



Update on marine conservation and restoration policy in the EU

European Commission, DG Environment, Nature Conservation Unit

Policy context

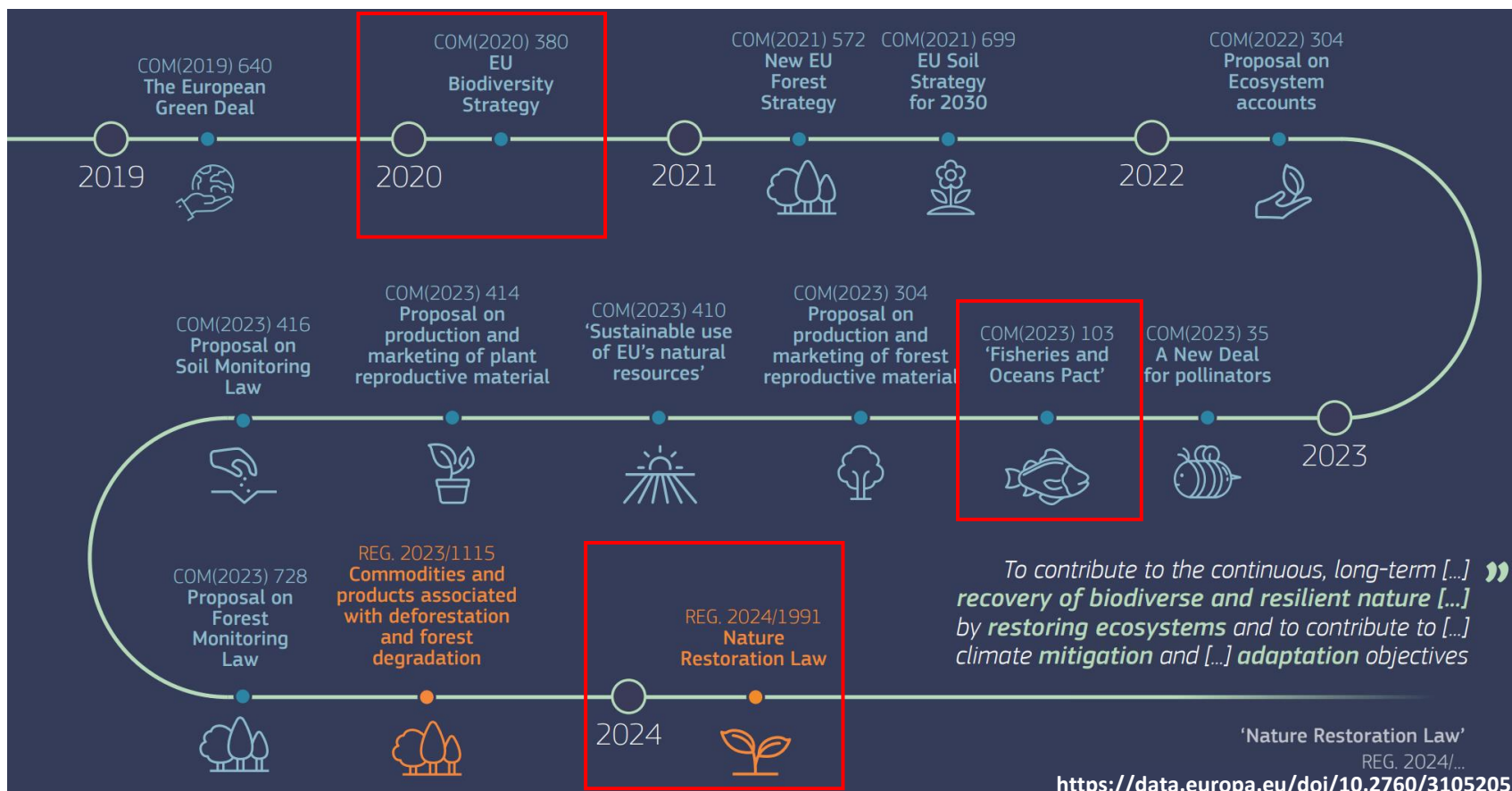
Existing
legislation:

