# Territorial typologies manual - coastal areas

## Statistics Explained

This article forms part of Eurostat 's *methodology manual on territorial typologies* .

Coastal areas are local administrative units (LAUs) that are bordering or close to a coastline. A coastline is defined as the line where land and water surfaces meet (border each other). Due to the existence of several measures (for example, the mean or median tides, high- or low-tides), the European Commission has adopted the harmonised use of the mean high tide (EC, 1999) in order to delineate EU coastlines.
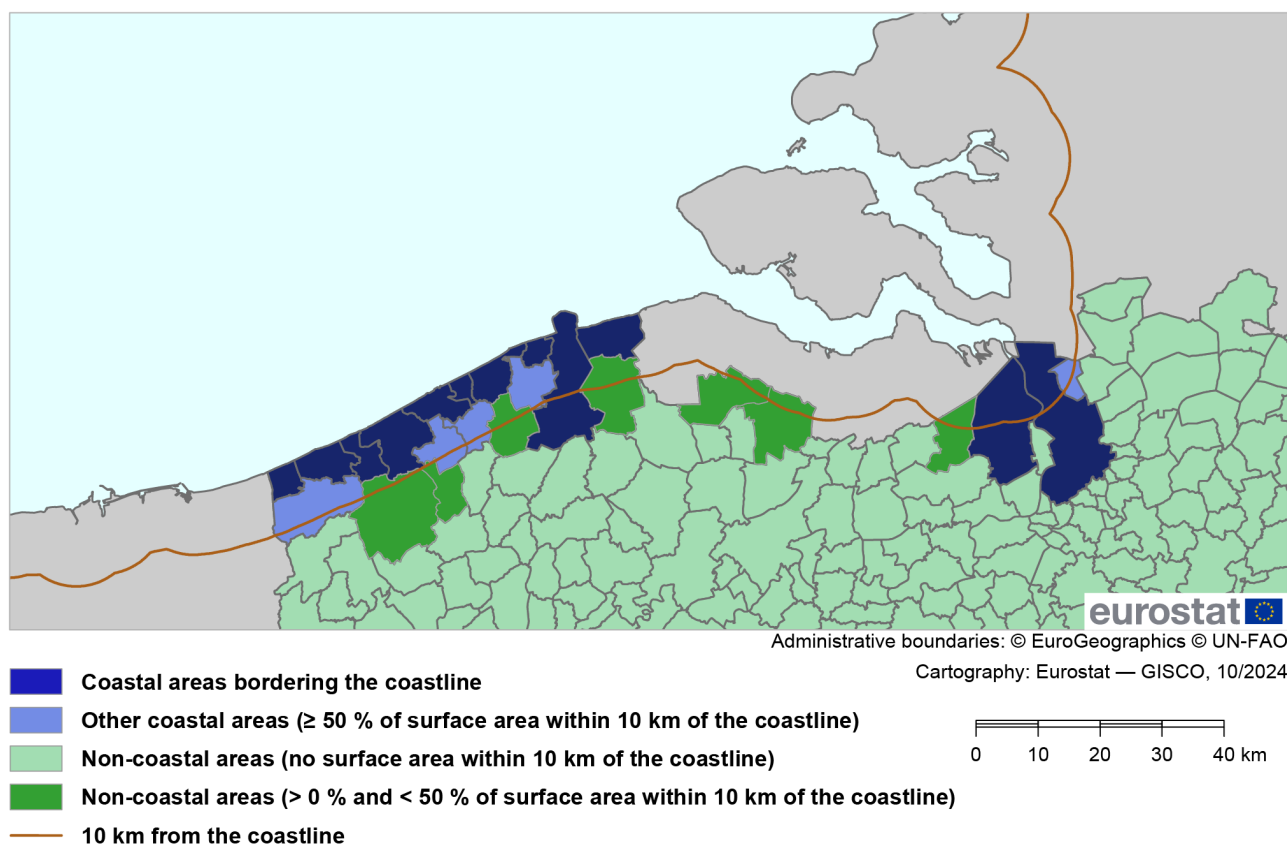
## Classes for the typology and their conditions

Coastal areas are a classification based on the following 2 categories

- **coastal areas** – LAUs that border the coastline or LAUs that have at least 50% of their surface area within a distance of 10 km from the coastline

- **non-coastal areas** – LAUs that aren't 'coastal areas'; in other words, LAUs that don't border the coastline and have less than 50% of their surface area within a distance of 10 km from the coastline.

