



Achieving renewable energy targets while protecting and restoring biodiversity

Vedran Nikolić, European Commission, DG Environment, Nature Conservation Unit

3rd Natura 2000 biogeographical seminar

for the Baltic marine region

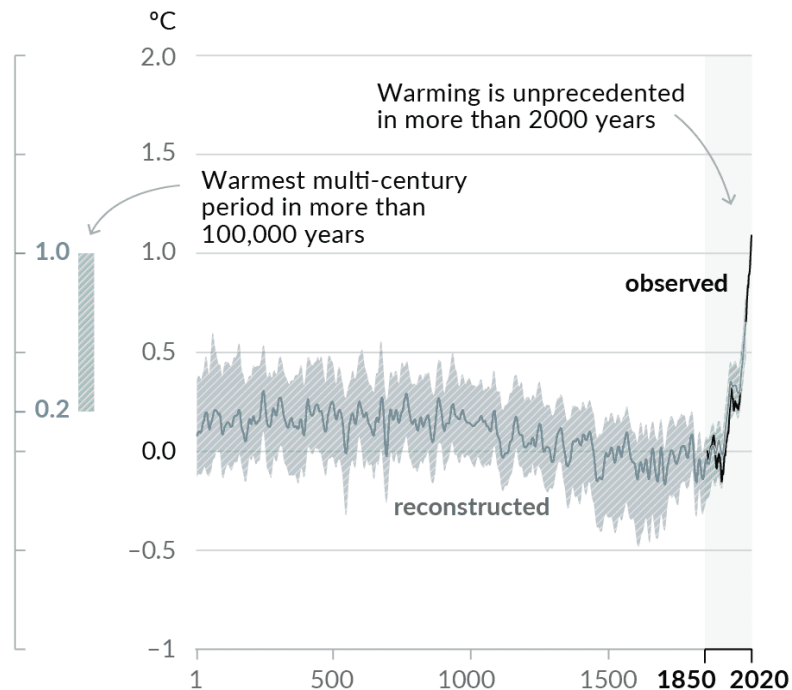
Riga, Latvia, 8-10 November 2023

Climate crisis

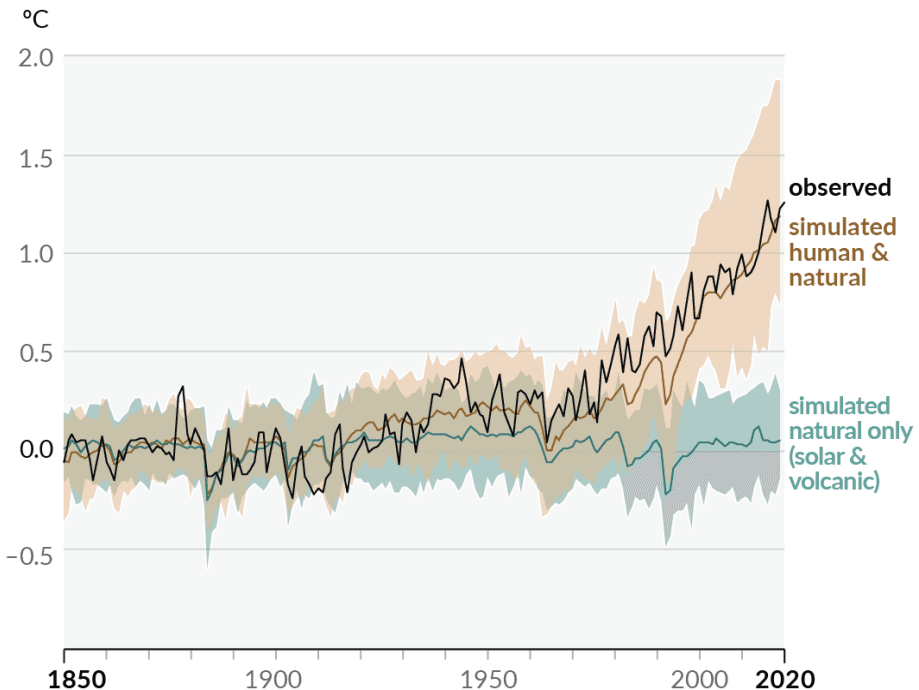
Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2000 years

