



EUROPEAN UNION



EU
MISSIONS

RESTORE OUR OCEAN AND WATERS



Marine protected areas: EU policy context and objectives

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1st EU Blue Parks Community Workshop

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EU policy context



- the Birds and Habitats Directives, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- **EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030**
- Global biodiversity framework
- **Nature restoration law *proposal***
- **Marine action plan**
- Climate policy and climate law

EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030

PROTECT NATURE

- Legally protect at **least 30% of the European Union's sea area** – coherent trans-European nature network
- **Strictly protect at least a third** of the EU's marine protected areas (**10%** of sea area)
- **Effectively manage all protected areas**, defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately.
- **Fisheries management measures must be established in all MPAs** according to clearly defined conservation objectives and on the basis of the best available scientific advice.

RESTORE NATURE

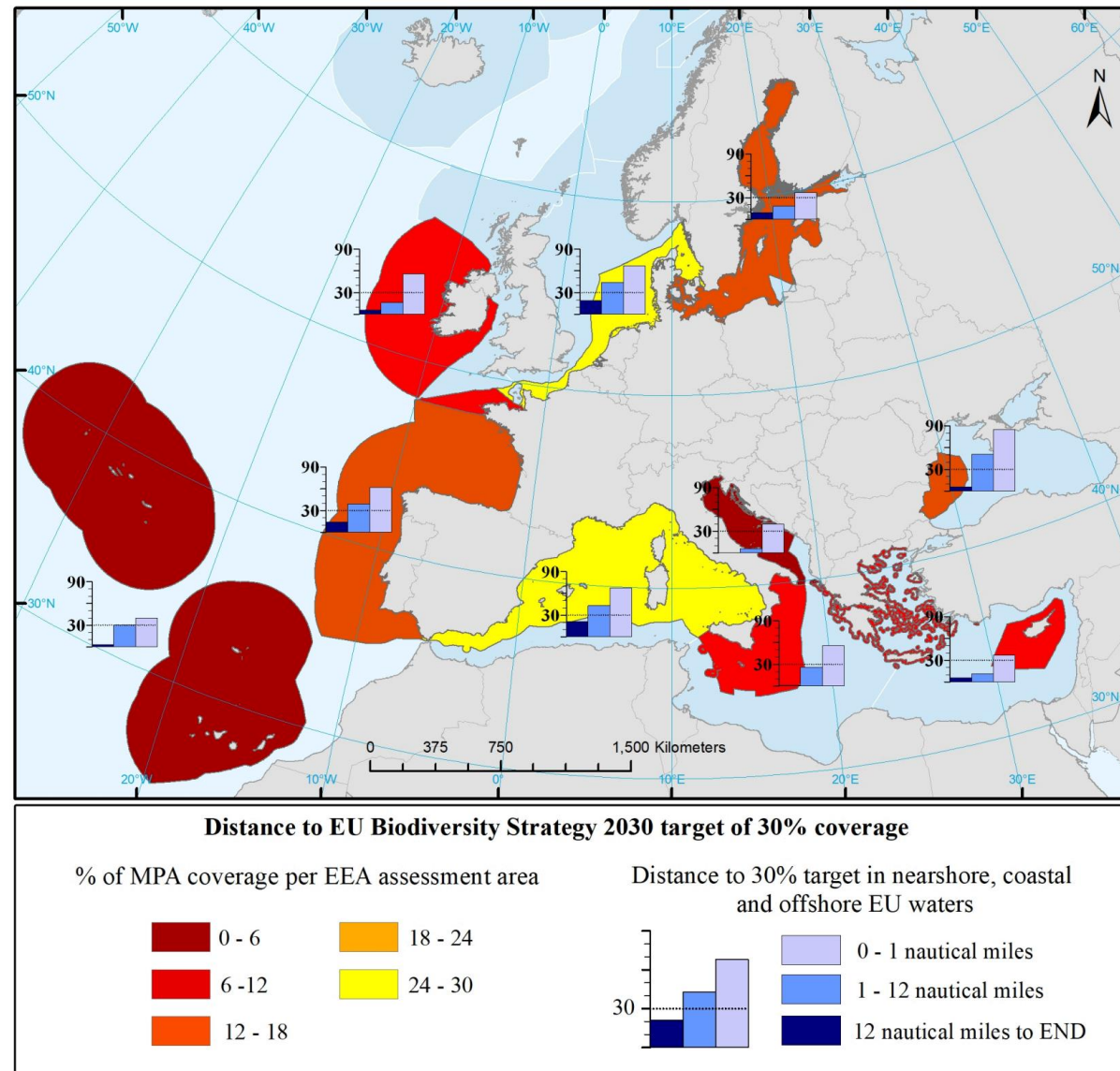
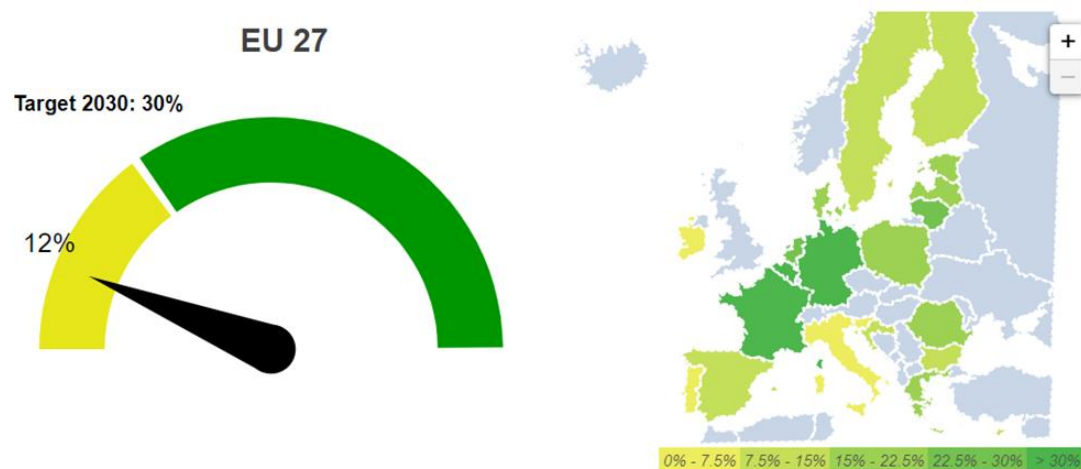
- **Nature Restoration Law** with **legally binding restoration targets**, including for the marine environment.
- Achieving good environmental status of marine ecosystems, including through strictly protected areas, must involve the **restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems** as well as important **fish spawning and nursery areas**.
- **Reduce bycatch** of sensitive species and the impact of bottom fishing **on the seabed**.

