rescuers, four Research and Evidence Officers, and three Onboard Communications Officers took turns onboard to fill these different roles.

## GOVERNANCE

In 2019, the non-profit organization **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France, founded in June 2015, was governed by a board of directors (*conseil d'administration* or CA) of fourteen members, seven of whom form the board. The board oversees the application of the organization's objectives as decided upon at the general meeting. The board gathers at least twice annually and the officers meet on a very regular basis. The members are from a wide range of industries – maritime, journalism, humanitarian, health, social, research, corporate – and devote substantial time and skill to supporting the organization's activities on land and at sea.

The organization has always been presided over by maritime professionals: Captain Klaus Vogel at its founding (France and Germany), former ship's manager Francis Vallat (France, April 2016 to June 2019), and merchant marine captain François Thomas (France, June 2019 to date).

## THE EUROPEAN NETWORK: FOUR NGOS WORKING AS ONE

**SOS MEDITERRANEE** is a European network composed of four non-profit organizations based in France, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. They operate under the same mandate and jointly lead search and rescue operations and mobilise citizens through call for actions and participation.

► **SOS MEDITERRANEE Germany** (founded in May 2015) is headquartered in Berlin and has volunteer branches in Cologne and Hamburg. Its president is Laura Gorriahn, professor and researcher at the University of Berlin specializing in human rights and democracy.

► **SOS MEDITERRANEE Italy** (founded in February 2016) has its headquarters in Milan and a volunteer branche in Florence. Its president, Alessandro Porro, is one of the NGO's most experienced rescuers. He has led a number of operations aboard the *Aquarius* and, later, the *Ocean Viking*.

► **SOS MEDITERRANEE Switzerland** (founded in August 2017) is headquartered in Geneva, with seven volunteer branches and a regional branche in Bern, which covers German-speaking Switzerland. Its president is journalist Serge Michel, winner of the Albert Londres Prize, France's highest journalism award, and former Assistant Director of French daily newspaper *Le Monde*.

## THE EUROPEAN SOS MEDITERRANEE NETWORK IN 2019

FRANCE (INCL. OPERATIONS)

**861** Volunteers



France **600**  
Germany **65**  
Switzerland **160**  
Italy **36**

**28** Volunteer branches



France **17\***  
Germany **2**  
Switzerland **7**  
Italy **2**

\* See list on page 29



**1,490**

Events

France **1,000**  
Germany **220**  
Switzerland **150**  
Italy **120**

**155** Volunteers involved in school awareness initiatives



France **124**  
Germany **11**  
Switzerland **16**  
Italy **4**



**48,000**

Number of students reached since initiatives began

France **39,800**  
Germany **4,600**  
Switzerland **2,200**  
Italy **1,400**

**50** Number of employees (including part-time)



France **25**  
Germany **15**  
Switzerland **5**  
Italy **5**

## AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

- 2016 European Citizen's Prize (European Parliament) – October 13, 2016
- 2017 Grand Cause Nationale designation (France) – co-recipient with the SNSM
- UNESCO's Félix Houphouët Boigny Peace Prize – June 27, 2017 - co-recipient with Giusi Nicolini
- Franco-German Media Grand Prize – July 4, 2017

# THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT



Fabian Mondl / SOS MEDITERRANEE

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

- Continued standoffs at sea and **criminalization of SAR NGOs**
- **Autumn 2019: first steps toward a European mechanism for disembarkation**
- **September 2019: Italian ports “reopen”**
- **Lack of search and rescue coordination and forced returns to Libya**
- **4.78%: record mortality rate in the Central Mediterranean**

### STANDOFFS AT SEA: THE “NEW STANDARD”

Since the *Aquarius* was not allowed access to Italian ports in June 2018, standoffs involving NGO ships in the Central Mediterranean have become the new “norm,” as criminalization campaigns against sea-rescue NGOs have continued. In January 2019, the ship of NGO Proactiva-Open Arms was banned from returning to the Central Mediterranean by the Spanish government. Mid-June, in Italy, a new “security decree” was passed, designed to legalize a practice of delaying or refusing the disembarkation of people rescued at sea. Italian authorities could now deny permission to enter or remain in Italian waters to any ship under suspicion of violating Italian immigration laws; impose fines up to one million euros on ship captains; and order the immediate seizure of ships. At the end of June, Italian authorities seized the *Sea-Watch 3*, a vessel belonging to the German NGO Sea-Watch, in Lampedusa. Her captain, Carola Rackete, was arrested after forcing entry into the Italian port to disembark 40 survivors, following a two-week standoff at sea. The captain was later released. Several NGO vessels were confiscated in Italy over the course of the year. The criminalization of search and rescue NGOs not only affected humanitarian vessels, but eroded the very obligation of providing assistance to people in distress at sea. Commercial and military vessels were increasingly unwilling to respond to people in distress because of the high risk of being denied a Place of Safety to disembark and thus being stranded at sea over a lengthy period, or of returning survivors to Libya, in violation of international law.

### WITHDRAWAL OF SHIPS OF OPERATION SOPHIA

While the application of maritime law was being eroded and rescue capacity dwindling in the Central Mediterranean, the European Union (EU) decided on March 27 to suspend the already reduced deployment of its naval sea-rescue assets off the coast of Libya. The military Operation Sophia, which made it possible to rescue

more than 45,000 people, was now only left with air resources for surveillance of the waters off Libya, while European support to the Libyan coastguard was stepped up to intercept boats and forcibly return survivors to Libya.

### FIRST STEPS TOWARD A EUROPEAN MECHANISM FOR DISEMBARKATION AND “REOPENING” OF ITALIAN PORTS

In the summer of 2019, after months of deadlock, several European Union Member States began discussing a temporary mechanism to disembark and relocate those rescued in the Central Mediterranean. This Franco-German initiative then led to a promising declaration of intent signed between Italy, Malta, France, and Germany in September. But the pilot initiative, which ensured a long-lasting, rapid, and predictable relocation mechanism within the EU, soon began to fail.

In September 2019, for the first time since the refusal to disembark 630 survivors from the *Aquarius* in June 2018, Italian ports finally allowed an NGO ship to disembark: the *Ocean Viking*. While an improvement in the situation regarding standoffs emerged as a result of European meetings on the issue of disembarkations, standoffs increased throughout the year as case-by-case negotiations on survivors distribution took place between Member States, even before they were disembarked. The lack of a coordinated disembarkation mechanism created delays in assigning a Place of Safety or disembarking survivors. Nevertheless, disembarkations in a Place of Safety continued in the second half of the year, a return – to some degree – of respect for maritime law in the Central Mediterranean.

### LACK OF SAR COORDINATION AND FORCED RETURNS TO LIBYA

The sudden transfer of rescue coordination to the Libyan Coast Guard in June 2018 led to creation of a vast search and rescue zone in the Central Mediterranean off Libya without effective coordination means. The Libyan Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) very rarely responds to calls from ships, and English-speaking interlocutors are nearly non-existent. The neighboring coordination centers in Malta and Italy, responsible for rescue coordination when the

 Hannah Wallace Bowman / MSF

#### THE LIBYAN NIGHTMARE



“One day, they grabbed a baby. They hit the mother. They beat her and beat her and beat her! She supposedly only needed to call her parents to have them send the ransom they were demanding. But her family couldn't pay it and she didn't have a husband. So one day, they took her baby, dug a hole, and put the child down in it. They started to dump sand over the baby until its head was covered. The infant was screaming, crying. After ten minutes, they took the baby out of the hole to give it back to the mother. **Thank God that's over. Libya is a nightmare.**”

YAYA, 22, mother of four-year-old twins, rescued by the *Ocean Viking* in February 2020.

\*The name and photo of the person sharing this testimonial have been changed to protect that person's identity and ensure their safety.





 Johan Persson

Libyan JRCC is unreachable, consistently refer coordination attempts to the same Libyan JRCC. **This lack of coordination endangers the lives of people in distress at sea and complicates relief operations. In addition, the Libyan JRCC fails to assign a Place of Safety for disembarkation for vessels requesting it after a rescue.**

Yet maritime law stipulates that any rescue does not end until the survivors are disembarked in a Place of Safety, meaning a place that guarantees the fundamental rights and essential needs of the survivors.

**No port in Libya can be considered a Place of Safety.** Growing insecurity in Libya and the intensifying armed conflict increasingly affects civilians, particularly migrants and refugees, who suffer very grave **human rights violations**, such as human trafficking, kidnapping, detention, and extortion. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), **the Libyan Coast Guard intercepted and forcibly brought back to Libya 9,035 refugees and migrants** (7,226 men, 623 women, and 1,186 children) in 107 operations at sea in 2019.

## THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN: THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST MIGRATION AXIS


In 2019, the number of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees arriving in Europe via the three Mediterranean migration routes was at its lowest level since 2015: 123,700 arrivals, compared to 141,500 in 2018 and 1,032,400 in 2015, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). With 59,700 arrivals by sea in 2019, compared to 26,200 in Spain and 11,500 in Italy, Greece had the highest such numbers, whereas Spain held the record the previous year.

Despite this major drop in arrivals in Italy over the past three years, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported a heavy death toll in 2019. **The Central Mediterranean saw the majority of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea: 1,262 of the 1,885 deaths recorded on the three Mediterranean migration routes**, not counting boats that disappeared without a trace. According to the IOM, the mortality rate in the Central Mediterranean more than doubled compared to 2018, reaching a record rate of 4.78%.

