

EU marine conservation and restoration policy: Are we on track to achieve 2030 targets?



European Commission
DG Environment
Nature Conservation Unit



10th EUSAIR
Forum

Georgioupolis, Crete

6-7 May 2025



Policy context



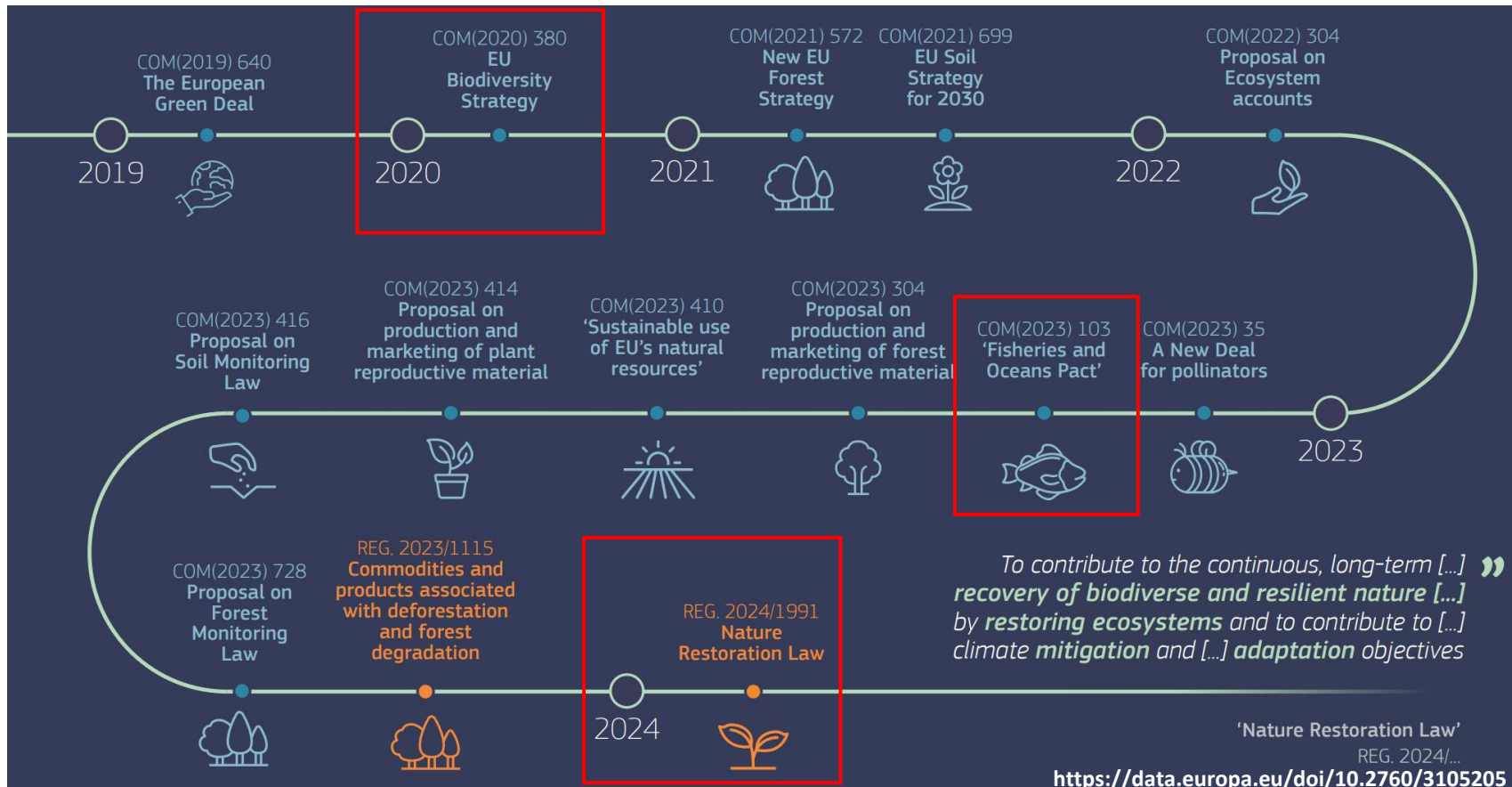
Protected area targets (30%/10%), EU restoration plan