Birds
Directive

Habitats
Directive

Marine
Strategy
Framework
Directive

Protected area targets (30%/10%), EU restoration plan



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

Nature Restoration Regulation: legally binding restoration targets



European
Commission

Biodiversity strategy for 2030

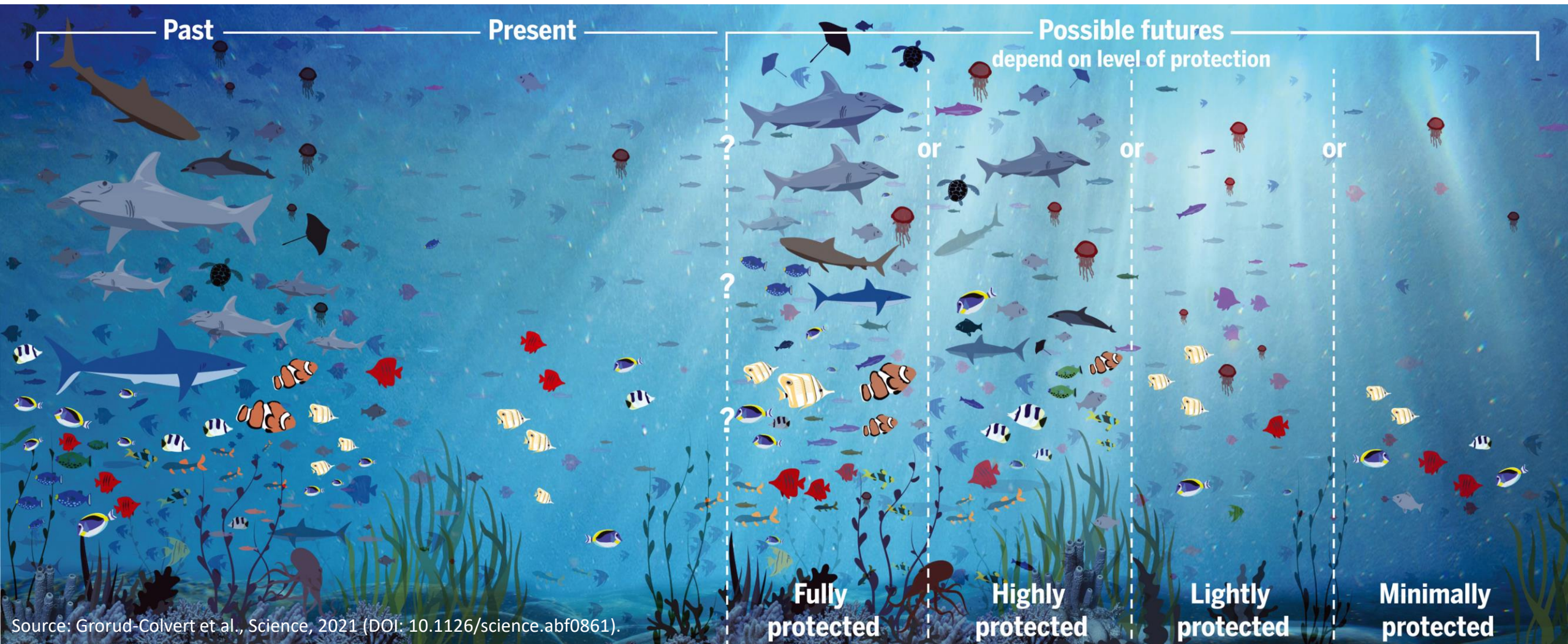
PROTECT NATURE

- 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**.