The Central Mediterranean therefore remains **the deadliest migratory axis in the world**. This is explained by the great distance (300 to 400 kilometers of high seas) separating Libya from Italy, as well as the lack of coordination and rescue capacities. Pushed onto overloaded boats that are utterly unseaworthy, the men, women, and children who flee Libya describe their decisions: "It is better to die at sea than to stay in Libya."

# HIGH-SEAS RESCUE OPERATIONS



 Hannah Wallace  
Bowman / MSF

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

- SOS MEDITERRANEE charts a **new vessel**
- August 4: The *Ocean Viking* leaves on her **first mission**
- **1,373 people rescued** by the *Ocean Viking* in 19 operations
- **4 standoff episodes** before designation of a Place of Safety

DESPITE A PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING CONTEXT IN 2019, OUR SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAMS RESCUED 1,373 PEOPLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL WATERS OF THE DISTRESS ZONE OFF THE LIBYAN COAST, LEADING 18 RESCUE OPERATIONS AND 1 TRANSHIPMENT, FOR A TOTAL OF 19 OPERATIONS IN FIVE MONTHS AT SEA.

## OUR MISSIONS AT SEA

SOS MEDITERRANEE continues its high-seas rescue activity in strict compliance with international maritime law. These missions entail:

- ▶ keeping **watch over the international waters** off the Libyan coast;
- ▶ conducting **search and rescue operations** for vessels in distress;
- ▶ **rescuing persons** from vessels in distress;
- ▶ **bringing** these persons aboard our rescue vessel and **caring** for them according to their immediate needs;
- ▶ disembarking those rescued in a **Place of Safety**, where their basic needs are met and their fundamental rights are respected<sup>1</sup>.

## SAR TEAMS SPECIALIZING IN OFFSHORE MASS RESCUE

IN 2019, THIRTY-ONE RESCUERS, THREE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICERS, AND FOUR RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE OFFICERS ROTATED DUTY ON THE *OCEAN VIKING*. ON BOARD THE SHIP, THREE PROFESSIONAL TEAMS WORKED IN CLOSE PARTNERSHIP ON MISSIONS LASTING FROM THREE WEEKS TO SEVERAL MONTHS.

### ▶ Thirteen SOS MEDITERRANEE SAR team members

Our team on board consisted of one Search and Rescue Coordinator, one Deputy Search and Rescue Coordinator, and nine rescuers. An Onboard Communications Officer and a Research and Evidence Officer completed this team.

### ▶ Nine MSF staff members

In 2019, the Médecins Sans Frontières team was composed of one Project Coordinator, one Medical Doctor, two Nurses, one Midwife, one Humanitarian Affairs Officer, one Cultural Mediator, one Communications Officer, and one Logistician to ensure the reception and care of survivors on board.

### ▶ Nine crew members

The Norwegian company Høyland Offshore A/S, owner of the *Ocean Viking*, provided a crew of nine people assigned to navigation

## FROM THE AQUARIUS TO THE OCEAN VIKING

In December 2018, after having been subjected to a campaign of administrative, political, and judicial harassment targeting the *Aquarius*, **SOS MEDITERRANEE**

### THE FOUR BOAT TYPES ENCOUNTERED IN RESCUES

Since operations began in 2016, our interventions have encountered four types of boats in distress. As none of these boats are seaworthy and all are always overloaded, the chances of survival are minimal. The occupants do not have enough water, food, and fuel to make the crossing. Yet the risk of interceptions, exposure to winter weather, and the dangers of the crossing do not dishearten these exiles fleeing the Libyan detention centers. The moment the weather permits, such boats head for the open sea.

**1. Inflatable rubber boats**, though extremely dangerous, are the most widely used. These 10-meter-long boats are assemblages of wooden planks and rubber tubes and threaten at any time to break, deflate beneath the weight of their passengers (about 150 people in the space of a few square meters), or capsize. On several occasions,

Hara Kaminara / SOS MEDITERRANEE



Anthony Jean / SOS MEDITERRANEE



Laurin Schmid / SOS MEDITERRANEE



Guglielmo Mangiapane / SOS MEDITERRANEE



the *Ocean Viking* has arrived on the scene to help those on an inflatable boat that has already deflated or broken, causing dire and complex rescue situations.

**2. The twenty-meter wooden boats** hold several hundred people crammed onto the deck and in the hold, sometimes on several levels. The risk of capsize caused by sudden crowd movements is extremely high, making rescue operations particularly difficult.

**3. Old fishing boats** or salvaged wooden boats, a few meters in length, holding 10 to 50 people.

**4. Tiny pleasure craft** are occasionally encountered.

These last two boats types are also very susceptible to waves and risk being overturned at any time.

<sup>1</sup>The **SOS MEDITERRANEE** rescue mission comes to an end once the people rescued are disembarked at a Place of Safety. These people are then cared for by the local authorities of the country concerned, with the assistance of specialized entities to aid the most vulnerable persons.

announced its decision to cease operating the vessel. The team began focusing on finding a new vessel. Several companies were visited and negotiations initiated: the robust *Ocean Viking* was among the favorites. More stable, faster, newer, and more maneuverable than the *Aquarius*, it had a spacious deck for organizing the reception and care of survivors. Its owner and the flag state showed understanding regarding the activities of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** and, during the month of April, an agreement was reached: The *Ocean Viking* was officially chartered.

## DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

In parallel with the search for a new vessel, the teams worked on translating our vast experience into standardized guidelines and establishing mass-rescue training to allow rescuers to maintain and enhance their level of professionalism for the return to sea. In March 2019, an initial two-week training session was held, with great attention given the importance of crowd management to minimize the risk of panic and to stabilize a situation before bringing survivors safely aboard the vessel. At each stopover of the *Ocean Viking*, as well as en route to the intervention area at sea, newcomers and experienced rescuers practiced these skills.

## CONVERTING THE OCEAN VIKING INTO AN AMBULANCE VESSEL

Before being chartered by **SOS MEDITERRANEE**, the *Ocean Viking* was an offshore supply and rescue/fire-fighting vessel working with oil platforms in the North Sea. The challenge for our teams was therefore to convert this fire-fighting ship into an ambulance vessel; a seven-week project that would be completed on short notice in Szczecin, Poland, in May 2019. Drawing on the experience acquired on board the *Aquarius*, the teams stowed and equipped a dozen containers on the aft deck in order to receive, treat, and protect the survivors as fully as possible, as well as to store food and equipment. A 60-square-meter medical module was installed, with a reception room, three consultation rooms, a doctor's office, and a hospital room. A refrigerated container ("reefer") could be used as a mortuary.