Existing
legislation:

Birds
Directive

Habitats
Directive

Marine
Strategy
Framework
Directive



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

Nature Restoration Regulation: legally binding restoration targets

Biodiversity strategy for 2030

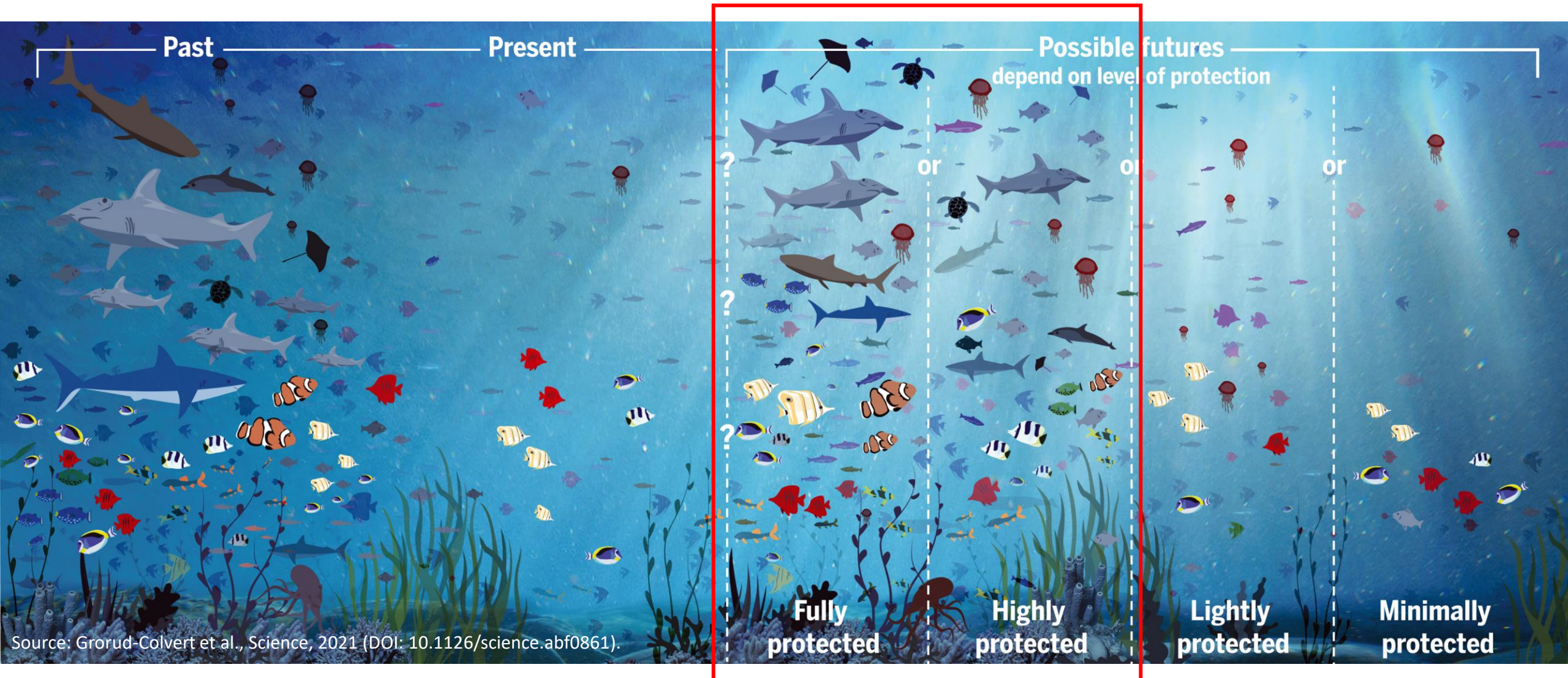
PROTECT NATURE

- 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.