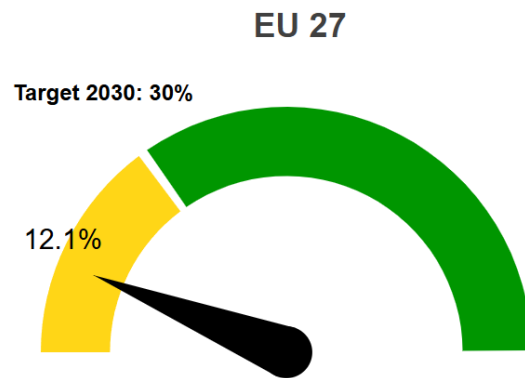
Marine protected areas



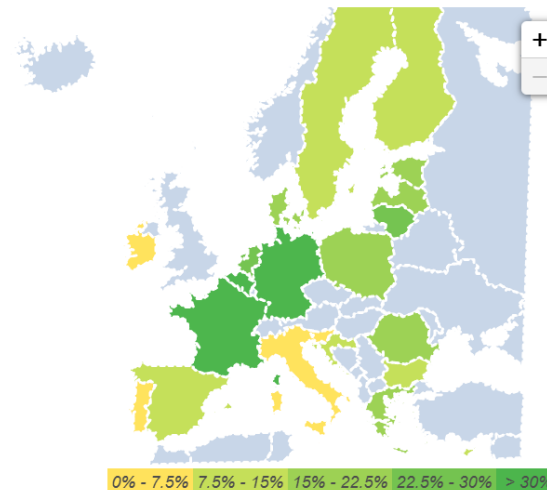
State of play

- EU MPA network currently covers **12% of EU seas, marine Natura 2000 >9%**
- **Less than 1%** strictly protected, **only 4% of MPA area has** all necessary fisheries management measures
- Most MPAs **not effectively managed**

Source: [European Environment Agency](https://europeanenvironmentagency.eu).



Values at national scale



NATURA 2000 - EUROPEAN UNION

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

European Environment Agency



Source:
NATURA 2000 - DG ENV, compiled from databases from the Member States.
Data for the background map: © European Commission/Environment and DG ENV.
Variety of NATURA 2000 data for Europe, updated End 2020.
Projection: Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area.

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

Working together to achieve the targets

- **Pledge and review process for Biodiversity strategy targets:** meetings for the Atlantic and Macaronesia, the Baltic and the Mediterranean and Black Seas (2023-2024)
- **6 Member States submitted pledges for marine protected areas** (*no pledges for OECMs*): Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium
- **3 Member States submitted pledges for marine strictly protected areas:** Sweden, Denmark and Belgium
- Other Member States are **working on the targets**



Third Natura 2000 biogeographical seminar for the Mediterranean and Black Sea marine regions

Background Document



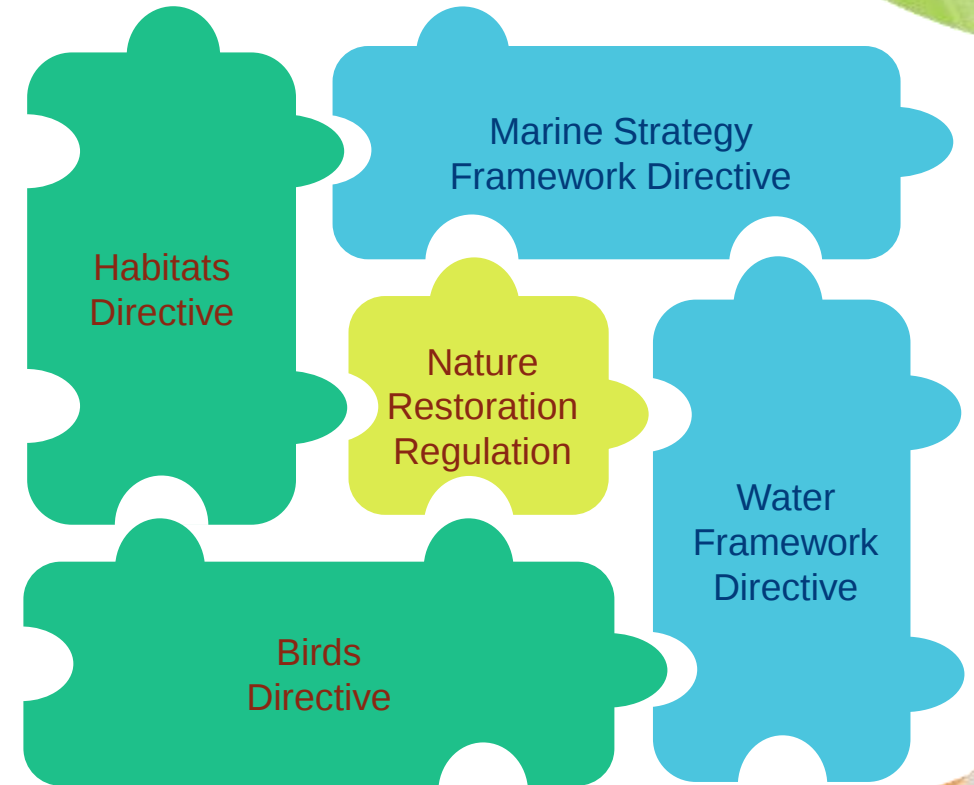
12-14 March 2024, Marseille
Palais du Pharo, Marseille, France