The main building blocks for the coastal areas classification are data for LAUs (such as municipalities). Coastal areas and non-coastal areas are classified according to the distance of each LAU to the coastline. The coastal areas typology is therefore atypical, insofar as it is based exclusively on topographical information, while other local typologies are constructed from statistics on population grids . If an LAU borders the coastline, it is by default coastal. If an LAU doesn't border the coastline but it has at least 50% of its surface area within a distance of 10 km from the coastline, then it is also considered to be a coastal area. All remaining LAUs are considered as non-coastal areas. An example showing how the methodology is applied to the coastline of Belgium is shown in Map 1.

The coastal areas typology is exhaustive, insofar as coastal and non-coastal areas together cover the whole of a territory. Note that among the European Union (EU) countries, Czechia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Austria and Slovakia are landlocked and therefore don't have any coastal areas; the same is true for the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries of Liechtenstein and Switzerland and for the candidate countries of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.

**Legend:**

- ■ **Coastal areas bordering the coastline**
- ■ **Other coastal areas (≥ 50 % of surface area within 10 km of the coastline)**
- ■ **Non-coastal areas (no surface area within 10 km of the coastline)**
- ■ **Non-coastal areas (> 0 % and < 50 % of surface area within 10 km of the coastline)**
- — **10 km from the coastline**

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO
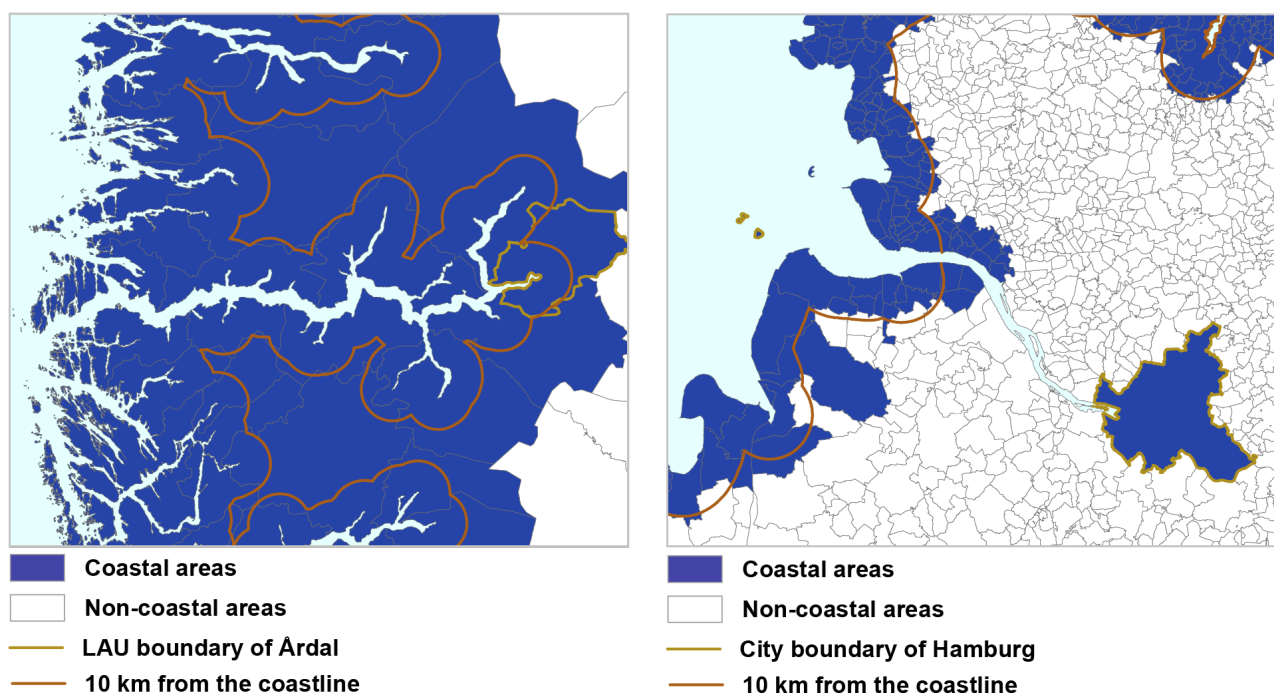Cartography: Eurostat — GISCO, 10/2024