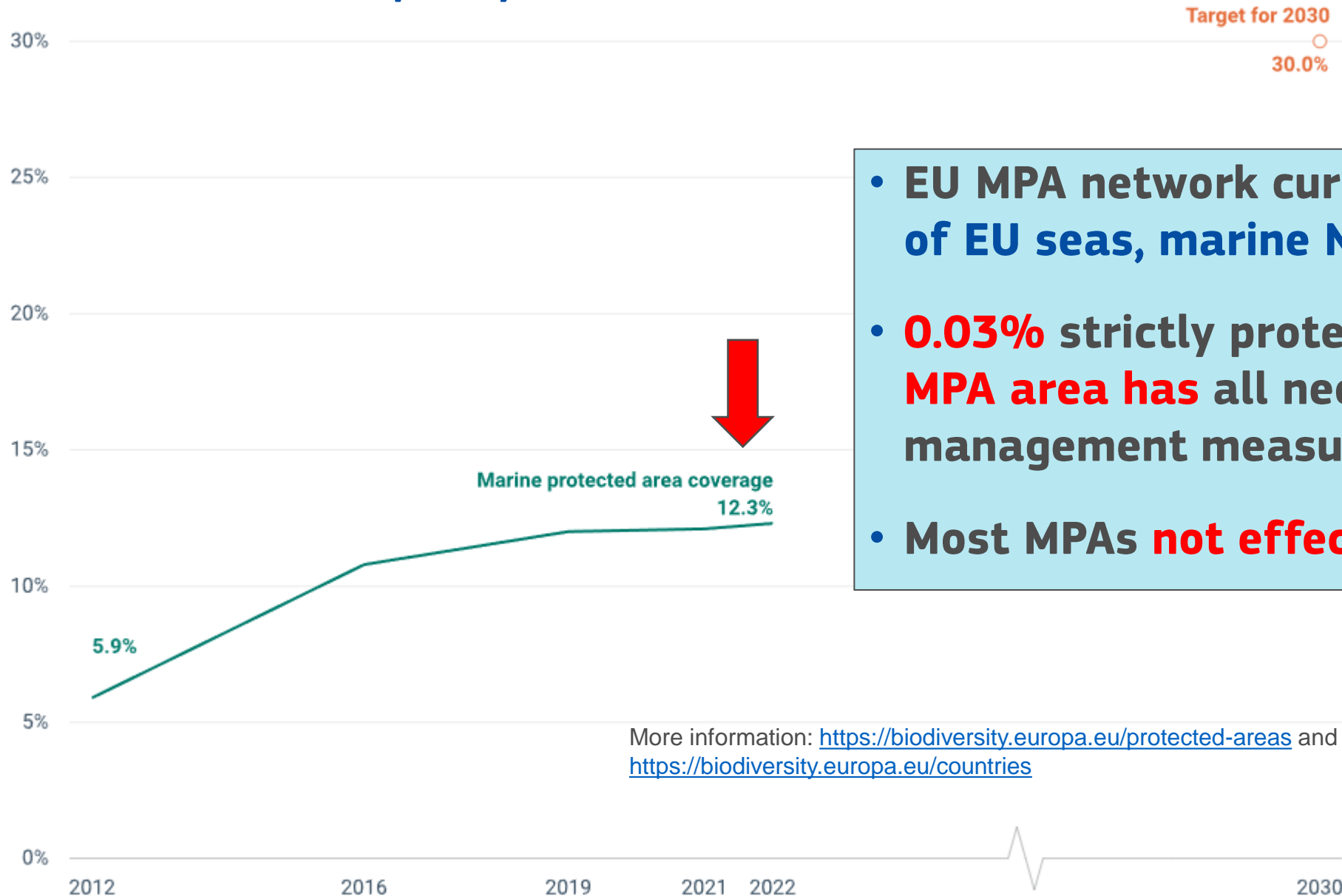
RESTORE NATURE

- **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 with EU MPAs



- EU MPA network currently covers **12.3%** of EU seas, marine Natura 2000 >9%
- **0.03%** strictly protected, **only 4% of MPA area has** all necessary fisheries management measures
- Most MPAs **not effectively managed**