A larger and coherent EU network of protected areas

- Legal protection for at least $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 30\% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 30\% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$
 - ↳ Strict protection for at least $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 10\% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 10\% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$
- Integrate **ecological corridors**
- All protected areas have clearly defined **conservation objectives and measures** and are **effectively managed** and appropriately **monitored**

Protected areas

- EU MPA network currently covers **12% of EU seas**
- **Less than 1%** strictly protected
- Most MPAs **not effectively managed**



Source: [Spatial Analysis of Marine Protected Area Networks in Europe's Seas III](#)

More information: <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/protected-areas> and <https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries>

Marine Natura 2000

- **Natura 2000** - the **largest** coordinated network of protected areas in the world
- Covers **9% of EU seas**: main driver of MPA designation (**75%** of all EU MPAs)
- Network is still **not complete**, in particular offshore and in some sea basins
- Strong **legal obligations** for the **designation and management of sites**



NATURA 2000 - EUROPEAN UNION

- Birds Directive sites (SPA)
- Habitats Directive sites (pSCI, SCI, SAC)
- Sites - or parts of sites - belonging to both Directives

European Environment Agency



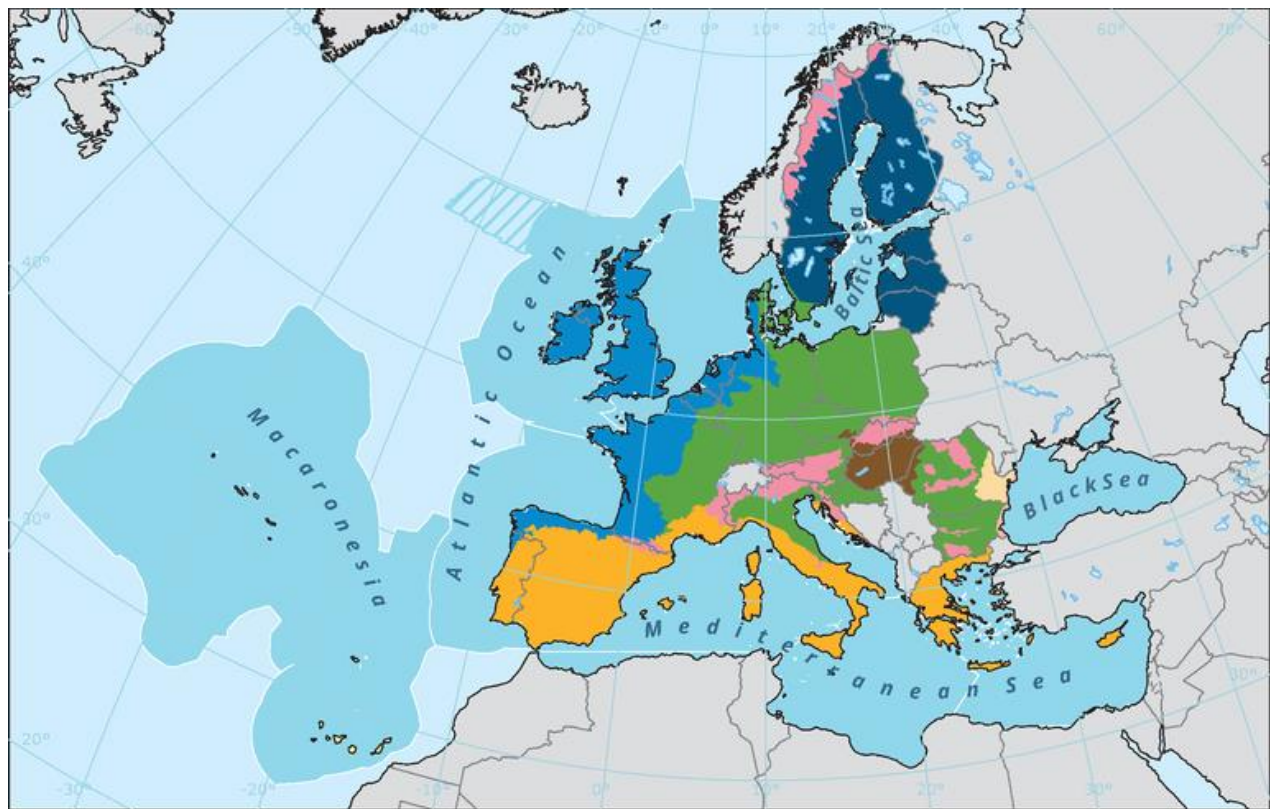
Source:
-NATURA 2000 - DG ENV, compiled from databases from the Member States;
-Source: background map: © EuroGeoInfo/Eurogeographics and DG ESTAT;
-Validity of NATURA 2000 data for : Europe, updated End 2020;
-Projection: Lambert azimuthal equal area.

Targets for EU marine regions

- The **protected area targets**: EU territory of 27 Member States (incl. EU outermost regions and sea areas surrounding them).
- The targets should be achieved **in each EU marine biogeographical region**.
- Member States are currently submitting their **initial pledges** for the targets.
- The Commission will **evaluate the progress by 2024** and decide whether stronger action, including EU legislation, is needed. [[BDS progress report in spring 2024](#)]

Working together to achieve the targets




- The Natura 2000 biogeographical process expanded to include the pledge and review process for Biodiversity strategy targets
- Biogeographical region seminars to discuss the pledges and Natura 2000 management issues
- Review, finalisation and implementation of pledges
- Developing an EU system to assess PA management effectiveness