Key challenges

- Where the additional area needs to be protected to achieve a **coherent MPA network** that will deliver maximum **benefits for biodiversity and society**?
- What is the role of **other effective area-based conservation measures** (OECMs)?
- Implementing appropriate **conservation objectives and measures, governance, financing and stakeholder involvement**. We are not interested in “paper parks” – **EU methodology to assess management effectiveness: *under development***
- How to reconcile the target with maritime activities, such as **renewable energy and fisheries**?

Nature restoration regulation (NRR)

- **Why?** Continuing **ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss** across the EU, **impact of disasters/climate change**, voluntary targets of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy not met, economy depending on **healthy ecosystems**,...
- **Builds on and complements existing EU policy framework:** Nature directives, Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, climate legislation,...
- **Urgency: regulation – applies directly** to Member States
- **In force since August 2024**



NRR objectives and framework

Overarching objectives

Restoration targets and obligations

Implementation framework

Financing

20% of EU land and sea by 2030

All ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050

Recovery of ecosystems

Climate action and land degradation neutrality

Enhancing food security

EU international commitments

Article 3(3): ‘restoration’ means the **process of actively or passively assisting the recovery** of an ecosystem in order to improve its structure and functions with the aim of conserving or enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience [...]



Specific restoration targets

Protected
habitat types
(Annex I HD)



Habitats of
protected
species (BHD)



Marine
habitats
(beyond HD)



Urban
ecosystems



River
connectivity



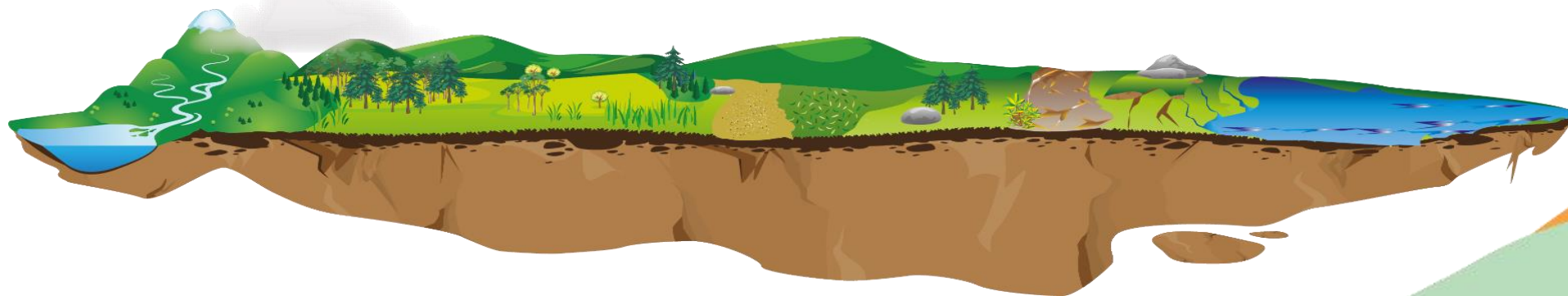
Pollinators



Agro-
ecosystems



Forest
ecosystems



Obligations for marine ecosystems

Restoration of coastal (Art 4., Annex I) and marine seabed habitats (Art. 5, Annex II)

- Annex I: **estuaries, mudflats and sandflats, coastal lagoons,...**
- Annex II Groups 1 to 6: **seagrass beds; macroalgal forests; shellfish beds; maerl beds; coral, sponge and coralligenous beds; vents and seeps**
- Annex II Group 7: **soft sediments** (not deeper than 1000 metres of depth)

Put in place measures to improve to good condition areas not in good condition

- **2030 – covering at least 30% of total area not in good condition**
- 2040 – covering at least 60% of total area not in good condition
- 2050 – covering at least 90% of total area not in good condition
- *Some differences in targets between Articles 4 and 5 and between marine Groups 1-6 and Group 7*