Changes in global surface temperature relative to 1850–1900

(a) Change in global surface temperature (decadal average) as **reconstructed** (1–2000) and **observed** (1850–2020)

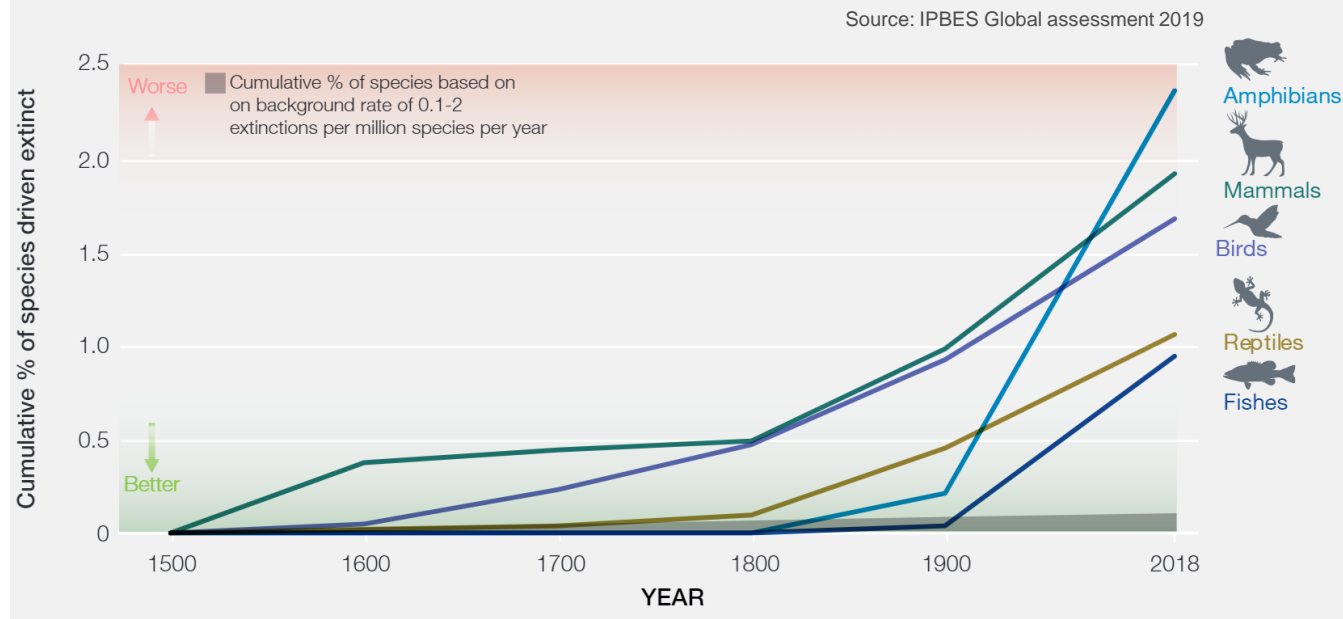


(b) Change in global surface temperature (annual average) as **observed** and simulated using **human & natural** and **only natural** factors (both 1850–2020)