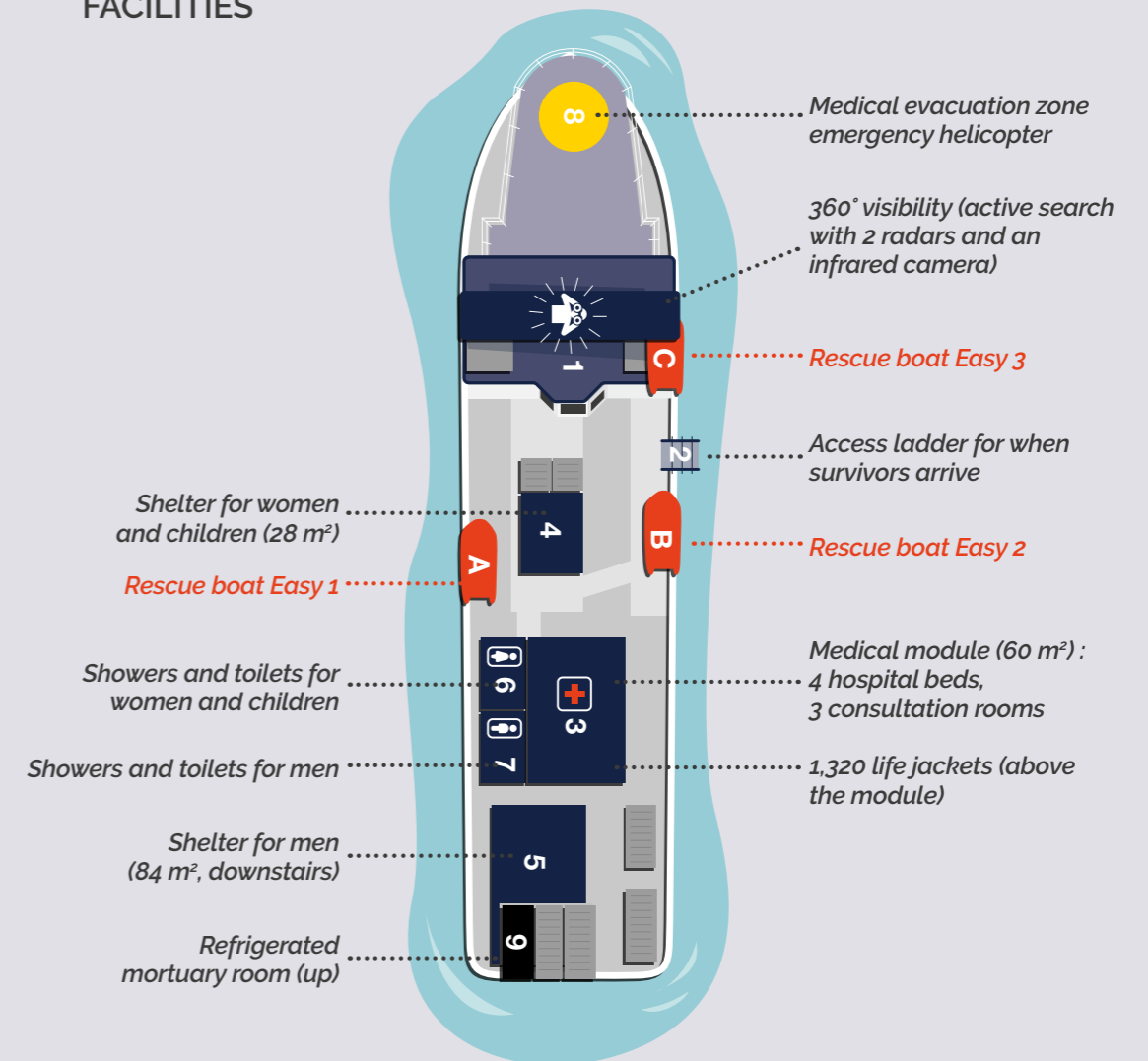
Laurin Schmid / SOS MEDITERRANEE

### MASS RESCUE

A "mass rescue" is an operation in which an immediate response is required to rescue a large number of people facing life-or-death circumstances at sea. Such operations must be approached with specific skills, implementing procedures that allow rescuers to manage a great number of risks simultaneously. The main fatality risks are drowning, suffocation, and crushing (when an overcrowded boat breaks or deflates, people crowded in the center of the boat can be crushed by the weight of the others).

## THE OCEAN VIKING EQUIPPED TO RESCUE, PROTECT, AND TREAT

### FACILITIES



### CHARACTERISTICS



- Year of construction: 1986
- Flag: Norwegian
- Shipowner: Høyland Offshore A/S
- Size: LOA 69.3 m, beam 15.5 m
- Maximum speed: 14 knots
- Operating cost: €14,000 per day

## THE RETURN TO SEA: 1,373 PEOPLE RESCUED IN FIVE MONTHS

On August 4, 2019, after a technical stopover in Marseille, the *Ocean Viking* set sail for her first search and rescue mission in the Central Mediterranean. During the five months of operations conducted in 2019, teams on board the *Ocean Viking* carried out **19 operations** (18 rescues and one transfer of survivors from another vessel) and managed to rescue **1,373 people**. At each stage, the *Ocean Viking* informed the competent authorities of distress messages she received, the boats' locations, and rescue operations. But search and rescue proved particularly difficult due to an almost total lack of coordination by the Libyan Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) (see chapter "The Central Mediterranean context").

Furthermore, since the transfer of responsibility for a large search and rescue area to the Libyan Coast Guard, distress messages were now very rarely relayed to ships in the area. If 18 boats in distress were spotted by the *Ocean Viking* in 2019, it was mainly thanks to the distress calls transmitted by the citizen alert network Alarm Phone and rigorous binocular watch by our rescuers.

## DESIGNATING A PLACE OF SAFETY: FOUR STANDOFFS AT SEA

Between August 4 and December 31, 2019, on four occasions, the *Ocean Viking* was left stranded at sea, awaiting a Place of Safety to disembark the survivors. These standoffs added unnecessary suffering for these people who had already lived through a horrible ordeal. Although the crews on board are trained in crowd management, these periods of uncertainty lead to difficult situations and can provoke new tragedies. While the *Ocean Viking* is equipped to care for vulnerable people, a ship is not a suitable place for an extended waiting period on the high seas.

On numerous occasions, the *Ocean Viking* was assigned a port for disembarkation in Libya by the Libyan maritime authorities – an unthinkable option, as it goes against maritime law, which requires the disembarkation of people rescued at sea in a Place of Safety. The Search and Rescue Coordinator on board the vessel must then turn to the nearest competent maritime authorities, namely Malta and Italy, in order to obtain an answer in accordance with the law.

During the *Ocean Viking's* first mission in early August 2019, the crews and people rescued in four consecutive operations within four days were stranded at sea for eight days before a disembarkation solution was found. The first survivors therefore had to wait at sea for fourteen days. Finally, the 356 survivors were authorized to disembark in Malta following an agreement on their relocation between six European countries.

### "OUR CALLS TO THE LIBYAN COORDINATION CENTER WENT UNANSWERED"



The last two operations in 2019 epitomized those conducted earlier in the same year: The lack of coordination at sea endangered the lives of 162 people, who were rescued by the *Ocean Viking* in late December during two particularly difficult operations.

 Afshin Ismaeli


“When we finally spotted an overcrowded and partially deflated white rubber boat, the *Ocean Viking* immediately tried to contact the Libyan Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) to notify them of the urgency of the situation and to receive instructions. However, although it received this distress message, the JRCC did not share the information with the vessels in the area, as required by maritime convention. Of our eight calls to the Libyan JRCC, only one was answered, but no English-speaking interlocutor was available to coordinate this urgent intervention. [...] Despite maneuvering in total darkness, we had to act quickly and prepare for the unseaworthy boat's further deterioration. The rescue teams could hear babies crying. Most of the people on board were frantic. Fortunately, rescuers managed to calm them and no one was lost overboard.”

NICOLA STALLA, Search and Rescue Coordinator aboard the *Ocean Viking*

### "FIVE OR SIX PEOPLE FELL IN THE WATER"



The first series of operations with the *Ocean Viking*, rescuing a total of 356 people in four consecutive rescues, was very difficult for the staff. SAR team member Antonin talks about the fourth rescue of this series, which took place on August 12, 2019.

 Hannah Wallace Bowman/MSF

“I was on watch duty. Through my binoculars, I began to make out a vague shape on the horizon that looked like some sort of boat. [...] After about 15 minutes, I realized that it was an inflatable boat with a hundred people on board. They were frantic. While we were distributing life jackets, one of the sections of the inflatable tubes exploded and five or six people fell in the water. Providentially, all of them had already received a life jacket. But it was truly a brush with catastrophe! People could have drowned, people could have died. We managed to calm and stabilize those who remained on the deteriorating boat, while the crew on the other rescue boat pulled the people from the water.”

ANTONIN, rescuer aboard the *Ocean Viking*

On September 14, for the first time in more than a year, Italy opened its ports to survivors rescued in the Central Mediterranean, but did not allow the *Ocean Viking* to dock. The transfer to an Italian ship was performed at sea; the 82 survivors who had been waiting on board for almost a week finally disembarked in Lampedusa. Ten days later, the ship was granted permission to enter Italian waters to disembark the survivors directly in the Port of Messina, Sicily – a first for the *Ocean Viking*. Throughout this month of operations, the time it took for decisions to be made remained unpredictable, ranging from less than 24 hours to five days. In October, the situation again deteriorated when 104 survivors were forced to wait eleven days on the aft deck of the *Ocean Viking* before a Place of Safety for their disembarkation was assigned.

## WHO ARE THE SURVIVORS?

- 1,373 PEOPLE RESCUED IN 2019
- 31 NATIONALITIES
- 28% MINORS
- 11% WOMEN

### HOW DOES A RESCUE OPERATION WORK?

As soon as a vessel in distress is located or reported, it's a race against time at sea. Two to three rescue boats (rigid-hulled inflatable boats or RHIBs) approach the vessel in distress. The first vital step is to calm the occupants, to avoid panicked mass movements that could capsize their boat. A multilingual cultural mediator reassures them and then gives them instructions. Life jackets are distributed and the most vulnerable people (first those injured or needing emergency medical treatment, then women and children) are transferred to the ship by the rescue boats. Then the rescue boats shuttle back and forth to bring all the survivors safely onboard the mothership. In some cases, the last phase of the rescue entails transferring the bodies of people who died during the crossing. The inflatable boats are then destroyed to ensure they are not reused. An operation can take one to seven hours, depending on conditions.

Every person rescued by the *Ocean Viking* has his or her own story. War, famine, political threat, and the search for a better life are some of the reasons they left their country. As their testimonials reveal, they arrived in Libya voluntarily or by force, either to work there or through human traffickers, criminal gangs or armed groups. Detained in appalling conditions, they often had no choice but to risk their lives at sea, alone or with their families, in order to flee what they call "Libyan hell." The country is in the throes of chaos and an intensifying armed conflict, where migrants are often robbed, tortured, sexually assaulted, subjected to forced labor, or worse.

Among the 137 women rescued in 2019, 9% were pregnant. Of the 384 minors rescued (28% of all survivors), 315 were unaccompanied by a parent or legal representative (80% of all minors). The majority of survivors were from sub-Saharan Africa, especially West Africa, Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. From time to time, Bangladeshi, North African, Libyan, and Syrian nationals were among those rescued by the *Ocean Viking* in 2019. The six countries of origin most represented on board the ship in 2019 were:

- SUDAN (24%) ;
- MALI (9%) ;
- CAMEROON (7%) ;
- CÔTE D'IVOIRE (11%) ;
- NIGERIA (8%) ;
- GUINEA (6%).

## MEDICAL CARE ON BOARD

A team of nine people from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was responsible for welcoming survivors and providing care on board in 2019. Over the year, the MSF team carried out 2,927 medical consultations in the clinic and on the deck of the *Ocean Viking*, with survivors traumatized by the very difficult conditions of the crossing as well as the repeated violence and lack of treatment options in Libya. The main reasons for consultation were seasickness, general physical pain, and identification of cases of scabies due to the living conditions in Libya. Other frequent reasons for consultation were serious gunshot wounds, burns to the skin caused by the mixture of diesel and seawater, pregnancy, skin infections, and wound treatment.