0    10    20    30    40 km

Source: Eurostat (GISCO) based on local administrative units 2021

**Map 1: Coastal and non-coastal areas in Belgium Source: Eurostat (GISCO) based on local administrative units 2021**

**Further adjustments**

There are a small number of special cases where the definition of a 'coastline' is treated on a case-by-case basis; for example, how to treat fjords, river estuaries or small islands. These country-specific exceptions to the underlying methodology have been agreed with the national statistical authorities of the EU countries or EFTA countries in question.

**Legend (left map):**
- Coastal areas
- Non-coastal areas
- —— LAU boundary of Årdal
- —— 10 km from the coastline

**Legend (right map):**
- Coastal areas
- Non-coastal areas
- —— City boundary of Hamburg
- —— 10 km from the coastline

**Map 2: Special cases for the classification of coastal and non-coastal areas** Source: Eurostat (GISCO) based on local administrative units 2021

### Sea or inland water? An example for the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the IJsselmeer is a closed area of inland water separated from the sea by a man-made dam (dyke). When applied rigorously the line marking the buffer zone that is 10 km from the coastline should be drawn with reference to this dam (as applied in the classification). An alternative would be to draw the buffer with reference to the inland coastline around the IJsselmeer, whereby the result would be quite different.

### Fjords? An example for Norway

The municipality of Årdal (shown by the beige line in the first part of Map 2) is located at the end of Sognefjord, which is the deepest and longest fjord in Norway. It is a major tourist destination due to the spectacular scenery along this stretch of water. Årdal, together with other LAUs along the fjord, is considered as a coastal area (despite being approximately 200 km from the open sea).

### Small islands and estuaries? An example for Germany

In Germany, the city of Hamburg provides an example of an estuary (the Elbe river) and of some small islands. In this case, a relatively strict definition was applied, as a majority of the Elbe estuary is excluded from being classified as a coastal area although the city of Hamburg (shown by the beige line in the second part of Map 2) is considered as a coastal area. This may be attributed to Hamburg's strong maritime influence (with easy access to its ports). Note in addition, that some small islands off the German coast (Neuwerk, Nigehörn and Scharhörn – also marked with a beige line) are administratively part of the city of Hamburg and, as such, the LAU of Hamburg borders the coastline.
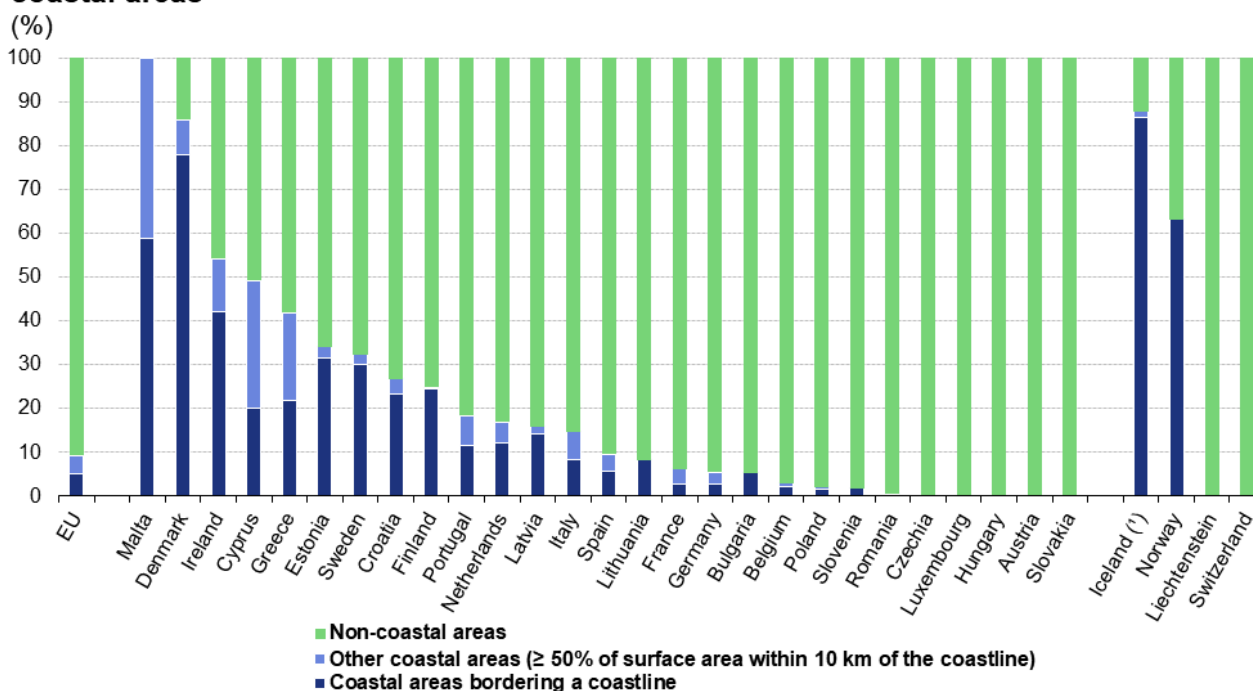
## Links to other spatial concepts/typologies