Biodiversity crisis

Extinctions since 1500

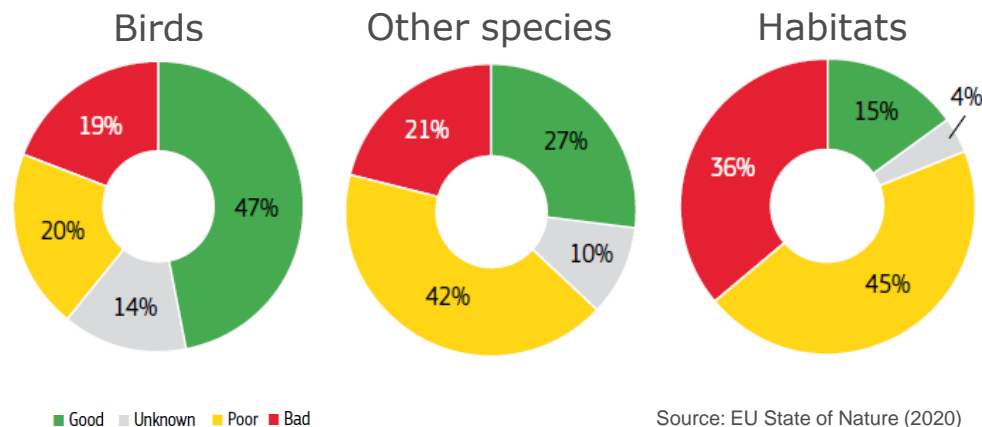


European Union

- 80% of protected habitat types are in bad or poor status
- up to 70% of soils are in an unhealthy condition

In Western, Central and Eastern Europe:

- Wetlands have shrunk by 50% since 1970
- 71% of fish and 60% of amphibians have been declining over the last decade



Time is running out...

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2022

“Restoring ecosystems will be fundamental in helping to combat climate change and also reduce risks to food security”

and we have a.....

“...brief, rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future”

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

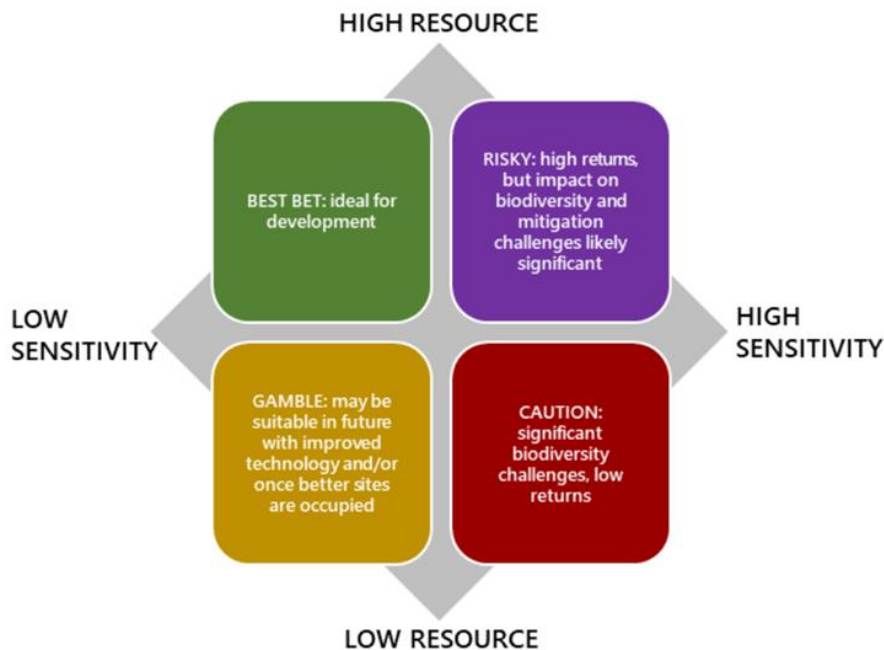


The role of existing environmental legislation

- The EU policy and legislation (SEA, EIA, HD, WFD, MSFD, MSPD) already provide **tools to avoid conflicts between renewables and biodiversity**.
- The EU nature legislation allows for effective deployment of renewable energy infrastructure and its **coexistence with nature protection**.
- The Habitats Directive (Article 6.3) allows implementation of projects **if they do not harm the integrity** of the Natura 2000 sites.
- Flexibility (Article 6.4): projects affecting the integrity of the sites can be carried out, if it is proven that there are **no alternatives, appropriate compensatory measures** have been put in place, and the plan or project is of '**overriding public interest**' (presumed in renewables emergency regulation).