During critical operations with several people overboard, all crew members on board are required to provide first aid. In cases of acute medical emergencies, the teams coordinate medical evacuations, which are most often carried out by helicopter. Three medical evacuations from the *Ocean Viking* took place in 2019.

Lastly, the medical team works to identify and protect the most vulnerable people as soon as the survivors arrive on board the *Ocean Viking* in order to refer them to the competent services for appropriate care (medical, international protection) upon disembarkation.

### CARING FOR THE SURVIVORS UNTIL DISEMBARKATION IN A PLACE OF SAFETY

The following steps are taken once survivors reach safety on board after a difficult crossing: immediate intervention on urgent medical cases, registration (noting sex, age, and country of origin, triage of injured or vulnerable persons, such as pregnant women and children, unaccompanied minors), distribution of survival kits, medical evaluation.

One shelter on the aft deck is reserved for women and children and a second, larger shelter is designated for men. Injured survivors and the most serious medical cases are seen in the onboard clinic. Distributing food and water and performing watch duties on deck are handled jointly by the teams of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** and Médecins Sans Frontières, 24 hours a day, until disembarkation.





Avra Fialas / SOS MEDITERRANEE

Jean-Francois Deroubaix / SOS MEDITERRANEE

## AD HOC DISEMBARKATIONS AND LONG STANDOFFS AT SEA

Between August and December 2019, nine disembarkations of survivors – including four after a long standoff at sea – were carried out in Malta and Italy (three transshipments to ships of the Italian or Maltese authorities at sea and six in Italian ports). It took intense diplomatic negotiations between European Union Member States to reach ad hoc agreements on the relocation of the survivors within the EU prior to each disembarkation.

Reception on land in the port of disembarkation was fully coordinated by the national authorities, with assistance from international organizations such as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and local or international humanitarian associations (notably the Italian Red Cross).

### SHE WILL NAME HER TWINS OCEAN AND VIKING



Parr, a 32-year-old Ivorian woman, was rescued by the **SOS MEDITERRANEE** search and rescue team, along with 94 other people, from a vessel in distress at sea on November 19, 2019. As she was eight months pregnant, Parr was quickly evacuated by helicopter, along with another passenger who had received gunshot wounds in Libya, to be treated at a Maltese hospital.

Hannah Wallace Bowman / MSF

“ I helped an eight-months-pregnant woman shower and change. She spoke French. She told me, ‘Now I know for sure what I will name my twins: The girl will be named Ocean and the boy will be named Viking, in honor of the ship that saved our lives.’ ”

AVRA, Onboard Communications Officer



# RAISING AWARENESS AND GALVANIZING SUPPORT

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

- **Four new volunteer branches** opened in France
- **More than 400 support** and awareness-raising events
- **Increased awareness** outreach to schools
- **Steep rise in media coverage** and citizen proactivity with **back-at-sea campaign**
- **Strong advocacy** for enforcement of maritime law

### CITIZEN ACTION: THE OCEAN VIKING'S FUEL

SOS MEDITERRANEE would not exist without the incredible, proactive citizen support it has seen since its founding. In France, the organization works to raise public awareness of the situation on the Mediterranean, especially among middle-school and high-school students. The organization speaks on behalf of the survivors, telling their stories of the terrors of the crossing and the horrors of their time in Libya. It asks for public support to enable the NGO's vessel to continue carrying out its mission. Dozens of initiatives flow spontaneously from citizens who want to join forces with the organization for this cause.

Since rescue operations began, our regularly bringing international, national, and regional journalists on board the ship has made it possible to generate coverage of the migration crisis at sea and the many related rescues. The organization uses the social networks to publicize operations at sea in real time while promoting citizen involvement on land.



### 17 BRANCHES, 600 VOLUNTEERS

To carry out its communications objectives in France, SOS MEDITERRANEE has **17 branch offices that are run by volunteers**, including four locations newly created in 2019: Strasbourg, La Rochelle, Saint-Étienne, and Bretagne Sud.

- |                |                    |              |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| › Bordeaux     | › Marseille        | › Rennes     |
| › Brest        | › Montpellier/Sète | › St-Etienne |
| › Bretagne Sud | › Nantes           | › Strasbourg |
| › Caen         | › Nice             | › Toulouse   |
| › Grenoble     | › Paris            |              |
| › La Rochelle  | › Perpignan        |              |

More than 600 active volunteers lead activities such as school information and awareness sessions; maintaining information booths at public events or taking part in sporting events; hosting shows, speakers, film screenings followed by Q&A and discussion, photo exhibits, public readings of survivor testimonials, and more.

### MORE THAN 400 EVENTS DIVERSIFYING OUR AUDIENCE

**Fundraising concerts, speakers' events, film screenings followed by Q&A and discussion, festivals, regattas, photo exhibits, sporting events:** In 2019, SOS MEDITERRANEE was part of more than 400 very diverse events. It benefitted from fundraising concerts such as Dub Inc and Jahneration in Dijon; attended the La Mer XXL expo in Nantes, dedicated entirely to the maritime world, La Semaine de la Mer with the Occitanie region, and La Course des Héros (Race of Heroes) in Paris, Lyon, and Bordeaux, one of France's biggest charitable events. Other original initiatives helped bring in donations, such as the Afrovibe Solidarity dance workshop,



### THE #BACKATSEA CAMPAIGN

After having suspended operations for seven months in 2019, SOS MEDITERRANEE again cast off for the Central Mediterranean in early August with a new vessel, the *Ocean Viking*. This return to Mediterranean waters was paralleled by a massive #BackAtSea communications and public-relations campaign, maintaining the momentum by showing the faces of our land-based volunteers, rescuers at sea, and public figures supporting this new rescue mission, all in the same video. This was a highlight for the organization in 2019, generating substantial media coverage and numerous donations.

a charity auction ("Un Trésor à la Carte") of nautical charts personalized by artists, courtesy of the Watever non-profit organization, and two skippers racing in the Transat Jacques Vabre event on a sailing yacht displaying **SOS MEDITERRANEE**'s colors and message.

New partnerships were formed with leading cultural entities, including the Festival d'Avignon, Visa pour l'Image in Perpignan, World Wide Festival in Sète, the La Rochelle International Adventure Film and Book Festival, the Paimpol Chant Marin (Sea Shanty) Festival, the No Logo reggae festival in the Jura, and the Marsatac music festival in Marseille. Some partnerships are with annual events: the Douarnenez Film Festival, Solidays, the Étonnants Voyageurs film and book festival in Saint-Malo, the Mouans-Sartoux Book Festival, Bienvenue à Bordeaux, and many others. **All told, our French volunteers took part in more than a hundred festivals in 2019, making the most of these opportunities to educate tens of thousands of people about our work.**

The organization also hosted two national events in 2019. The "Tous à Bord" ("All on Board") soiree at Paris's Théâtre Odéon on April 15, in parallel with the advocacy campaign "Be humane, save lives at sea, respect the law," drew 800 people who came to hear our representatives recount their experiences, including **SOS MEDITERRANEE** staff members, survivor Alpha Kaba, Judith Sunderland from Human Rights Watch, and a number of well-known figures from the Support Committee, such as Ariane Ascaride, agnès b., Shani Diluka, Laurent Gaudé, Robert Guédiguian, Ray Lema, Daniel Pennac, Lilian Thuram, and Saype.

The third annual L'Appel du 8 Juin event was held in Bordeaux, in collaboration with Le Rocher de Palmer cultural center, an opportunity to repeat the call for citizen action and raise awareness among young people throughout the day, with exhibition areas, movie screenings with Q&A and discussion, and concerts by artists Blick Bassy, Camélia Jordana, and Trust.

Photo exhibits featuring works by the photographers aboard the *Aquarius* were put on public display: Maud Veith in Paris, Nantes, and several cities in Brittany;

### OUR VOLUNTEERS: COMPETENT COMMUNICATORS

In 2019, many volunteers lent their special talents to our public relations and communications work: videographers, film editors, photographers, journalists, translators, graphic designers, computer scientists, actors. They help diversify the organization's communications content, to improve reach and impact. Other volunteers take turns each day answering the emails that land in our contact and donation inboxes. Our warmest thanks to every one of you!

Anthony Jean in Paris, Toulouse, and Montpellier; Yann Levy at Les Focales du Pays d'Auge in Honfleur. A large group exhibition entitled *Sauver, protéger, témoigner* (Save, protect, tell others) was created and presented in Bordeaux and again at the Festival d'Avignon.

Lastly, the Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (National Museum of the History of Immigration) in Paris dedicated a display to the *Aquarius*, exhibiting objects collected from the ship when it was being demobilized. The publisher Actes Sud released *Méditerranée amère frontière* (*Mediterranean: Bitter Frontier*), a book featuring writings by 16 authors, with proceeds from the sale going to the organization.

## RAISING AWARENESS IN SCHOOLS

In 2019, awareness-raising initiatives in schools allowed our teams and volunteers to meet with **16,640 students** from elementary and secondary schools, as well as higher-education institutions, to educate them about the situation in the Mediterranean and the organization's rescue work. This outreach was performed by 124 **SOS MEDITERRANEE** volunteers in an initiative approved by France's Ministry of Education. The volunteers who devote themselves to raising awareness in schools continuously hone and improve their educational tools, such as by regularly updating the booklet that serves as an educational resource for these sessions.