Coastal areas are a subgroup of coastal regions (see Chapter 7 ).

Within this context, it also worthwhile noting that the EU's outermost regions – principally islands and archipelagos in the Caribbean, the Western Atlantic and Indian Ocean – are largely composed of coastal areas (except Guyane).

# Results

Using the above definition, and on the basis of data for reference year 2021, there were 8 947 LAUs in the EU that were considered to be coastal areas (4 932 directly bordering the sea and a further 4 015 that weren't bordering the sea but had at least 50% of their surface area within 10 km of the sea). As such, almost 10% of all LAUs in the EU were coastal areas, a share that ranged – among those EU countries with a coastline – from 0.5% in Romania to 100.0% in Malta (see Figure 1).

## Distribution of local administrative units between coastal and non-coastal areas

(%)



■ Non-coastal areas
■ Other coastal areas (≥ 50% of surface area within 10 km of the coastline)
■ Coastal areas bordering a coastline

(¹) 2018.
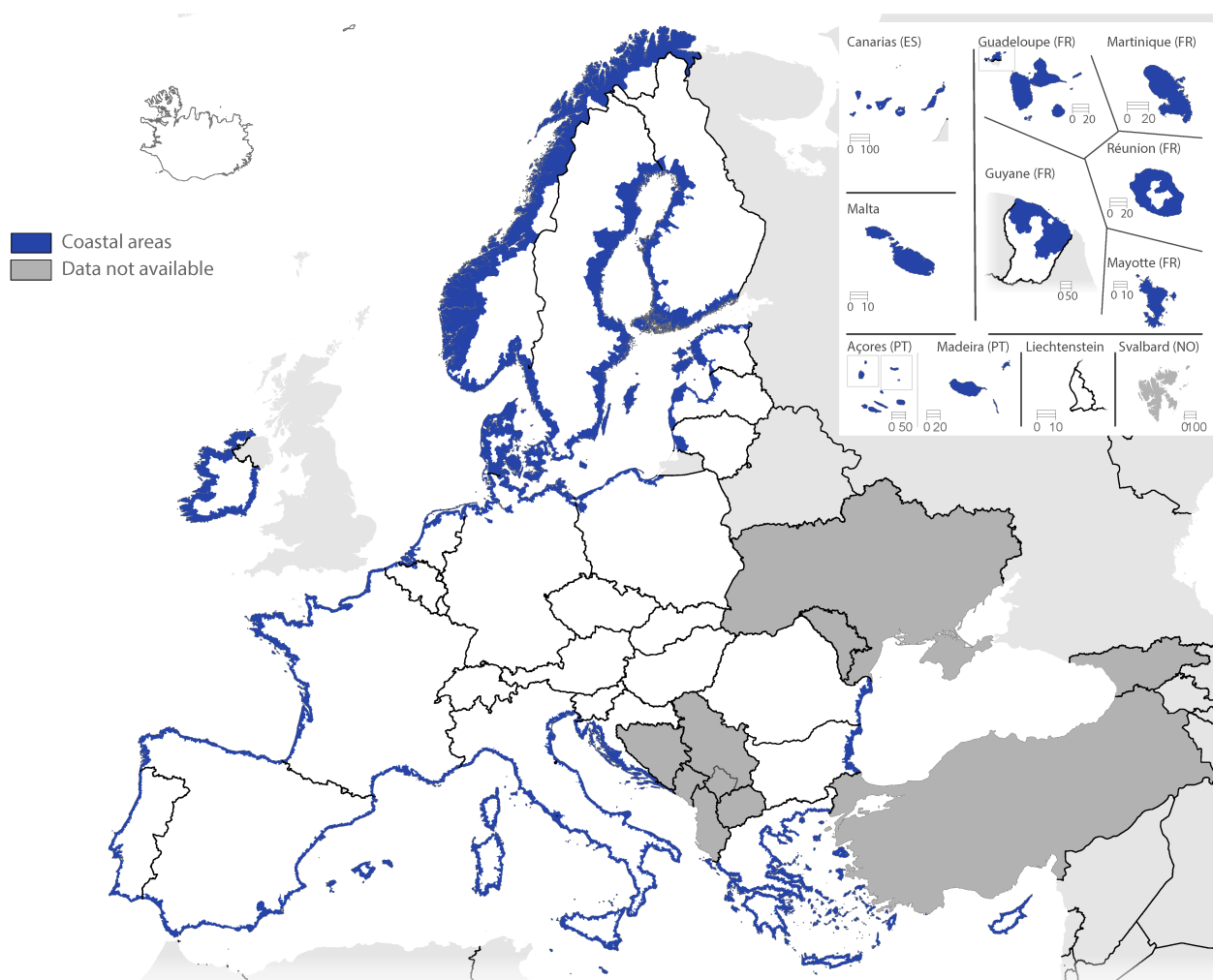Source: Eurostat, based on local administrative units 2021

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**Figure 1: Distribution of local administrative units between coastal and non-coastal areas (%) Source: Eurostat, based on local administrative units 2021**

A correspondence table between coastal/non-coastal areas and LAUs is available on Eurostat's thematic page .

Map 3 provides an overview of the final classification of coastal and non-coastal areas for 6 sea basins that border the EU: the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the North-East Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the EU's outermost regions.

