

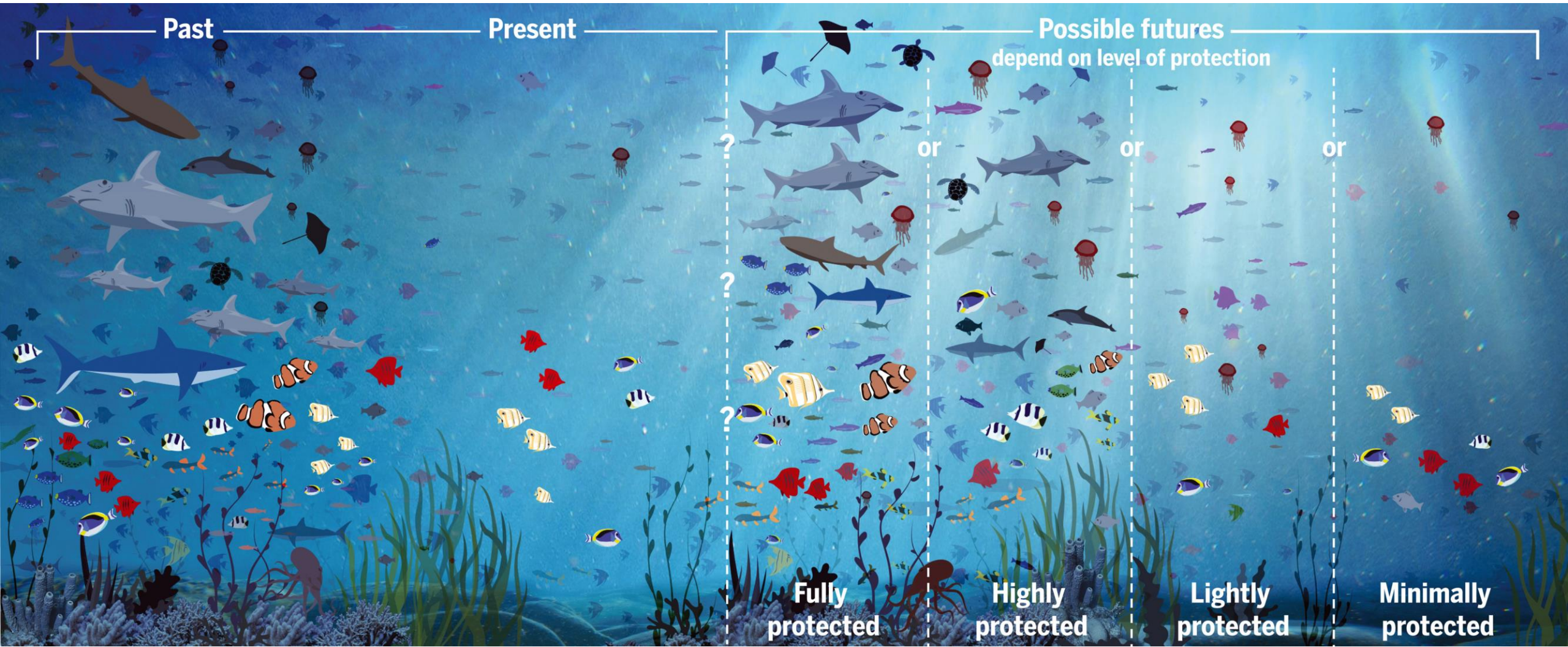


Criteria for strictly protected marine areas in the context of the EU Biodiversity strategy

Nature Conservation Unit, DG Environment

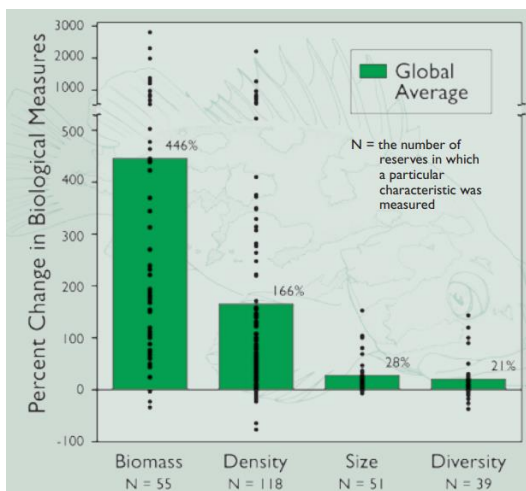
Strictly protected marine areas in the context of the EU Biodiversity strategy