Re-establishment of habitats to reach their favourable reference area

- 2030/2040/2050 – 30%/60%/100% **of additional area** for each group from 1 to 6

Restoration of habitats of species

- **Covered by the Birds and Habitats Directives + additional species** (Annex III)
- Quality and quantity of habitat, connectivity

Filling the knowledge gap

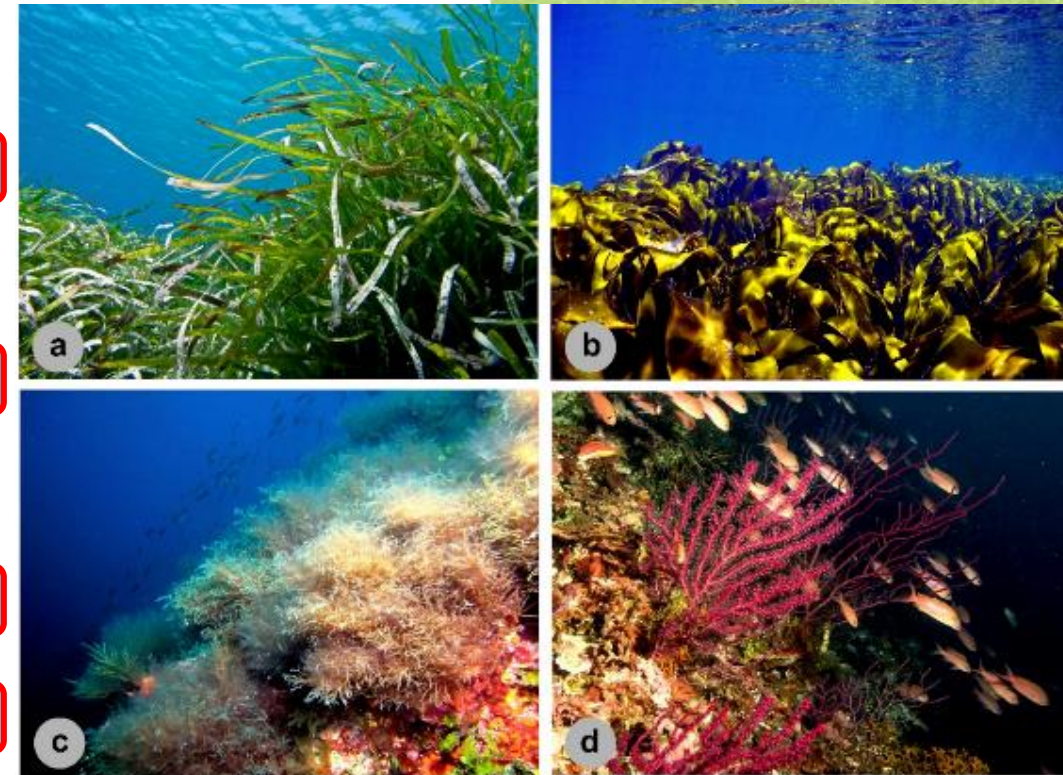
- **2030 – at least 50% of total area of all groups 1 to 6**
- 2040 – all areas of all habitat types in groups 1 to 6, 50% of total area of group 7
- 2050 – all areas of all habitat types in group 7

Requirement to prevent non-significant deterioration

- Area where good condition has been reached
- Area in good condition or necessary to reach restoration targets