The importance of strategic planning

- Conflicts are best avoided through **good strategic planning**.
- **Maritime spatial plans** must integrate nature protection/restoration, energy, fisheries and all other **uses of the sea**.



- Strategic planning of renewables through **sensitivity mapping**.

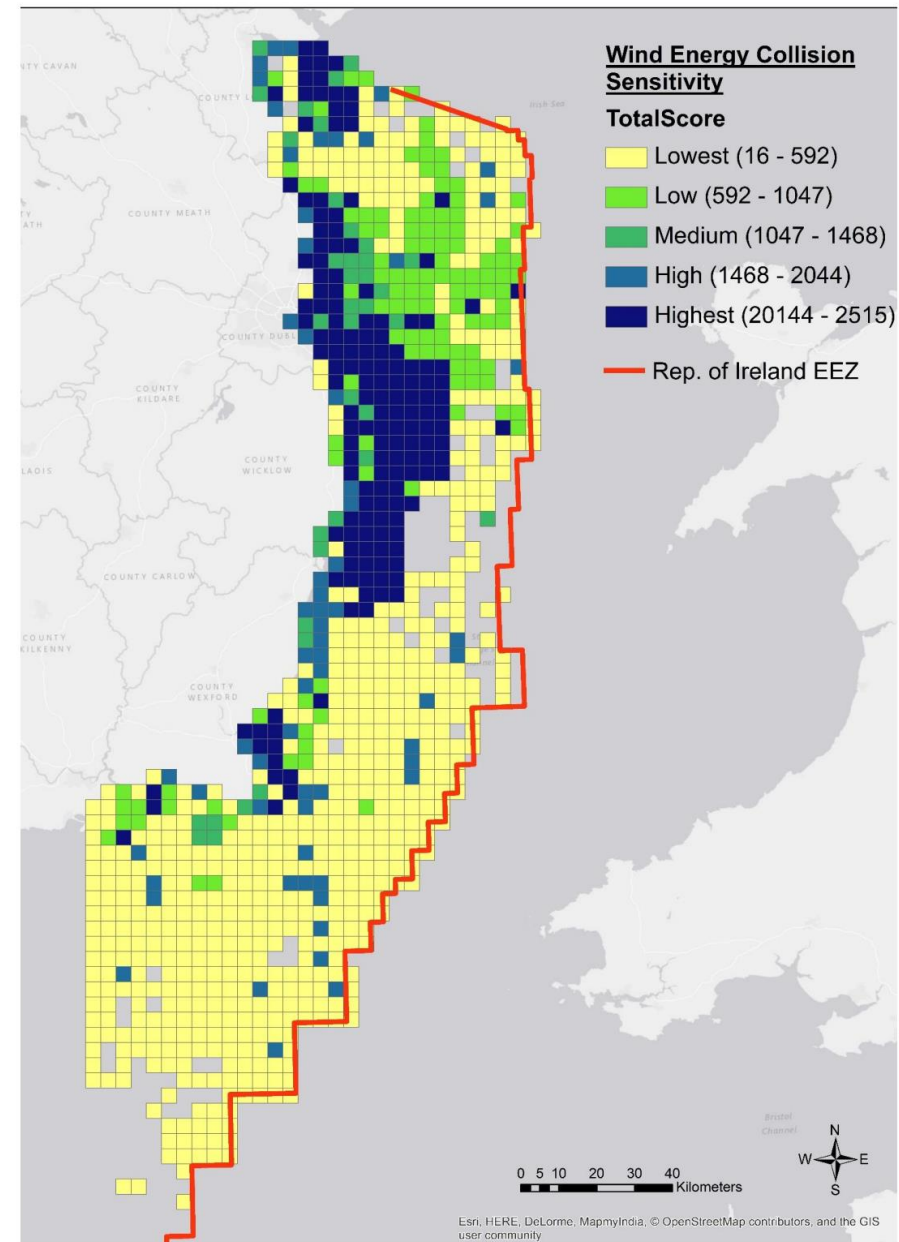


Figure 4. Trial composite sensitivity map of the Irish Sea (within the Republic of Ireland EEZ), following mapping and assessment of six seabird species in relation to the collision risk posed by wind energy developments.