# Coastal areas



Coastal areas
Data not available

**Map 3: Coastal areas Source: Eurostat (GISCO) based on local administrative units 2021**

## Changes to the typology over time

The coastal areas classification should be updated to reflect any changes in LAU boundaries. The list of LAUs is updated on an annual basis

- information relating to any changes to the boundaries or structure of LAUs should be communicated by EU countries to the European Commission (Eurostat) within the first 6 months of each calendar year, with reference to 31 December of the previous year

- Eurostat publishes a revised list of LAUs before the end of the same year.

Once geodata for the new LAU breakdowns become available in late autumn of each year, Eurostat updates the coastal area typology in the LAU list.

# Further information

**Glossary entry**

Coastal area

**Detailed methodology**

Coastal areas – methodology

**Dedicated section**

Coastal, island and outermost regions

# Published indicators

Tourism statistics for coastal and non-coastal areas have been collected by Eurostat since the 2012 reference year. The legal basis for the collection of this data is Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 .

**Database**

Eurostat's website presents statistics for coastal and non-coastal areas. They are available here .

# Explore further

## Database

- Coastal, island and outermost regions (coast)

## Thematic section

- Coastal, island and outermost regions – information on data

## Methodology

- Coastal, island and outermost regions – methodology

## Legislation

- Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 – European statistics on tourism