Use of tools from the common fisheries policy

- Submission of joint recommendations - 18 months before deadline for targets



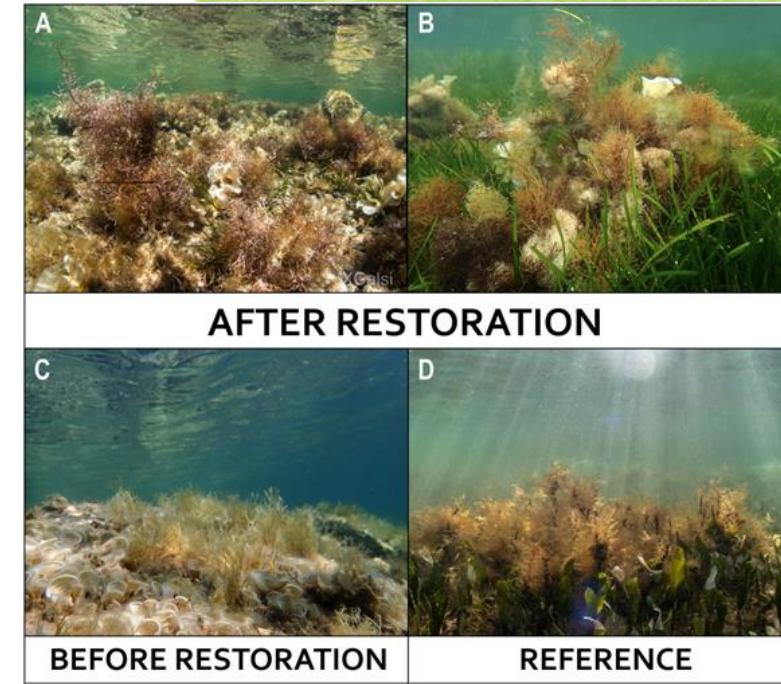
Derogations and flexibilities

- Re-establishment at 90% if 100% not possible
- Non-deterioration: derogation for force-majeure, unavoidable habitat transformations directly caused by climate change, overriding public interest, action or inaction of third country
- Further derogation for renewable energy and defence activities

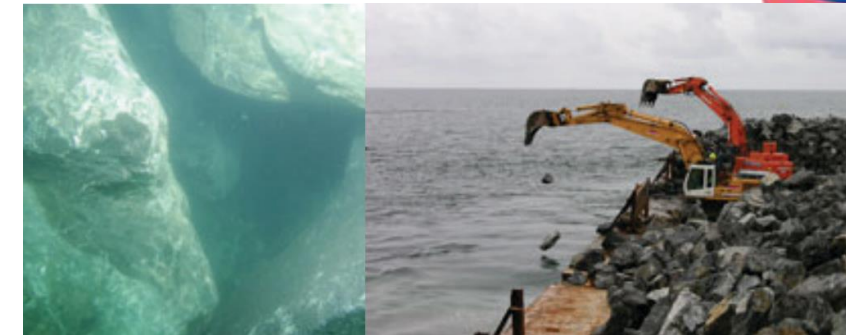


Challenges for marine restoration

- **Precondition** for putting in place restoration measures is **good mapping and assessment of condition of habitats** but there are currently gaps in knowledge.
- **Marine restoration knowledge** and practice are currently **limited to certain habitats** and areas, focusing mainly on **active restoration** (e.g. replanting of seagrasses, corals, macroalgae in coastal shallow waters).
- **More efforts in development and upscaling of restoration measures** for all Annex II habitats and habitats of species, including through extensive use of **passive restoration**.



Source: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2023.1176655>



Source: Layman report of the LIFE project "Rebuilding of Marine Cavernous Boulder Reefs in Kattegat ("Blue Reef")"



- Restoration benefits ecosystems and society, including local communities!
- Participation and engagement of all actors will be crucial for NRR implementation



The LIFE ECOREST Project



ECOREST



NATURA 2000

THE LIFE ECOREST PROJECT

Innovation and cooperation to *restore marine habitats of the Catalan coast*

Objective

To restore around **30,000 hectares of deep-sea habitats** with a high ecological value located off the coast of the provinces of Girona and Barcelona, both in Catalonia, with the active collaboration of the fishing sector.

Actions



Research

Studies and research campaigns.



Conservation

Recovery and ecological restoration of gorgonians, corals, sponges, and other structuring organisms.



Participation, capacitation and governance

Driving participative processes.



Dissemination, education and transfer of results

Activities for the local population, fishing and school communities.

Area of action



What is marine restoration?

The marine ecosystems are home to essential habitats and species for the planet. At a time of environmental emergency like this one, with degraded sea beds and the loss of species, marine restoration is an ally to reverse this situation and preserve natural heritage.

Passive restoration: through the establishment of protection areas and bans, regulating fishing activity and allowing for the natural recovery of marine ecosystems.

Active restoration: through the recovery of organisms accidentally captured in fishing nets and their release back into the sea. It accelerates the process of natural recovery.



One of the central values of the LIFE ECOREST project is the participation of the fishing sector to **protect and conserve** key ecosystems. A highly diverse ocean and in good conditions of conservation helps **resist the effects of climate change**.

Thank you



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