Source: Burke, B. (2018) Trialling a Seabird Sensitivity Mapping Tool for Marine Renewable Energy Developments in Ireland. BirdWatch Ireland, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow.

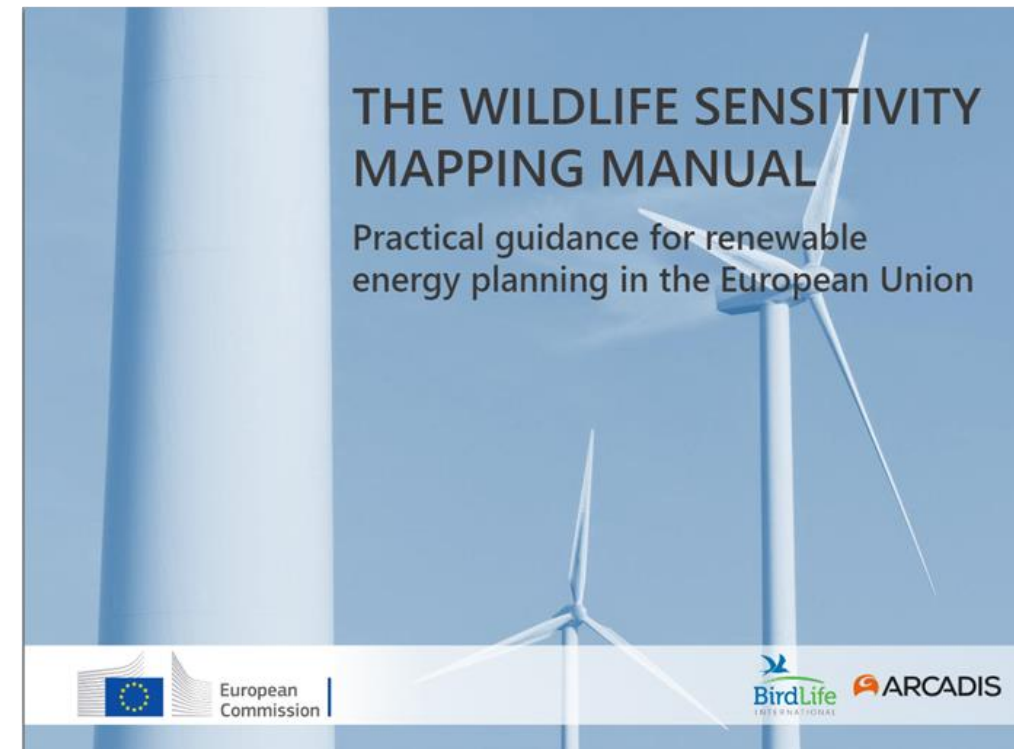
Guidance and support

- **Guidance document on wind energy developments and EU nature legislation** clarifies existing obligations and flexibilities built in the EU law.
- **The wildlife sensitivity mapping manual** with case studies.
- **The recommendation on speeding-up permit-granting procedures** for renewable energy projects (and the accompanying guidance) adopted as part of REPowerEU.