### "WE'RE NOT ALWAYS AWARE OF WHAT'S GOING ON AT SEA"

“Two volunteers, Laure and Florine, met with the class and explained what SOS MEDITERRANEE does. I think that's great, because we're not always aware of what's going on at sea, so people don't do anything. But they have the courage to go out and save lives right where there's so much need for it. Some people criticize them, but what they don't understand is that you don't leave your country for the fun of it, but because you have to.”

ÉLIEN, student, Jean Auriac middle school, Arveyres (Gironde)

## ADVOCACY FOR THE RESPECT OF MARITIME LAW

In principle, the search for and rescue of people in distress at sea is the responsibility of the States. **SOS MEDITERRANEE** was founded in response to the inaction of EU countries in the face of the tragic shipwrecks in the Mediterranean. Since 2015, the organization has continually called upon these States to honor their duties, reminding them of their responsibilities under maritime law, and to respect human rights by asking them to:

- establish an effective State-led search and rescue mechanism in the Central Mediterranean;
- establish a predictable, transparent, and sustainable disembarkation mechanism for survivors in a Place of Safety;
- put an end to the obstruction and criminalization of NGOs so that they can save lives at sea.



Illustration by Rhodo





On January 31, 2019, an open letter was sent by **SOS MEDITERRANEE** and various humanitarian, solidarity, and human-rights organizations to Christophe Castaner, French Minister of the Interior at the time, and Nicole Belloubet, then French Minister of Justice, asking them to adopt swift and predictable European disembarkation procedures.

In April, faced with the controversy initiated by former Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, who had declared that NGOs were "smugglers' accomplices" – remarks he subsequently withdrew – the organization defended itself by publishing a new open letter.


Back at sea with the *Ocean Viking*, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** reiterated its demands in each press release, asking for a Place of Safety to disembark the survivors without being forced to wait at sea for the European States to arrive at an ad hoc agreement for the relocation of the rescued persons.

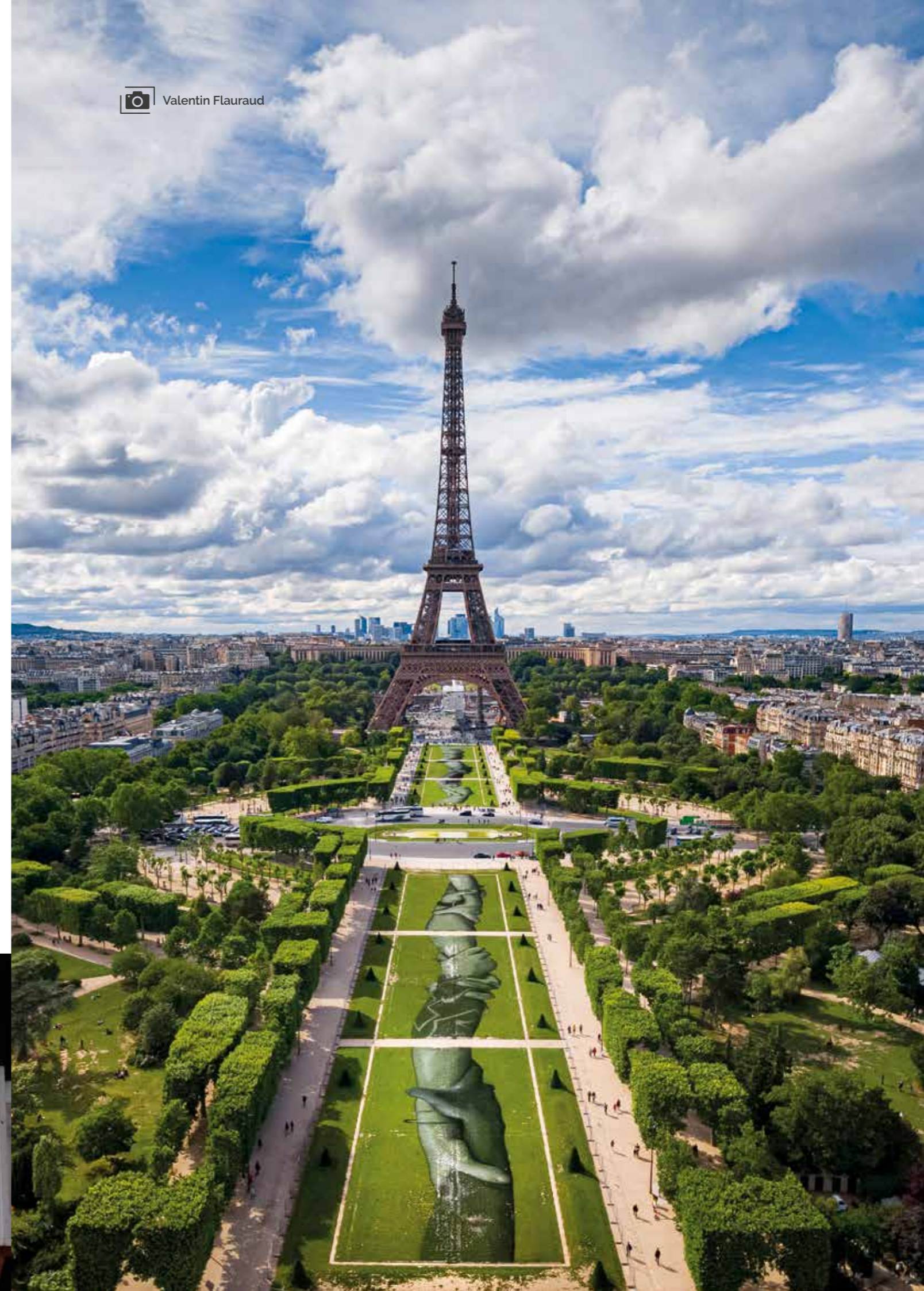
In May 2019, with the European elections on the horizon, the advocacy campaign "Be humane, save lives, respect the law!" was introduced by the **SOS MEDITERRANEE** international network. It called upon European citizens to hold their future elected representatives accountable to ensure that international maritime law would be respected and human life protected in the Mediterranean.


## **MEDIA COVERAGE:** **A CATALYST FOR RAISING AWARENESS AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

**SOS MEDITERRANEE**'s mission of informing others of the situation at sea is based in large part on its ability to communicate with a variety of audiences, including those of regional, national, and international electronic and print media outlets. In France, in 2019, 9,993 media articles/stories (television, radio, print, and online) were catalogued, for a total cumulative reach of 979.4 million people. From January to July 2019, when **SOS MEDITERRANEE** was not at sea, the mission to increase visibility continued to shine a spotlight on the humanitarian drama in the Mediterranean. Actions that received substantial media coverage include the publication of the comic strip "À bord de l'*Aquarius*" ("On board the *Aquarius*") in January 2019 and the monumental fresco at the foot of the Eiffel Tower by land-art artist Saype supporting **SOS MEDITERRANEE**.

The news of **SOS MEDITERRANEE**'s return to sea with the *Ocean Viking* caused a media spike. Between August and December 2019, 13 journalists from 13 international

 Valentin Flauraud



 Julie Bégin /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE

media outlets boarded the *Ocean Viking*. Coverage included stories on the first rescues carried out in August 2019, by virtue of having a journalist on board from Agence France Presse, and a report produced in late 2019 and broadcast in early 2020 during the France 2 television newscast, as well as a series of articles published at the end of the year by the newspaper *Ouest-France*.

Throughout 2019, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** continued to loudly reiterate through the media its insistence that European States reach greater solidarity concerning the Mediterranean. A press conference following the "reopening" of Italian ports was held in September 2019 and numerous press releases were issued to challenge the States to action.

Lastly, key land-based events were covered in articles in the regional daily press, such as the opening of a local office in Strasbourg in November 2019.

## SOCIAL NETWORKS: INFORMING IN REAL TIME

Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter – in the digital age, these tools are of incalculable value in disseminating information about the work of **SOS MEDITERRANEE** both on land and at sea. Social networks make it possible to reach a younger audience (it opened its Instagram account in May 2019) and to communicate in real time with journalists and citizens on events at sea, especially using Twitter. Posts on these networks also help generate website traffic, promote initiatives to galvanize citizen involvement, and are an important catalyst for fundraising. Photos, videos, infographics, stories, tweets – posting once a day in 2019, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** has diversified its content to deliver its message to new audiences.

### "CAN WE LET PEOPLE DIE WHEN WE COULD SAVE THEM?"



“Too many people are dying at sea every day. And we have the means to do something to save those lives. The solidarity among seafarers is a response to a universal human right and duty: the duty to rescue, to lend assistance to anyone in danger. The only question we can ask ourselves is this: ‘Can we let people die when we could save them?’ We cannot turn a blind eye to what’s currently happening in the Mediterranean.”