Natura 2000 biogeographical process, online event, 16 April 2024

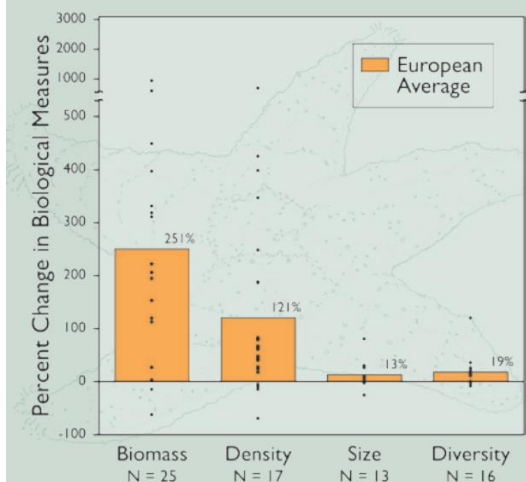


Source: Grorud-Colvert et al., Science, 2021 (DOI: 10.1126/science.abf0861).

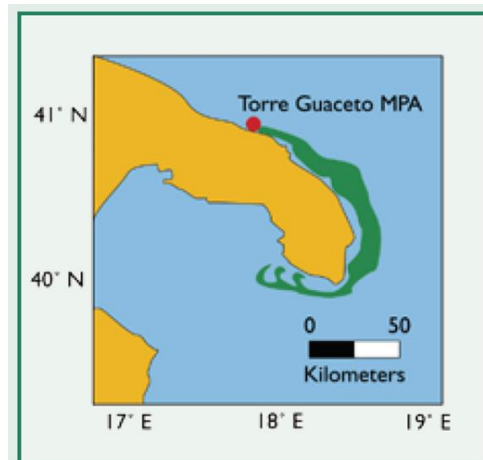
Effects of strict protection – science is clear



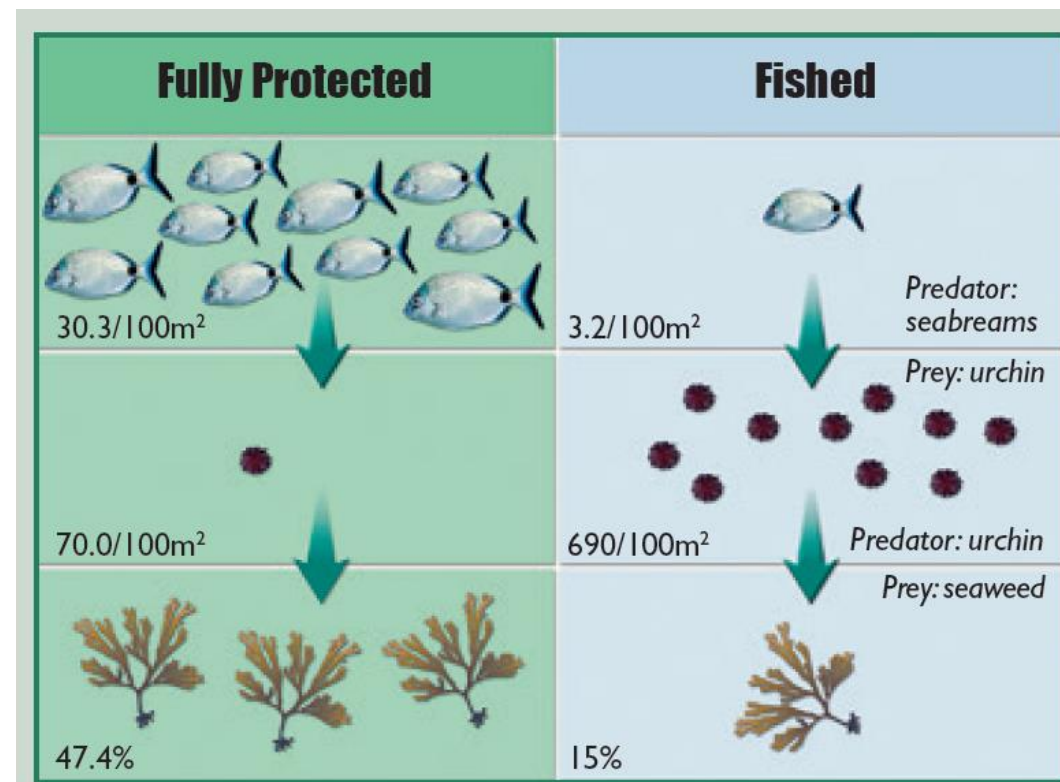
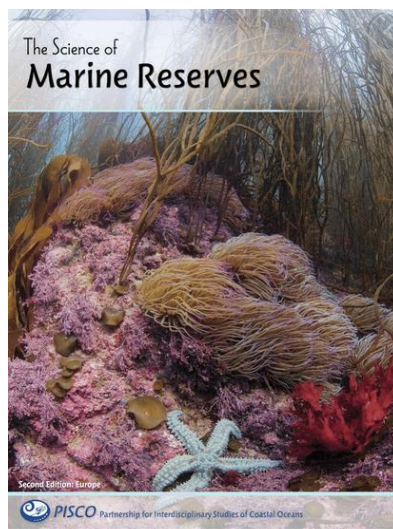
Average changes (green bars) in fishes, invertebrates and seaweeds within marine reserves around the world. Although changes varied among reserves (black dots), most reserves had positive changes. *Data: Ref. 8*



