

# LIFE and the marine environment

<https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/life/life-programme-publications>

THE EU LIFE programme plays an important role in safeguarding the health of Europe's seas and oceans. Over the years, it has co-funded some 120 projects to the tune of €170 million. This has included 55 projects on nature and biodiversity, and 42 on marine pollution.

LIFE projects have not only greatly increased our knowledge of marine offshore habitats such as reefs, but also improved the conservation status of numerous species especially seabirds (73% of LIFE projects), cetaceans (17%) and sea turtles (9%).

## THE LIFE MALTA SEABIRD PROJECT

The MALTA SEABIRD project and the MIGRATE project surveyed seabirds, turtles and cetaceans, leading to the designation of 9 new Natura 2000 sites in Malta's marine waters. Building on this, LIFE BaHAR has created inventories of habitats and species to fill existing knowledge gaps, and to extend marine protection in Maltese waters.

## THE LIFE-IP INTEMARES PROJECT, SPAIN

The objective of the INTEMARES project is to implement the Prioritised Action Framework for the Spanish marine Natura 2000 network and ensure that, upon completion, Spain's marine Natura 2000 sites are managed in a demonstrative, effective and integrated way, with the active participation of all the sectors involved.

The project which runs from 2017 to 2024 and has a budget of almost €50 million will increase the knowledge required for management of some 300 marine Natura 2000 sites around Spain, ensure the maintenance and restoration of the protected habitat types and species present, improve surveillance and monitoring, as well as provide adequate training and capacity building while involving all socio-economic sectors and users of the sea in the management process.

With a budget of €4.8 million, the BLUEREEF Project set out to restore a cavernous offshore reef within the Natura 2000 site Læsø Trindel in the Kattegat area between Sweden and Denmark. More than 100 000 large stones were placed on the sea floor.

The restoration of 5 ha of boulder reef led to a six to eight-fold increase in biomass in just four years. Fish species such as cod also increased on average between three-fold and six-fold thanks in part to a ban in fishing activities in the area. At the end of the project the BLUEREEF team drew up guidelines on restoring boulder reefs to share their experience with other site managers in northern Europe. In 2015 the project won a LIFE Nature Award in the category 'Best Conservation Project'.



## NATURA 2000 AS PART OF A WIDER EU MARINE STRATEGY

No marine Natura 2000 site can operate in isolation. Integrating the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives into wider European policy areas is therefore fundamental to the success of Natura 2000. Important synergies are being created with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the Water Framework Directive (WFD) as well as the common fisheries policy and the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, amongst others, to ensure that the Nature Directives contribute to ensuring that Europe's seas are once again healthy, biodiverse, resilient and productive.

The EU provides financial support for the conservation and protection of marine biodiversity through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) and the EU LIFE programme. A wide range of successful projects has been funded so far under these two programmes.



### Further reading

European Commission marine Natura 2000 website: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/index_en.htm)  
European Commission LIFE website: <https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/life>  
European Environment Agency: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/water/europes-seas-and-coasts/assessments/marine-protected-areas>

### Publications

*LIFE and the Marine Environment* 2018  
*Marine protected areas in Europe's seas. An overview and perspectives for the future.* EEA Report No 3/2015  
*Spatial Analysis of Marine Protected Area networks in Europe's Seas I*, Volume A, 2017, ed. Künitzer, A., ETC/ICM Technical Report 4/2017  
*State of Europe's seas.* EEA Report No 2/2015

Cover: Common/red sunstar (*Crossaster papposus*) amongst dead-man's fingers (*Alcyonium digitatum*) Shetland Is. Scotland, © Alex Mustard/naturepl.com. Page 2: Puffin (*Fregata arctica*) and sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*) Shetland Is. Scotland, © Andy Trowbridge/naturepl.com. Page 3: Cove, Cala Maestra Archipelago National Park, Tuscany, © Angelo Gandolfi/naturepl.com. Page 4: Fisherman, Kent, UK, © Terry Whittaker/naturepl.com. Page 6: Mediterranean anthias, Tavolara marine reserve Sardinia, © Alex Mustard/naturepl.com

