



# EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

## *Marine Protected Areas*

European Commission - DG ENV - Unit D3, Nature protection

# MPAs

## 1. A larger and coherent EU-wide network of protected areas (PA):

- **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  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 10\% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 10\% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$

- All protected areas have clearly defined conservation objectives and measures and are:
  - effectively managed
  - appropriately monitored

# MPAs and recreational fishing

- Should always respect the MPA's conservation objectives, like any other activity.
- Added value in terms of socio-economic benefits, income from tourism, fishers' expenditure, nutritional benefits etc.
- Can raise challenges due to the large number of people/boats involved together with other forms of fishing: removing fish biomass and affecting food webs/ecosystems; indirect impacts on habitats e.g. anchoring of anglers' boats on protected habitats such as *Posidonia* meadows.
- Many different types of fishing gear, impossible to speak generally about their impact.
- Even catch-and-release has been shown to have impacts.
- Careful regulation and effective implementation of the MPA rules **together with anglers** and eliminating illegal activities ensured through strictly controlled licences, zoning, control and enforcement (effective management of MPAs).

# Strict protection

## → “Strict protection” – What does it mean?

- strictly protected areas need to be legally protected (just like other protected areas)
- should incorporate 

<p><b>areas of very high biodiversity value or potential.</b></p> <p><b>significant areas of carbon-rich ecosystems, such as wetlands, mangroves and seagrass meadows</b></p> <p><b>important fish spawning and nursery areas.</b></p>
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- **natural processes** are left essentially **undisturbed** → not necessarily incompatible with some human activities
- the compatible activities, **strictly regulated, controlled and enforced**, will depend on site conservation objectives and will need to be **reviewed** regularly.
- **functionally meaningful areas** → sufficient size on their own or together with buffer zones

# Strict protection

## → “Strict protection” – draft definition

“Strictly protected areas are fully and legally protected areas designated to conserve (and/or restore) the integrity of biodiversity-rich natural areas with their underlying ecological structure and supporting natural environmental processes. Natural processes are therefore left essentially undisturbed from human activity”.

- The concept of strict protection is present in the IUCN ‘Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories’, and it is generally associated with the definitions of **categories Ia, strict nature reserve, Ib, wilderness area, and II, national park (as part of the zoning)**.
- **The definitions of categories Ia and Ib in the IUCN guidelines are largely in line with the objective of leaving natural processes essentially undisturbed to respect the areas’ ecological requirements as specified in the Strategy and can be used as a starting point for an EU definition.**
- Commission’s guidance on Natura 2000 and wilderness

# Strict protection

- **Extractive activities** are not compatible with this level of protection, while activities such as non-extractive scientific research, restoration, invasive alien species control, non-intrusive installations (e.g. energy transmission cables), or non-intrusive and strictly controlled tourism (e.g. diving) could **exceptionally be allowed** when they are compatible with the ecological requirements of the areas on the basis of a case by case assessment.

# Strict protection

- Possible **criteria for designation** of areas as strictly protected
  - (1) ecological value (areas that are biodiversity hotspot/ nursery areas/ breeding areas/ important feeding grounds, etc.);
  - (2) provision of relevant ecosystem services (e.g. carbon sequestration, water filtration and disaster prevention);
  - (3) status of decline/ threat (e.g. through red list assessments) and
  - (4) sensitivity (i.e. low resistance to disturbance and long recovery times).

**Strong link with restoration** – strictly protected areas can provide an important contribution to the restoration targets in the Strategy, by **creating the conditions for passive restoration** or by **providing adequate protection to restored habitats**.

Discussion is on going, next round probably in June. When agreement is reached, then Member States are expected to implement Commission guidance and to start the process of identification of potential areas for designation (both strict and non strict MPAs)

# Designation of new MPAs

- They are done by the Member States through national consultative processes.
- Member States expected to bring their ‘pledges’ for designation of MPAs to marine regional (per sea basin) seminars organised by the Commission and with stakeholders participation (starting end 2022).
- Feedback (« peer review ») of the pledges to take place at those seminars before Member States start designations (during the course of 2023).





Thank you for your attention !