**FRANÇOIS GABART**, skipper, SOS MEDITERRANEE patron

### FOLLOWERS

(growth on social networks between 2018 and December 2019)

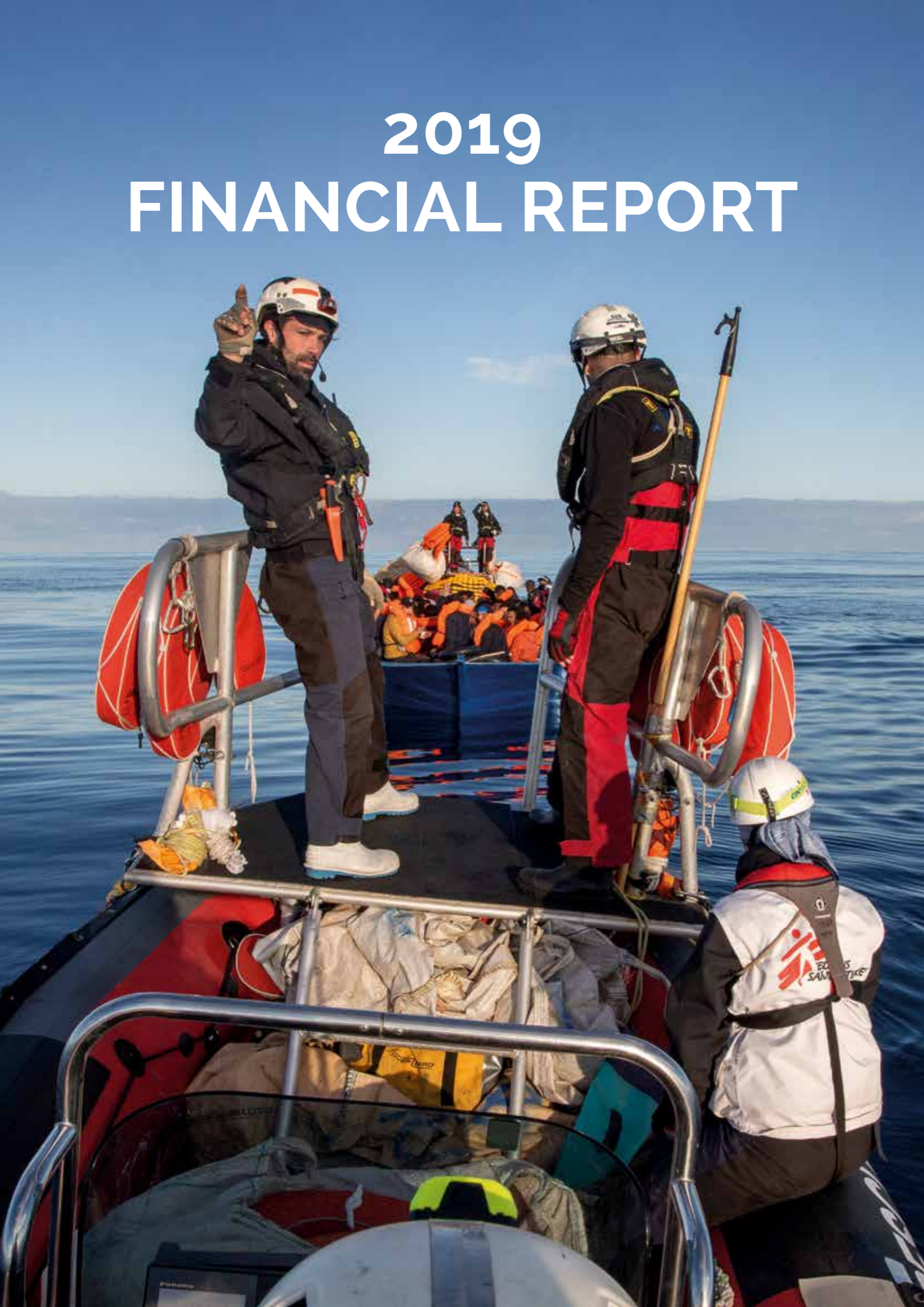
	<b>74,115</b>	up 13.4K.	Profile: 56% women; age 25-34, then age 35-44
	<b>30,056</b>	up 6.5k.	Profile: 60% men
	<b>2,300</b>	(account opened May 16, 2019)	Profile: 62% women; age 25-34
	<b>6,447</b>	up 2k	
	<b>1,760</b>	up 866	

## 123 WELL-KNOWN FIGURES ON THE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

THE SUPPORT COMMITTEE, FORMED IN 2015, CONTINUES TO EXPAND. AT THE CLOSE OF 2019, IT INCLUDED 123 WELL-KNOWN FIGURES FROM A VARIETY OF SPHERES: MARITIME, SPORTS, ARTS, RESEARCH, ECONOMY, ETC.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| A FILETTA, vocal ensemble   | DESGRANDCHAMPS Marc, painter                     | LÉVY Marc, writer  |
| AL MALIK Abd, musician, writer  | DI ROSA Hervé, painter                           | LOIZEAU Emily, musician  |
| ADJANI Isabelle, actress  | DILUKA Shani, pianist                            | LOJKINE Boris, filmmaker   |
| ADLER Laure, journalist   | DISIZ LA PESTE, rapper                           | MADAME MONSIEUR, musicians   |
| AGNÈS B., fashion designer  | DROZ-VINCENT Philippe, political scientist       | MAKEÏEFF Macha, author, stage and theatre director                         |
| AGRINIER Thomas, painter  | DUB INC, reggae group                            | MANOURY Philippe, composer   |
| ALVARO Anne, actress  | ESTRELLA Miguel Angel, pianist                   | MARCOU Jean, political scientist   |
| AMBROGIANI Marc, Director of the Festival Nuits Mëtis                     | FABRE Thierry, essayist                          | MASSILIA SOUND SYSTEM, musicians   |
| ARTHUS-BERTRAND Yann, photographer, Chairman of the GoodPlanet Foundation | FAYE Gaël, writer, musician                      | MEURICE Guillaume, radio commentator                                       |
| ASCARIDE Ariane, actress  | FLEURY Eric, painter                             | MOATTI Jean-Paul, economist  |
| AUTISSIER Isabelle, sailor, navigator, writer, broadcaster                | FOCCROULLE Bernard, organist, composer           | MONCANY DE SAINT AIGNAN Frédéric, President of the French Maritime Cluster |
| BADIE Bertrand, political scientist                                       | FOURRIER Philippe, entrepreneur                  | MOREL François, actor, singer  |
| BAGIEU Pénélope, comic-strip author                                       | FRANÇOIS Etienne, historian                      | MOUGLALIS Anna, actress  |
| BARTHÈS Yann, producer, broadcast host                                    | FRESU Paolo, musician                            | MOUSS & HAKIM, musicians   |
| BASSY Blick, musician, writer   | GABART François, navigator                       | NAGUI, producer, broadcast host  |
| BEAUNE François, writer   | GAGLIONE Nielo, musician                         | NEKFEU, rapper   |
| BENDERBOUS Djamila, neurosurgeon  | GAUDÉ Laurent, writer                            | N'SONDÉ Wilfried, writer   |
| BERLING Charles, actor  | GÉZE François, editor                            | ORSENNA Èrik, writer   |
| BIGNOLAS Laurent, journalist  | GLUCKSMAN Raphaël, essayist                      | PENNAC Daniel, writer  |
| BLANCHY Jacqueline, President of the Fondation les Arts et les Autres     | GUÉDIGUIAN Robert, director                      | PERALDI Michel, anthropologist   |
| BONNAFFÉ Jacques, actor   | GUYARD Pierre, film producer                     | PIKETTY Thomas, economist  |
| BONVOISIN Bernie and the group Trust, musicians                           | HELFER-AUBRAC Renaud, humanitarian activist      | PY Olivier, Director of the Festival d'Avignon                             |
| BOUCHERON Patrick, historian  | HÉNIN Nicolas, journalist                        | QUEFFÉLEC Anne, pianist  |
| BUSSI Michel, writer  | HERBELIN François, merchant marine captain       | RENAUD, singer   |
| BRUSK, street artist  | HOUSSEIN Rohan, artist                           | RONDIN Paul, Deputy Director of the Festival d'Avignon                     |
| CALAME Claude, anthropologist   | IAM, rap group                                   | RYFMAN Philippe, lawyer and political scientist                            |
| CHAMOISEAU Patrick, writer, poet  | IMHOTEP, DJ                                      | SANGARÉ Oumou, singer  |
| CHINESE MAN, DJ   | JAHNERATION, reggae group                        | SAVALL Jordi, musician   |
| CLUZAN Sophie, archaeologist, heritage curator                            | JORDANA Camélia, singer, actress                 | SAYPE, painter   |
| CURLET François, painter  | JOURDAIN Roland, navigator                       | SISSOKO Ballaké, musician  |
| D'ABOVILLE Gérard, navigator  | KAHN Axel, geneticist                            | STORA Benjamin, historian  |
| D'ALMEIDA Fabrice, historian  | KSIKES Driss, author, playwright                 | THURAM Lilian, athlete   |
| DAKHLIA Jocelyne, historian   | LABORIER Pascale, political scientist            | TIKEN JAH FAKOLY, musician   |
| DAMASIO Alain, writer   | LABOURGADE Christelle, painter                   | TORRETON Philippe, actor   |
| DANAKIL, reggae group   | LAMAZOU Titouan, artist, navigator               | TRAORÉ Rokia, musician   |
| DAYAN-HERZBRUN Sonia, sociologist   | LANG Jack, President of the Arab World Institute | TROUBLE Bruno, skipper   |
| DE KERANGAL Maylis, writer  | LAVILLIERS Bernard, singer-songwriter            | URVOY Marianick, psychologist  |
| DE PAVANT Kito, navigator   | LE CLÉZIO Jean-Marie Gustave, writer             | VANHOENACKER Charline, journalist  |
| DELUXE, music group   | LEMA Ray, musician                               | VIDEAU Philippe, shipowner   |
| DESCHAMPS Fabianny, filmmaker   | LES HURLEMENTS D'LÉO, musicians                  | WIEVIORKA Michel, sociologist  |
|   | LES OGRES DE BARBACK, musicians                  | WILD Nicolas, comic-strip author   |
|   |  | WIHTOL DE WENDEN Catherine, political scientist                            |

# 2019 FINANCIAL REPORT



## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

- Total resources of **7.8 million euros**
- **13% increase in resources**
- **92 % private funds** compared to 8% public grants
- **32,000 donors**
- **8,000 regular donors**
- **84% of expenses** devoted to operational missions

### OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

**SOS MEDITERRANEE** France has been managing rescue operations since 2018; it has become a recipient of contributions from other member organizations of its European network (**SOS MEDITERRANEE** Germany, Switzerland, and Italy) for financing operations at sea. The same is true for the contribution of Médecins Sans Frontières Holland, which helps finance maritime operations.