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Publications Office



# The EU Nature Directives: protecting Europe's marine biodiversity



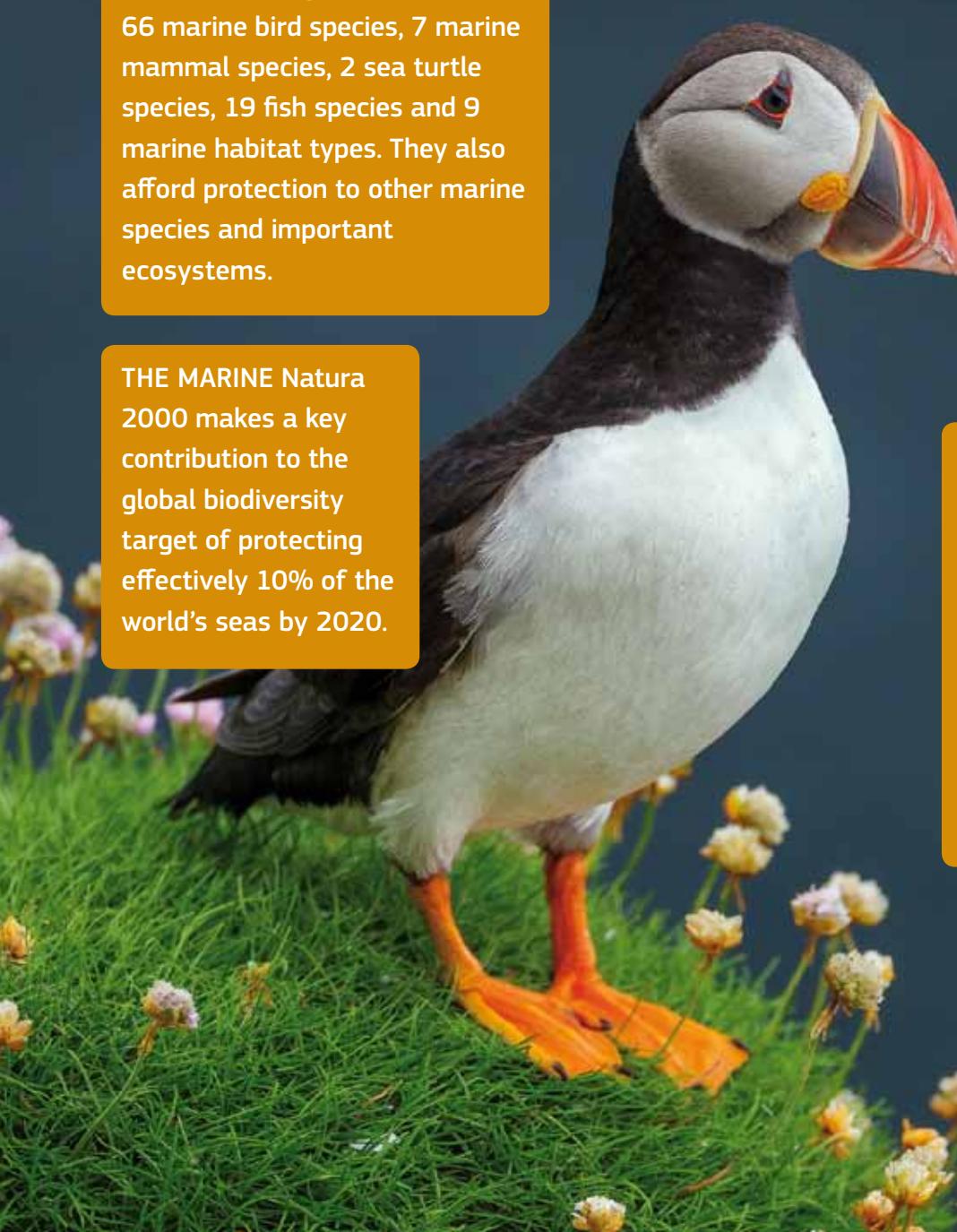
Environment

# Marine Natura 2000 network

THE EU BIRDS AND HABITATS DIRECTIVES – the EU nature directives – lie at the heart of the EU's biodiversity strategy. They aim to protect the EU's most vulnerable habitat types and species both on land and at sea. Through the Directives an EU-wide Natura 2000 network of protected sites has been created spanning 28 EU Member States. Certain marine species are also protected across their entire range, both inside and outside Natura 2000.

THE MARINE Natura 2000 sites have been designated to protect 66 marine bird species, 7 marine mammal species, 2 sea turtle species, 19 fish species and 9 marine habitat types. They also afford protection to other marine species and important ecosystems.

THE MARINE Natura 2000 makes a key contribution to the global biodiversity target of protecting effectively 10% of the world's seas by 2020.