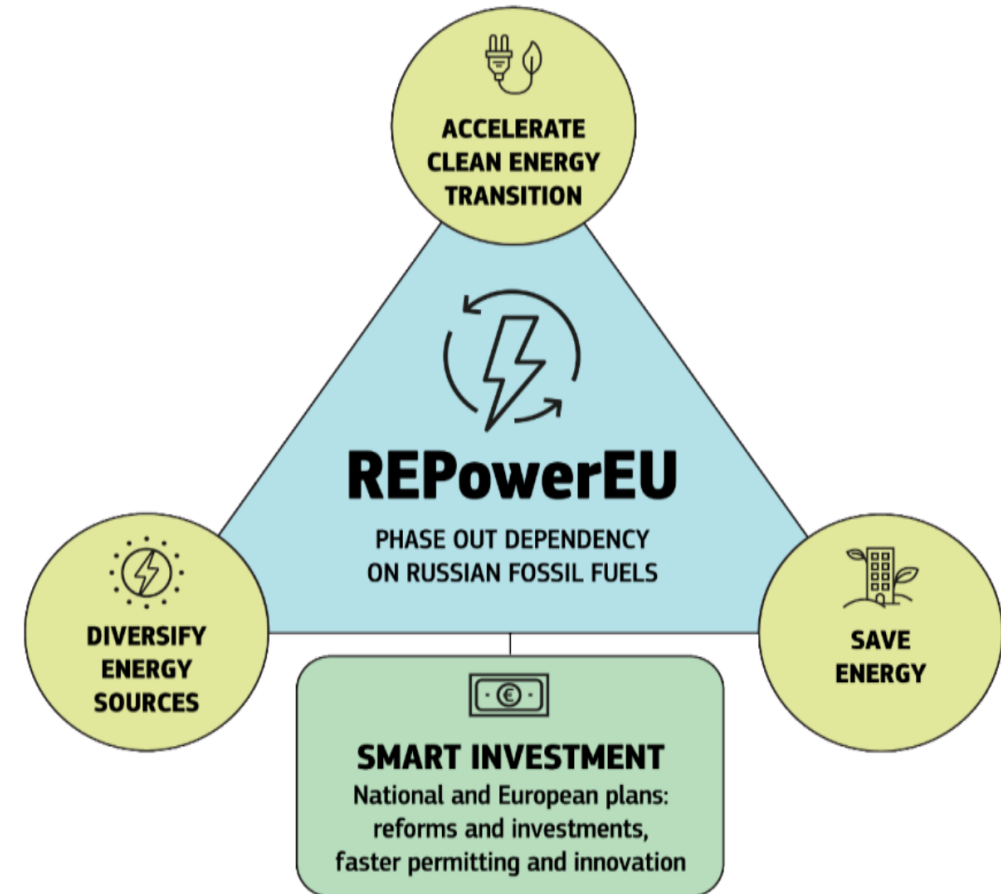
Guidance document on
wind energy developments and
EU nature legislation

Guidance on Energy Transmission
Infrastructure and EU nature legislation



REPowerEU plan

- Reinforces and **accelerates the implementation of the European Green Deal** and tackling the climate crisis
- Three pillars:
 - diversifying energy sources
 - saving energy
 - accelerating renewable energy
- EU solar strategy, target for solar photovoltaics, European solar rooftop initiative
- Heat pumps
- Hydrogen...