This partly explains the increase in the French organization's resources 2019 by 13% to €7.8M, with an increase in institutional grants, as well, rising from 2% to 8% of the total budget.

**SOS MEDITERRANEE's** fundraising in France remains steady at €5.11M, driven by public donations of €3.8M; contributions from private companies, organizations, and foundations of €615K; and contributions from public partners amounting to €655K.

During this fiscal year, the level of private resources reached 92% of the total funds collected, public funding representing 8% of the resources.

### RESOURCES: FUNDED PRIMARY BY CITIZEN

WITH MORE THAN 32,000 DONORS, THE LEVEL OF REVENUE IN 2019 FROM DONATIONS FROM INDIVIDUALS REFLECTS THE DEGREE OF CITIZEN-MOBILISATION INITIATIVES CARRIED OUT BY SOS MEDITERRANEE FRANCE. REGULAR DONATIONS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR 19% OF RESOURCES IN 2019.

#### LOYALTY OF REGULAR DONORS

In 2019, the **loyalty of regular donors** was essential. The unwavering support of these 8,000 donors has allowed us to charter our new vessel, the *Ocean Viking*, and return to sea.

The numerous volunteer initiatives carried out in the 17 branch offices across France, as well as the media exposure the organization achieved, played very important roles in these results, since they helped raise awareness among citizens and also inspired them to make donations.

## OTHER PRIVATE FUNDS (COMPANIES, FOUNDATIONS, AND CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS)

Contributions from partner organizations for the implementation of our project, combined with other private funds, totaled 42% of resources, the second-most important source of funding for the French organization's work. In 2019, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France enjoyed support from 303 sponsors, divided as follows: eight foundations, 101 organizations, and 194 companies, mostly based in France. Their contributions amounted to €615,000, or 24% less than in the previous year.

Some sponsors have also provided support through in-kind contributions, material donations, and by supplying media space. Skills sponsorship was more important than ever in 2019, totaling €222,000, particularly in the maritime, communications, and legal sectors.

## MAIN PARTNERS IN 2019

A gauche de la Lune  
Afrovibe  
AGAT Films et cie  
Accueillir au Pays non-profit organization  
Watever non-profit organization  
Atelier Maladroit  
CCFD - Terre Solidaire  
Collectif Bienvenue  
Cheminots en PACA works council

Delta Trailers  
Diversité  
Electric Bazar  
Festival du Chant du Marin (Sea Shanty Festival)  
Fondation Abbé Pierre  
Fondation Cabestan  
Fondation Inkermann  
Fondation Pour un Autre Monde  
Fondation Un Monde par Tous

Gestotel  
Le Rocher de Palmer  
Société civile Joseph  
Théâtre National de l'Odéon  
Tous Aziluttes  
Unkle Productions  
Verifavia SARL  
Virtual Expo  
Voyageurs du Monde /  
Fondation Insolites Bâtitseurs

Patrick Bar /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE



## INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING

Public contribution total €655,000, bringing the proportion of institutional funding to 8%. They increased by 396% in 2019, primarily due to a contribution of €500,000 being granted by France's Loire-Atlantique department.

### GRANTS RECEIVED

Loire-Atlantique department: €500,000  
Paris City Hall: €100,000

Occitanie region: €50,000  
City of Miramas: €5,000

## EXPENSES

**SOS MEDITERRANEE France's** operational expenses totaled €5.6M in 2019, or **84% of total expenses, out of €6.8M in total expenditures.**

### THESE OPERATIONAL EXPENSES INCLUDE:

- ▶ **the French organization's financial contribution** to the search and rescue operations carried out by the Ocean Viking from August to December 2019;
- ▶ **expenses** related to the direct management of these activities;
- ▶ **awareness-raising**, information-dissemination, and advocacy initiatives carried out in France regarding the situation in the Mediterranean.

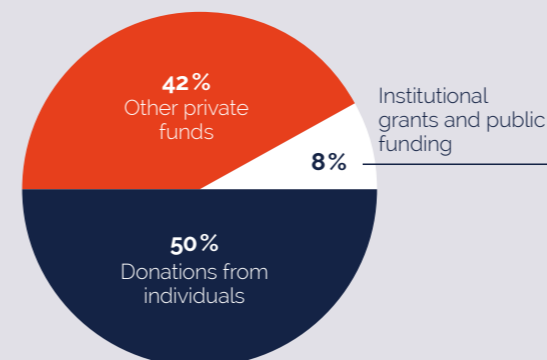
Fundraising costs represent 8% of expenses. **SOS MEDITERRANEE** France continues to regularly disseminate newsletters and carry out its external communications on social networks and traditional media, keeping the public informed of its latest news and encouraging citizens to help finance its operations.

Operating costs represent 8% of expenses, identical to 2018.

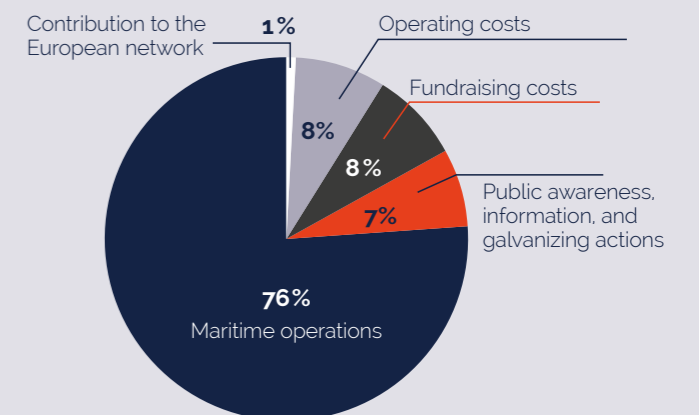
## RESULT

The financial statements show a surplus of **€1,165,593.**

### BREAKDOWN OF RESOURCES BY ORIGIN (€7,766,516)



### BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE BY TYPE (€6,836,504)



**GLOBALISED ANNUAL RESOURCE EXPENSE STATEMENT WITH ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC BY EXPENSES TYPE**

EXPENSES	2019 = Income statement (1)	Allocation of resources collected from the public by application type and used in 2019 (3)	RESOURCES	Resources collected in 2019 = Income statement (2)	Tracking of resources collected from the public and used in 2019 (4)
			Carry-over of resources collected from the public unallocated and unused at the start of the year		3,469,838
<b>1 – OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURES</b>	5,626,415	2,140,045	<b>1 – RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC</b>	3,844,563	3,844,563
<b>1.1. Incurred in France</b>	590,947	224,771	<b>1.1. Donations and contributions collected</b>	3,844,563	3,844,563
Direct actions (citizen awareness, information, galvanising initiatives)	447,419	170,179	Unallocated donations from individuals	3,844,563	3,844,563
Maritime operations monitoring	143,528	54,592	Allocated donations from individuals	-	-
			Unallocated contributions and other gifts	-	-
<b>1.2. Incurred abroad</b>	5,035,468	1,915,275	Allocated contributions and other gifts	-	-
Chartering and operation of the <i>Ocean Viking</i>	5,035,468	1,915,275	<b>1.2. Other income related to public appeals for donations</b>	-	-
<b>2 – FUNDRAISING COSTS</b>	541,496	284,620	<b>2 – OTHER PRIVATE FUNDS</b>	3,234,818	
			Donations from private companies	193,487	
<b>2.1. Expenses related to appeals for public donations</b>	284,620	284,620	French and foreign foundations	145,300	
<b>2.2. Expenses related to research of other private funding</b>	145,924	-	Non-profit organisations, endowments and others	2,896,032	
<b>2.3. Expenses related to research grants and other public funding</b>	110,952	-			
<b>3 – OPERATING COSTS</b>	668,593	254,304	<b>3 – INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS AND OTHER PUBLIC FUNDING</b>	655,000	
			French government agencies	-	
<b>3.1. Information dissemination and communications costs</b>	112,547	42,808	Local and regional authorities	655,000	
<b>3.2. Other operating costs</b>	556,047	211,496	Foreign government agencies	-	
			<b>4 – OTHER REVENUES</b>	32,136	
			Contributions	1,980	
			Financial products	836	
			Other miscellaneous products	29,320	
<b>I - TOTAL EXPENSES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR</b>	6,836,504	2,678,969	<b>I - TOTAL RESOURCES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR RECORDED IN THE INCOME STATEMENT</b>	7,766,516	
<b>II - ALLOCATIONS TO PROVISIONS</b>	150,942		<b>II - REVERSALS OF PROVISIONS</b>	376,323	
<b>III - COMMITMENTS ON ALLOCATED RESOURCES</b>	-		<b>III - CARRY-OVER OF UNUSED RESOURCES FROM PREVIOUS FISCAL YEARS</b>	10,200	
<b>IV - EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR</b>	1,165,593		<b>IV - CHANGE IN RESTRICTED PUBLIC DONATIONS</b>		
			<b>V - RESOURCE INSUFFICIENCY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR</b>	-	
<b>V - GRAND TOTAL</b>	8,153,039		<b>VI - GRAND TOTAL</b>	8,153,039	3,844,563
<b>V - SHARE OF GROSS FIXED ASSET ACQUISITIONS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR FINANCED BY RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC</b>		-			
<b>VI – NEUTRALISATION OF DEPRECIATION CHARGES FOR FINANCED FIXED ASSETS FROM THE FIRST APPLICATION OF THE REGULATION BY THE RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC</b>		2,678,969	<b>VI - TOTAL OF THE EXPENSES FINANCED BY RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC</b>		2,678,969
			<b>BALANCE OF RESOURCES COLLECTED FROM THE PUBLIC UNALLOCATED AND UNUSED AT YEAR END</b>		4,635,431
<b>VII – EVALUATION OF VOLUNTARY IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS</b>					
Operational expenses	22,413		Volunteering		
Fundraising costs	166,674		In-kind benefits	222,777	
Operating costs and other charges	33,690		In-kind donations		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222,777</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222,777</b>	