Reference data: ©ESRI

Biogeographical and marine regions in the EU

Biogeographical regions

 Alpine	 Macaronesia
 Atlantic	 Mediterranean
 Black Sea	 Pannonian
 Boreal	 Steppic
 Continental	

Marine regions

 Marine region names are given in the map
 Overlapping submissions to UNCLOS

0 500 1000 1500 km

 Outside coverage

Key challenges

- **Where the additional area needs to be protected** to achieve a coherent (representative, connected, adequate) network that will deliver maximum **benefits for biodiversity and society?**
- What is the role of **other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)?**
- We are not interested in “paper parks”. **Establish and implement appropriate conservation objectives and measures** and ensure effective management: **governance, financing and stakeholder involvement.**
- How to reconcile the target with **renewable energy and fisheries?**

Main solution → **science-based strategic planning!**

Proposal for a nature restoration law

A key initiative of the European Green Deal and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:



- **Protection** needs to be strengthened but is not enough
- Need for **large scale restoration effort**
- Complement and **build on existing policy framework** (BHD, MSFD, WFD)
- Focus on the **synergies between climate and nature policy**
- Key global target of the GBF

Regulation on nature restoration

Overarching objective

Restoration targets

Implementation framework

**National
Restoration Plans**

**Monitoring and
Reporting**

**By 2030 restoration measures
cover 20% of EU's land and sea**

**By 2050 – all ecosystems in need of
restoration**

Specific restoration targets

Protected
Habitat Types
(Annex I HD)



Habitats of
protected
species (BHD)



Marine
Habitats
(beyond HD)



Urban
ecosystems



River
connectivity



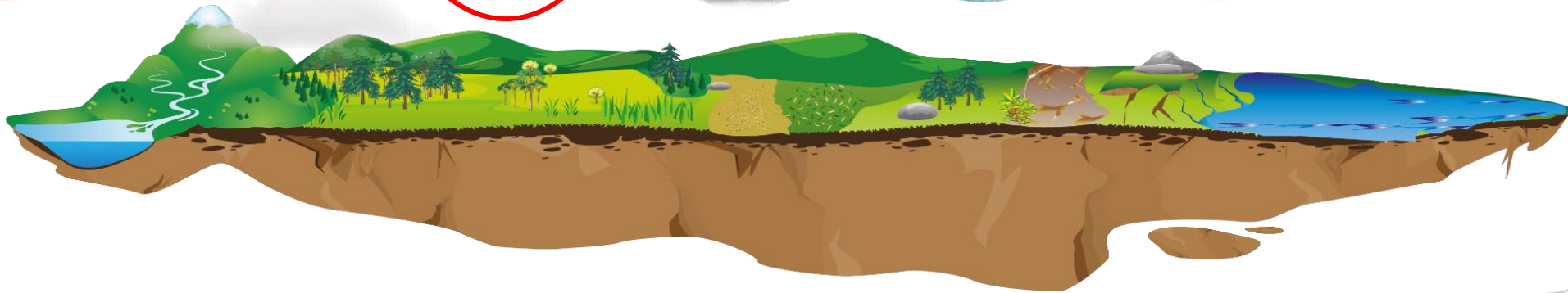
Pollinators



Agro-
ecosystems



Forest
ecosystems



EU Action plan: Protecting and restoring marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries

- State of seas and sustainability of fisheries
- Bring “nature back into our lives”
- Bridge fisheries and environment worlds
- Builds on existing framework
- **Improve gear selectivity & address bycatch of sensitive species** 
- **Protect the seabed** 
- **Transition & knowledge** 
- **Governance** 

Marine action plan

Measures

→ Measures for **priority species**
→ **Transition to better protection of the seabed: Natura 2000 sites** protecting the habitats and marine species (Habitats Directive)

→ **Transition to better protection of the seabed in all MPAs**
→ Protect remaining sensitive species

2023

2024

2030

Governance

New special group established
-
First meeting held on 6 October

Member States' **roadmaps** prepared & delivered

Implementation of Member States' roadmaps

Biodiversity strategy progress assessment > action plan progress

Thank you



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