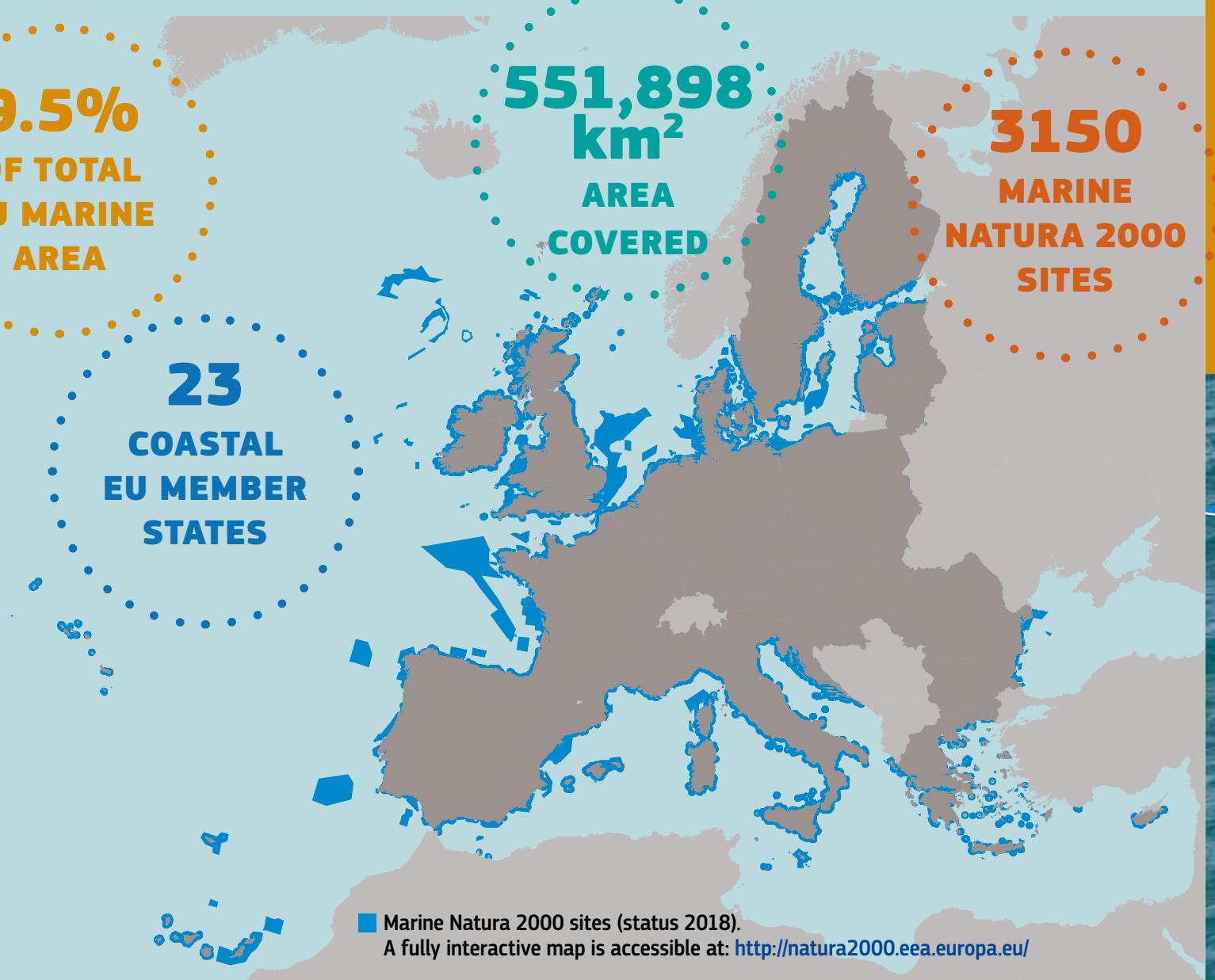


AFTER MANY years of hard work and research, some 3150 marine Natura 2000 sites have been included in the network covering over 550,000 km<sup>2</sup> across 23 coastal Member States. This represents around 9.5% of the total marine area in the EU.

CURRENTLY VERY few protected marine habitats and species are in a favourable conservation status. For many their status is unknown due to the significant gaps in marine data.

THE TOTAL marine protected area in the EU has more than doubled in the last six years, primarily due to the expansion of the Natura 2000 network. However, there is still work to be done to complete the network, especially in offshore waters and in certain regional seas.