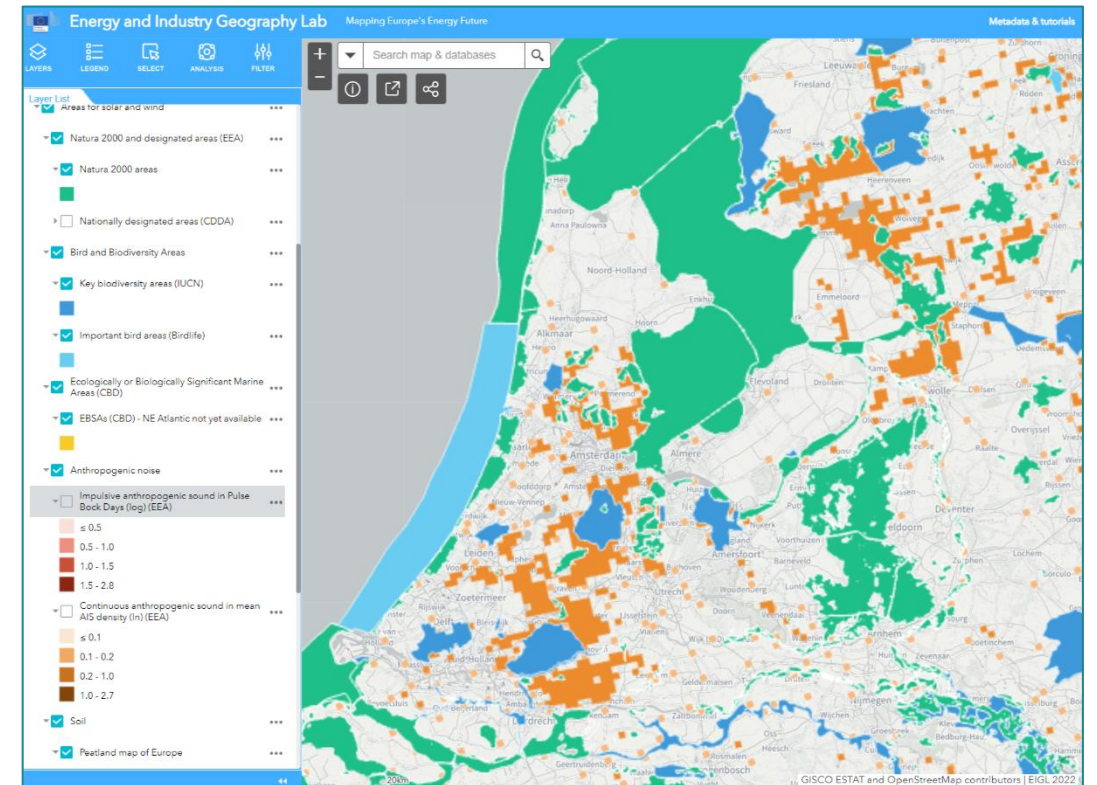


Temporary emergency regulation

- Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 on RES: Adopted 22 Dec 2022 - Sets **new, temporary and targeted measures** to accelerate the deployment of certain renewable energy projects
- Directly applicable in all MSs for **18 months** (30 Dec 2022 – 30 June 2024)
- Most provisions have a limited scope in terms of technologies and projects (e.g., solar installation on artificial structures and heat pumps)
- **Articles 3 (OPI), 5 (repowering) and 6 (permit-granting)** apply to all renewable energy sources
- Applies to **all permitting procedures** with a starting date within the duration of its application, regardless of their end date, as well as to ongoing processes which have not resulted in a final decision before 30 Dec 2022

Identification of RE acceleration areas for wind and solar

- EIGL tool has been **expanded** and is **embedded in the permitting Recommendation of REPowerEU**
- EIGL is intended as an **instrument to support planning choices** by national and regional authorities who may not otherwise have immediate access to relevant datasets