Working together

- **Pledge and review process for Biodiversity strategy targets:** Atlantic and Macaronesia, the Baltic, the Mediterranean and Black Seas (2023-24)
- **6 Member States submitted pledges for marine protected areas** (*no pledges for OECMs*): **Spain, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium**
- Only **Denmark** and **Belgium** submitted pledges for strictly protected marine areas.
- **Pledges from EUSAIR EU countries are missing!**



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

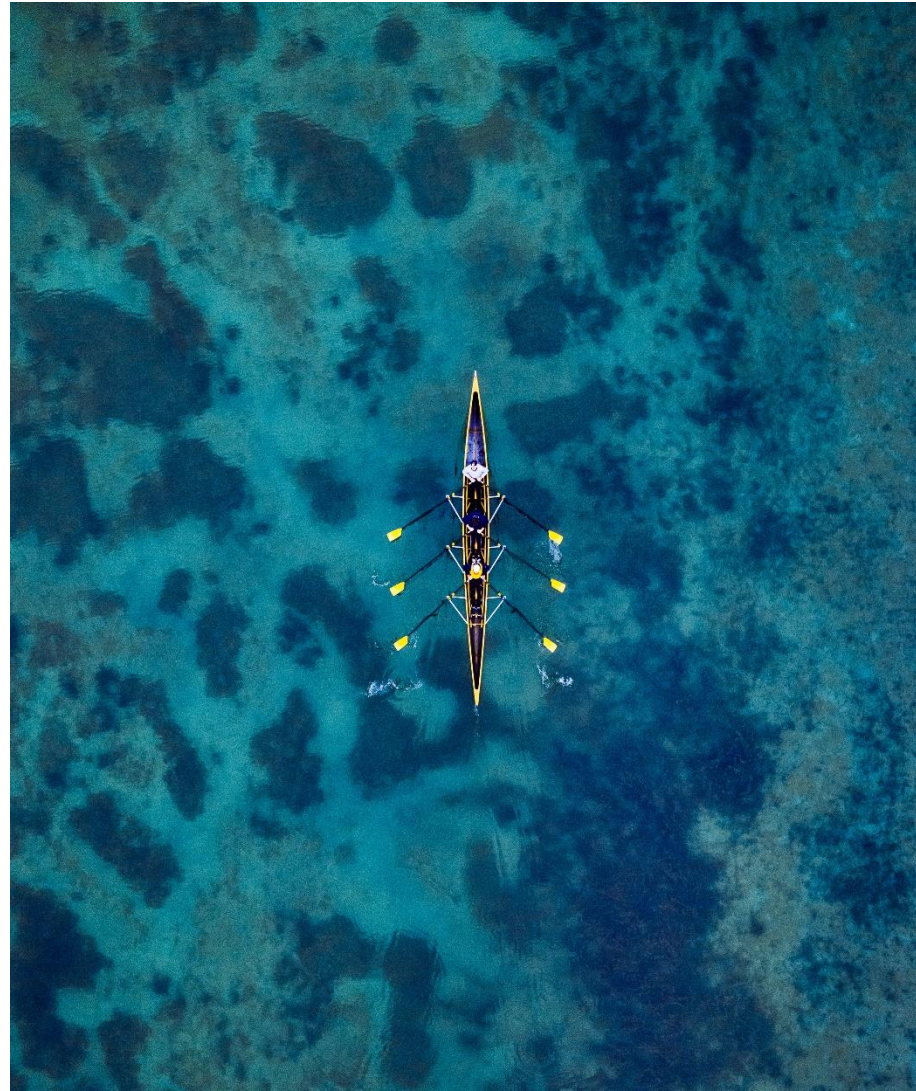