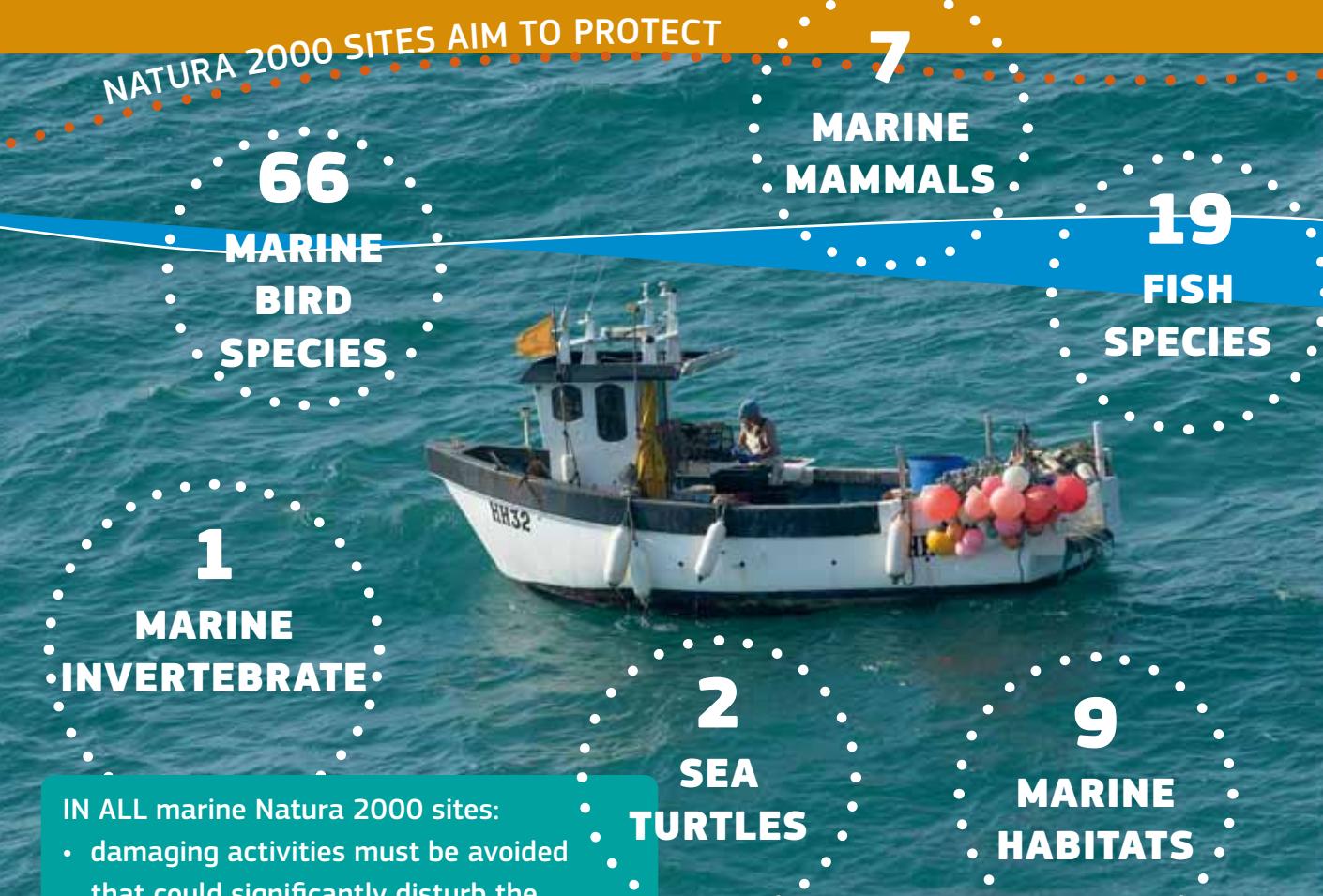
## The EU Natura 2000 network of marine protected sites



# Managing marine Natura 2000 sites

THE EU'S marine biodiversity is under increasing pressure from a wide range of activities and threats including unsustainable fisheries, dredging, transport and energy production, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT of the sites is needed to address these pressures. Since every site is unique, the emphasis is very much on finding local solutions to local management issues in close cooperation with stakeholders, and any other interested parties.



IN ALL marine Natura 2000 sites:

- damaging activities must be avoided that could significantly disturb the species or deteriorate the habitats for which the site is designated, such as the use of destructive fishing gears or the generation of underwater noise; and
- positive conservation measures must be taken, where necessary, to maintain and restore the habitats and species present, taking account of the economic, social and cultural requirements and regional and local characteristics of the area concerned.

NEW DEVELOPMENT activities (e.g. offshore wind farms, oil and gas exploration, dredging) are not automatically excluded from Natura 2000 sites, however such plans or projects must undergo a robust assessment to ensure that they do not damage the protected species and habitats present.