



Strict protection in the context of Biodiversity Strategy targets

Anna Cheilari, Nature Conservation Unit, DG Environment

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Strict protection - EUBS 2030

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

Today, only less than 1% of marine areas are strictly protected in the EU.

Strict protection - Definition

SWD(2022) 23 final

“**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 pressures and threats** to the area’s overall ecological structure and functioning, independently of whether those pressures and threats are located inside or outside the strictly protected area”.

- In the marine environment, these protected areas are often called *marine reserves, no-take zones, or similar*.

Strict protection - What does it mean?

- **Natural processes are left essentially undisturbed** → not necessarily incompatible with some human activities, such as *research, invasive alien species control, restoration, non-intrusive activities and installations, non-intrusive and strictly controlled recreational activities*, when such activities are compatible with the conservation objectives of the areas on the basis of a case-by-case assessment.
- **Non-intervention areas, where only limited and well controlled activities will be allowed**
- **Functionally meaningful areas** → sufficient size on their own or together with buffer zones
- **Should incorporate** {
 - areas of very high biodiversity value or potential**
 - significant areas of carbon-rich ecosystems, such as wetlands, mangroves and seagrass meadows**
 - important fish spawning and nursery areas**
- The strategy also states that particular focus would be placed **on tropical and sub-tropical marine and terrestrial ecosystems in the EU's outermost regions.**

Strict protection - Formal designation criteria

- Strictly protected areas need to be **legally protected**.
- A protected area may be strictly protected in its entirety, but it is **also possible that the area under strict protection is only a part of a wider protected area**.
- Strictly protected areas **can be designated through specific national legal instruments**, such as some existing nature reserves, **through specific long-term contractual agreements, or through zoning** in the management planning of wider areas.
- In these cases, the **strictly protected areas have to be clearly identified in the management plans and those plans have to have a legal standing**.

Strict protection - IUCN categories

- The concept of strict protection is present in the IUCN ‘Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories’, and it is often 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.
- The definition of category II allows for a process of zoning, in which strict protection does not necessarily apply to the whole protected area.

IUCN categories – Marine activities

- **Extractive activities** are not compatible with this level of protection
- **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.

Table 5: Matrix of marine activities that may be appropriate for each IUCN management category

Activities	Ia	Ib	II	III	IV	V	VI
Research: non-extractive	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Non-extractive traditional use	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Restoration/enhancement for conservation (e.g. invasive species control, coral reintroduction)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Traditional fishing/collection in accordance with cultural tradition and use	N	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Non-extractive recreation (e.g. diving)	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Large scale high intensity tourism	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shipping (except as may be unavoidable under international maritime law)	N	N	N*	N*	Y	Y	Y
Research: extractive	N*	N*	N*	N*	Y	Y	Y
Renewable energy generation	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Restoration/enhancement for other reasons (e.g. beach replenishment, fish aggregation, artificial reefs)	N	N	N*	N*	Y	Y	Y
Fishing/collection: recreational (sustainable)	N	N	N	N	*	Y	Y
Fishing/collection: local fishing (sustainable)	N	N	N	N	*	Y	Y
Industrial fishing, industrial-scale aquaculture	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Aquaculture – small-scale	N	N	N	N	*	Y	Y
Works (e.g. harbours, ports, dredging)	N	N	N	N	*	Y	Y
Untreated waste discharge	N	N	N	N	N	N*	N*
Mining, oil and gas extraction (seafloor as well as sub-seafloor)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Habitation	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N

Key:

No	N
Generally no, a strong prerogative against unless special circumstances apply	N*
Yes	Y
Yes because no alternative exists, but special approval is essential	Y*
Variable; depends on whether this activity can be managed in such a way that it is compatible with the MPA's objectives	*

Source: Day, J., Dudley, N., Hockings, M., Holmes, G., Laffoley, D., Stolton, S., Wells, S. and Wenzel, L. (eds.) (2019). Guidelines for applying the IUCN protected area management categories to marine protected areas. Second edition. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN

Strict protection - Restoration

- **Protected areas can provide an important contribution to the restoration targets** in the strategy, by creating the conditions for restoration efforts to be successful
- **Placing such areas under strict protection**, in particular in the marine environment, will in some cases be **sufficient to lead to the restoration** of the natural values they host
- **If the restored areas comply with the criteria for protected areas, these restored areas should also contribute towards the EU targets on protected areas**

Strict protection - Pledges

- Two Member States (Spain and France) submitted information on current area under strict protection.
- Spain reported that the current area of strict protection covers 1305 km² of its marine area and France reported that it covers 112 km² of its marine area in the Mediterranean Sea.
- They haven't provided expected coverage by 2030.

Thank you



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