

Marine Protected Areas in European waters

The European Green Party calls for the designation of at least 30% of EU territorial waters as Marine Protected Areas.

The European Green Party, mindful of essential duty we have to urgently prevent further destruction to our seas and oceans, acknowledges:

- that our seas and oceans, and all life within them, are under unprecedented pressure, generated by the combined impacts of climate change, ocean acidification, shipping, fossil fuel and substrate exploration and exploitation, destructive fishing, pollution and use of waters for economic purposes under the Blue Growth agenda;
- that ecologically coherent networks of high quality and well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), managed in collaboration with local stakeholders, are the best tool to conserve marine ecosystems;
- that the importance of our seas to the long-term health of the planet requires us to engage in a dramatic effort to protect them, respecting the planetary boundaries and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- that Member States are currently obliged to effectively protect only 10% of their maritime space
- that, despite the fact that 12% of European Maritime Area is designated as Marine Protected Areas, only 1,8% of the European Waters are covered by MPA with management plans, without which MPA designation means effectively very little;

and therefore, in order to address this unprecedented crisis of destruction, demands:

- that Member States effectively enforce the obligation to protect maritime water by introducing management plans for all existing MPAs
- that at least 30% of the territorial waters of all EU member states be designated as Marine Protected Areas by 2030;
- that all MPAs should be part of ecologically coherent networks and not stand-alone areas, with effective management and regulation across those networks;
- that all MPAs should operate under effective management plans to enable their conservation and enhancement and that these should be adequately resourced and monitored;
- that new MPAs must cover deep sea areas, not just coastal and shallow waters;
- that the designation of inshore MPAs be community-led as far as practicable, with a robust public consultation process as required under the Aarhus Convention. The right to access to justice to protect seas, oceans and marine areas should also be guaranteed and enforced;
- that the Common Fisheries Policy promotes for the incorporation of strong MPAs that would prohibit any especially destructive fisheries practices, providing year-round full seafloor protection from bottom-impacting fisheries, and prioritise an ecosystems-based approach to marine management that distributes catch quota amongst EU vessels in an equitable and ecologically sustainable manner;
- a moratorium on the granting of any licences by EU Member States for deep sea mining and fossil fuel exploration and exploitation, and an immediate prohibition on seismic testing within any range of protected areas that would have any deleterious effects;
- the implementation of control and monitoring mechanisms to limit plastic, agricultural and industrial contamination and other external threats, including an immediate ban on microbeads, to ensure that MPAs are effectively safeguarded against any risk of pollution.