## BALANCE SHEET AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019

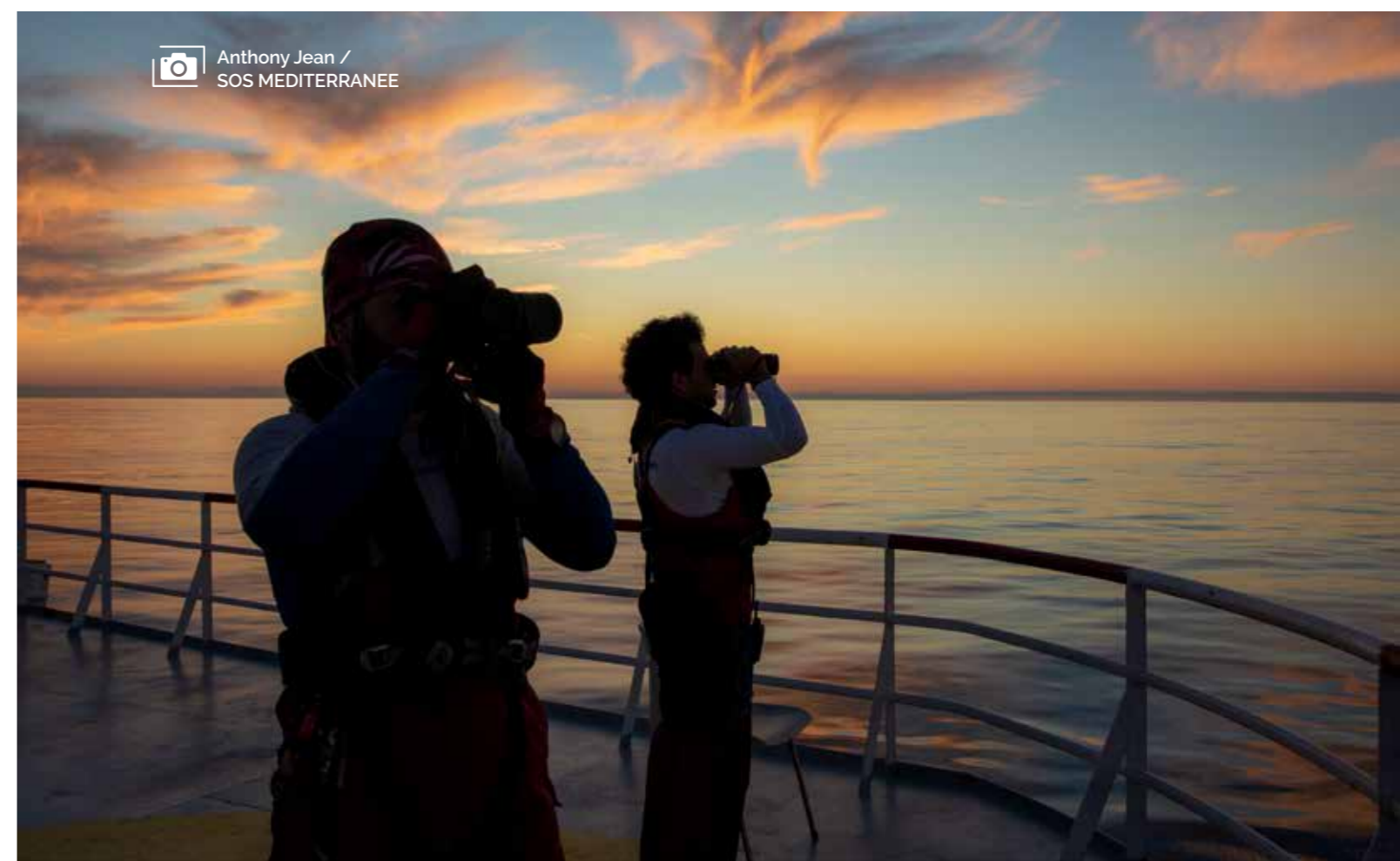
The balance sheet total is €5,244,000, meaning an increase of €1,083,000, primarily due to the increase in reserves/association funds of €1,166,000, bringing them to €4,668,000, and liquid assets (up €819,000), totaling €4,735,000.

## BALANCE SHEET (IN K€)

	ASSETS			LIABILITIES	
	2019	2018		2019	2018
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	116	72	RESERVES	3,470	1,641
FINANCIAL ASSETS	119	4	BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	32	1
ADVANCE PAYMENTS	-	-	PROFIT/LOSS FOR THE YEAR	1,166	1,860
RECEIVABLES	263	151	PROVISIONS AND DEDICATED FUNDS	203	439
LIQUID ASSETS	4,735	3,916	DEBTS	373	210
PREPAID EXPENSES	11	9			
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>5,244</b>	<b>4,151</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>5,244</b>	<b>4,151</b>

### WHAT WILL THE RESERVES BE USED FOR?

Over the last four years, we have managed to generate financial reserves of €4.7 million. For the organization, these reserves provide a buffer, a form of insurance to handle the contractual commitment of high expenses, especially with regard to chartering the vessel, which is contracted for a one-year period. It is also a way of guarding against the risks and possible obstacles to our activities at sea that could have financial consequences.



Anthony Jean / SOS MEDITERRANEE



Flavio Gasperini /  
SOS MEDITERRANEE

# OUTLOOK FOR 2020

## SEARCH AND RESCUE AT SEA DURING A PANDEMIC

The *Ocean Viking* continued operations over the first months of 2020 until March, when the coronavirus pandemic became global, heavily impacting the Central Mediterranean.

To prevent the spread of the epidemic, people everywhere were under lockdown orders. Governments began taking draconian measures and the maritime industry was severely disrupted: closure of ports and borders, ships quarantined or stranded at sea without being able to disembark their passengers, crew changes rendered impossible, port logistics paralyzed. In the Central Mediterranean, the fragile Valletta agreement permitting survivors to be relocated between voluntary European States was interrupted. The humanitarian crisis nonetheless continued, with many departures from the Libyan coast.

In this unprecedented context, in early April, **SOS MEDITERRANEE** and the ship-owner felt that it would not be responsible to immediately set back out to sea because of the health and safety risks faced by the staff, risks that could jeopardize the sustainability of the mission. Similar decisions were reached by those responsible for the humanitarian ships *Open Arms* and *Sea Watch 3*.

This operational decision led to the end of the partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières, as that organization wanted to set back out to sea immediately. The

rescue ships *Alan Kurdi* and *Aïta Mari* set out in April. After their first rescues, both were detained by the Italian authorities and are still being held as of this writing.

The end of the partnership with Médecins Sans Frontières created new operational and financial challenges for **SOS MEDITERRANEE**. During France's initial lockdown, the *Ocean Viking* remained docked in Marseille and the **SOS MEDITERRANEE** staff prepared to go back out to sea – eventually – and recruited a medical team.

On June 22, as the extraordinary measures in Europe were being gradually lifted, the *Ocean Viking* left Marseille with 22 people on board under contract with **SOS MEDITERRANEE**: rescuers, a full medical team, and logistics staff, as well as the nine crew members. To minimize the risks associated with Covid-19, exceptional measures were implemented: preventive quarantine of the staff, very strict hygiene protocols, and protective equipment onboard the ship. In what is already an extremely challenging context, the pandemic will make future operations even more complex.

On land, the organization's 600 volunteers engaged in sporadic activities during the COVID pandemic. However, new forms of digital dissemination and engagement have emerged, these will enable us to meet the challenges before us that will require the commitment of all to overcome. It is this collective action that strengthens our determination to continue our mission

# THANK YOU

to the thousands of citizens  
who make it possible  
for **SOS MEDITERRANEE** to save lives!

## SOS MEDITERRANEE

[#TogetherForRescue](#)

[www.sosmediterranee.com](http://www.sosmediterranee.com)

[contact@sosmediterranee.org](mailto:contact@sosmediterranee.org)