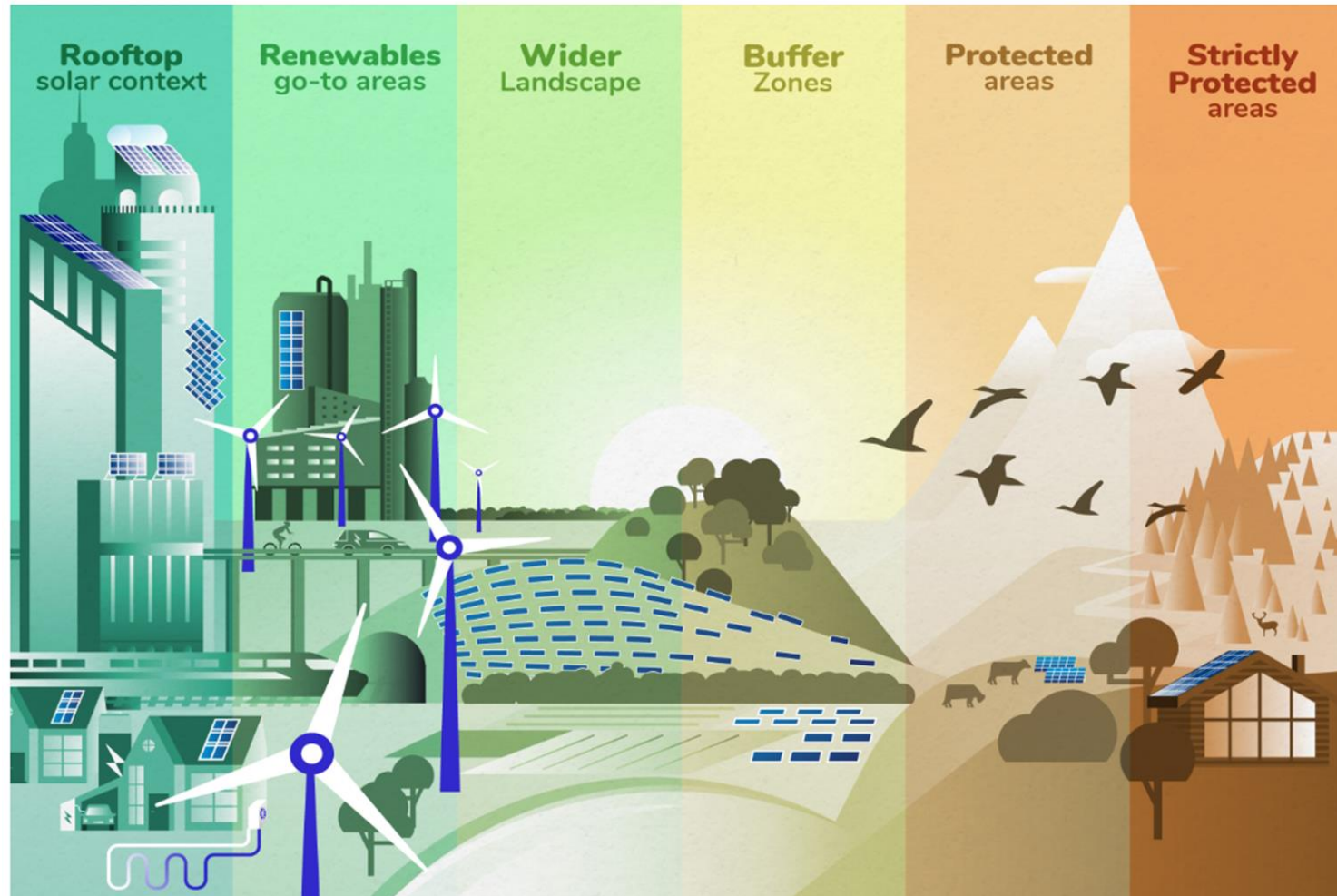


https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/energy-and-industry-geography-lab_en

European wind power action plan

- Published on **24 October 2024**
- Commission and Member States to work together in order to accelerate permitting (**online Q/A tool** before end 2023).
- **‘Accele-RES’** - frontloading transposition and implementation of the revised RED. Temporary emergency regime.
- **By April 2024**, the Commission will:
 - **Update** the Recommendation on speeding up permit-granting procedures for renewable energy projects and the Guidance on good practices to speed up permit-granting procedures for renewable energy projects and on facilitating power purchase agreements
 - **Issue guidance** to the Member States on the designation of the renewables acceleration areas.

Need to support win-win solutions



Source: <https://meta.eeb.org/2022/11/15/mapping-out-space-for-nature-positive-renewables//>

Need to support win-win solutions

POWER PLANT



OFFSHORE WIND / POSSIBLE SYNERGIES



Artificial Reefs
provide new habitats for marine species



3D Underwater Farming
of seaweeds and shellfish requires zero inputs and minimise acidification while sequestering CO₂



(Re)introducing Reef Building Species
for example, oysters or Ross worms (*Sabellaria spinulosa*)



Noise Reduction
from installation of wind turbine foundations, to protect marine mammals



Scour Protection
using materials such as rock and sand to protect cables and structures to prevent local seabed deepening



Bird Protection
Elevated nacelle height can reduce bird collisions by providing migratory paths between water surface and swept wind area

Thank you



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