Average changes (orange bars) in fishes, invertebrates and seaweeds within marine reserves in Europe. Although there are far fewer data for Europe, changes as a result of reserve protection look remarkably similar to the global results. *Data: Fenberg et al. in prep*



Biological tracking showed that seabream eggs and larvae dispersed (green area) outside the Torre Guaceto fully protected area into fished areas. *Data Ref: 32*



In the fully protected area of Torre Guaceto MPA in Italy, there are abundant seabreams and low urchin numbers, enabling seaweeds to flourish. Outside the fully protected area, fewer seabreams mean there are too many urchins, which eat most of the algae. *Data: Ref. 12*

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**.

Strict protection under the Strategy

A larger and coherent EU-wide 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 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 10\% \text{ of EU land area} \\ 10\% \text{ of EU sea area} \end{array} \right.$

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

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

Working together to achieve 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

- **The Natura 2000 biogeographical process** expanded to include the pledge and review process for Biodiversity strategy targets
- So far **5 Member States submitted pledges for marine protected areas**: Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden
- **Marine biogeographical seminars**:
 - Atlantic and Macaronesia, October 2023, Ireland
 - Baltic, November 2023, Latvia
 - Mediterranean and Black Sea, March 2024, France

Strict protection - Definition

Criteria and guidance for protected areas designations (EC, 2022):

“**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, **strictly protected areas have to be clearly identified in the management plans and those plans must 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

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/collecting 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/collecting: recreational (sustainable)	N	N	N	N	*	Y	Y
Fishing/collecting: 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	*

Table 6: Compatibility of fishing/collecting activities in different management categories

IUCN category	Local fishing/ collecting	Recreational fishing/ collecting	Traditional fishing/ collecting	Industrial-scale fishing	Collection for research
Ia	No	No	No	No	No*
Ib	No	No	Yes**	No	Yes
II	No	No	Yes**	No	Yes
III	No	No	Yes**	No	Yes
IV	Variable#	Variable#	Yes	No	Yes
V	Yes#	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
VI	Yes#	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Key:

*	any extractive use of category Ia MPAs should be prohibited with possible exceptions for scientific research which cannot be done anywhere else.
**	in category Ib MPAs traditional fishing/collecting should be limited to an agreed sustainable quota for traditional, ceremonial or subsistence purposes, but not for purposes of commercial sale or trade.
#	whether fishing or collecting is or is not permitted will depend on the specific objectives of the MPA.

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 - Pledges

- Two Member States (Spain and France) submitted information on current area under strict protection.
- Denmark provided the pledge for new areas under strict protection.
- Several Member States are currently working on their strict protection pledges.

Marine protected area pledges submitted to date

(area figures in km²)

Member State	Date of pledge upload	MATL	MBAL	MMED
Spain	1 March 2023			1,305
Germany	15 March 2023			
Denmark	28 April 2023	3,645	526	
Sweden	21 June 2023		new pledged	
France	20 December 2023			112

current

Pledges on strict protection by region

Region code	Whole Area	Strict protection current	Strict protection pledged	Strict protection % current	Strict protection % pledged
MATL (excl MMAC)	1,524,174		3,645	0.00%	0.24%
MBAL	368,694		526	0.00%	0.14%
MBLS	64,415			0.00%	0.00%
MMAC	1,857,163			0.00%	0.00%
MMED	1,224,297	1,417	1,417	0.12%	0.12%
Whole EU	5,038,743	1,417	5,588	0.03%	0.11%

Note: whole area figures are taken from the EEA

Thank you



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