Background Document



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

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

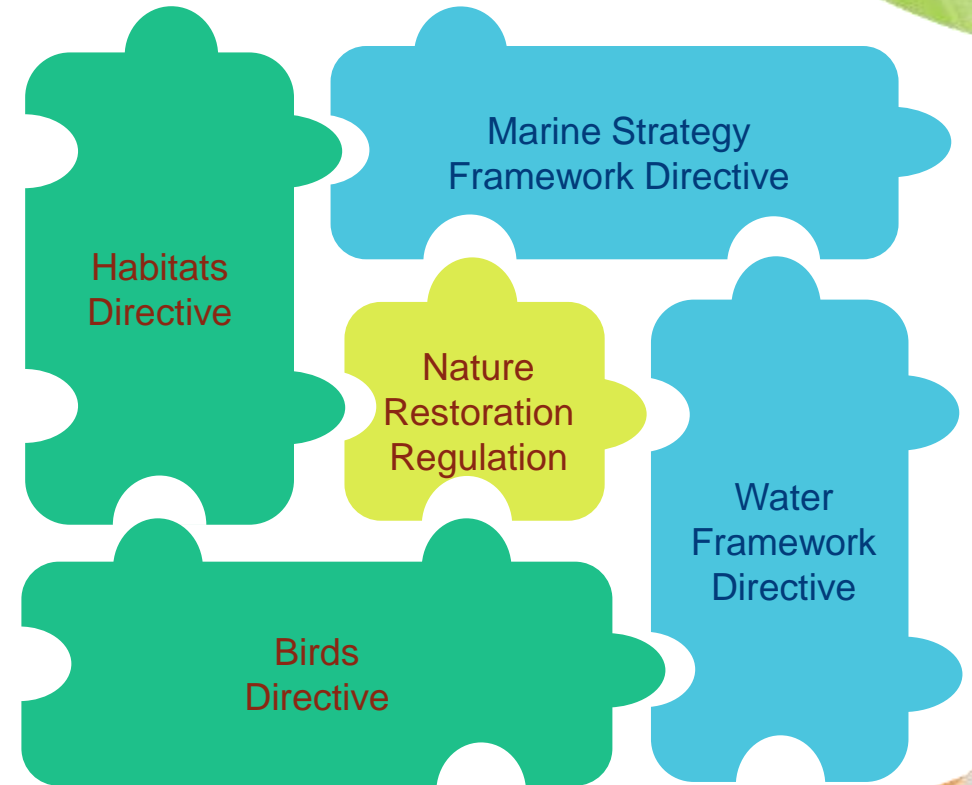
- State of seas and sustainability of fisheries
- Bring “nature back into our lives”
- **Bridge fisheries and environment worlds**
- Builds on existing legal framework



- Improve gear selectivity & **address bycatch of sensitive species**
- **Protect the seabed**
- Transition & knowledge
- **Governance** (joint special group)
- **EUSAIR role?**

Nature restoration regulation (NRR)

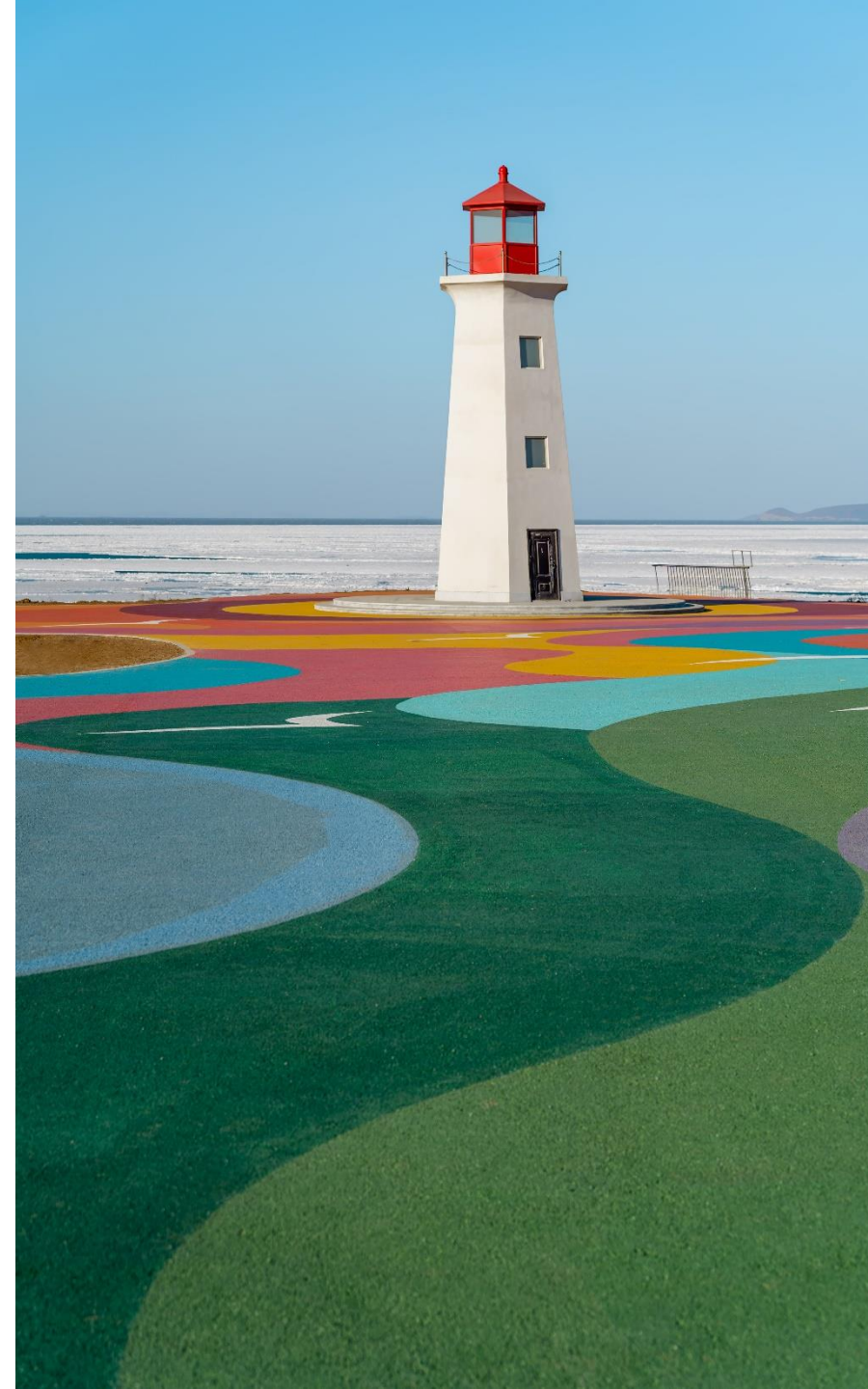
- **Why?** Continuing **ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss** across the EU, **impact of disasters/climate change**, voluntary targets of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy not met, economy depending on **healthy ecosystems**,...
- **Builds on and complements existing EU policy framework:** Nature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





Support for NRR implementation

- Draft national restoration plans (NRPs) must be submitted by September 2026. **Countries sharing marine region should cooperate and may use existing regional cooperation structures.**
- Support to Member States: LIFE PLP **project to support the mapping, condition assessment and restoration measures** for NRR-marine ecosystems (from 2025), **workshops and meetings**, **guidance documents** (such as EUNIS marine habitat manual), **LIFE** and **Horizon** Europe projects,...
- **Opportunities to connect EUSAIR countries - coordinate NRPs and restoration action?**



EUSAIR contribution

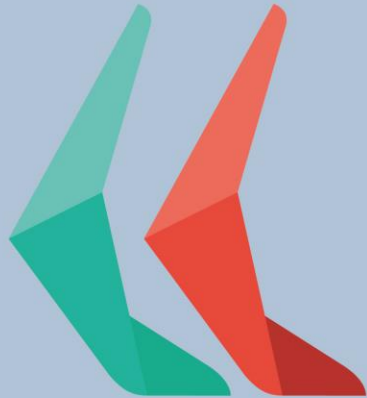
- **Planning and effective management of (strictly) protected areas.** Setting conservation objectives and measures. Monitoring, surveillance and enforcement. Demonstrating their benefits to society.
- **National restoration plans (EU MS) due by September 2026.** Mapping and assessing condition of marine habitats. Prioritisation of restoration, including through passive restoration (e.g. strict protection). *Connecting EU action with restoration efforts in non-EU countries.*



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Thank you