



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Marine Environment and Marine Biodiversity

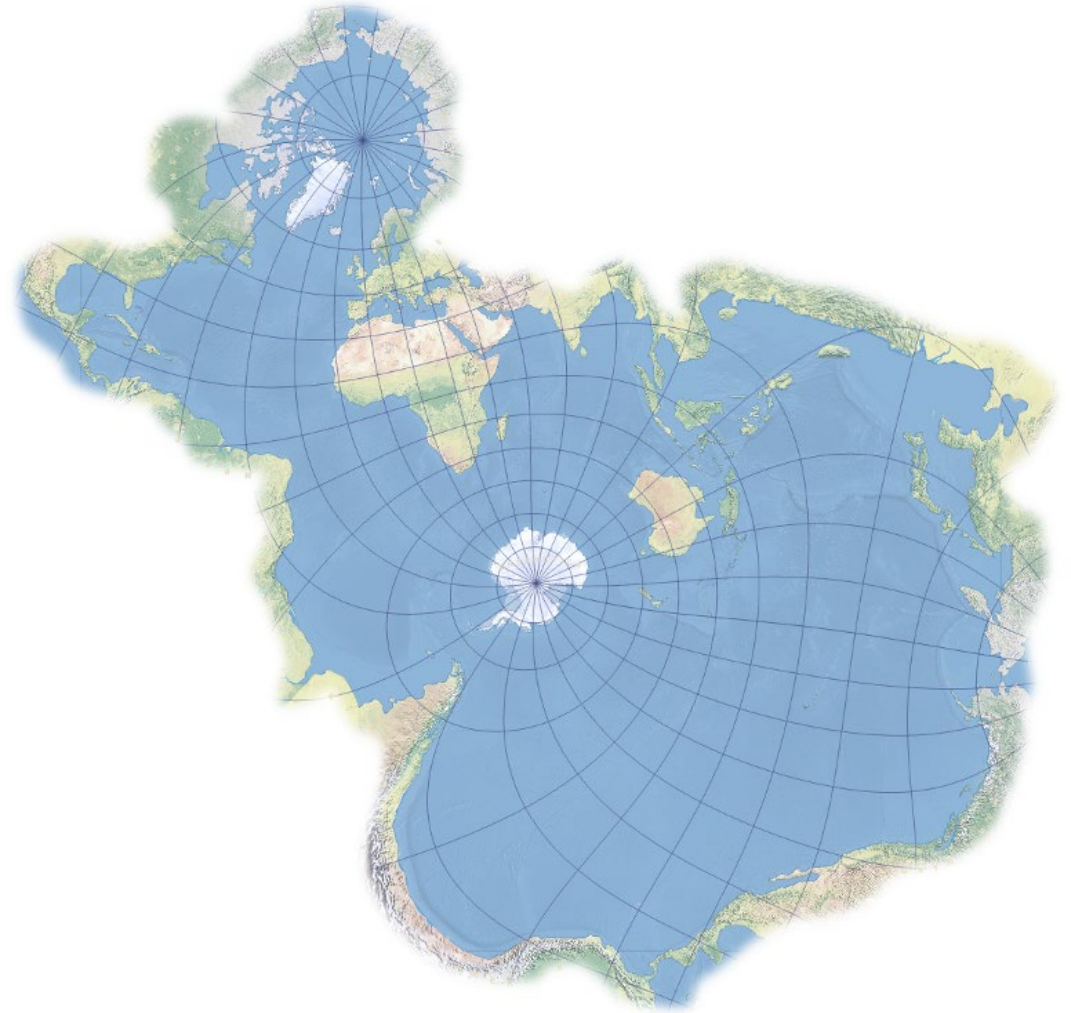
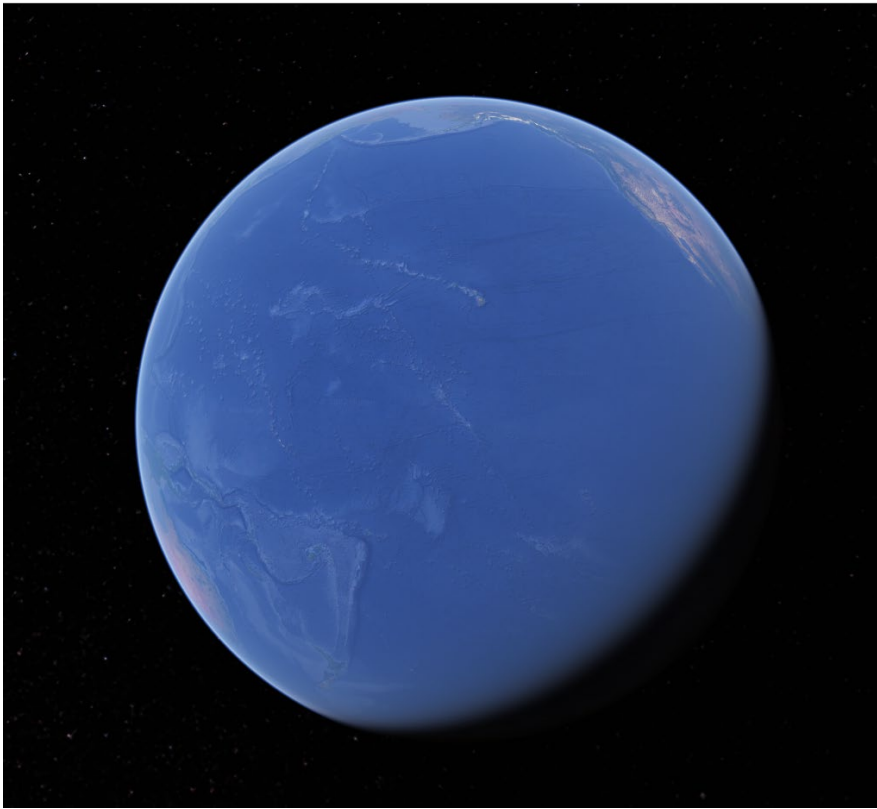
November 2022

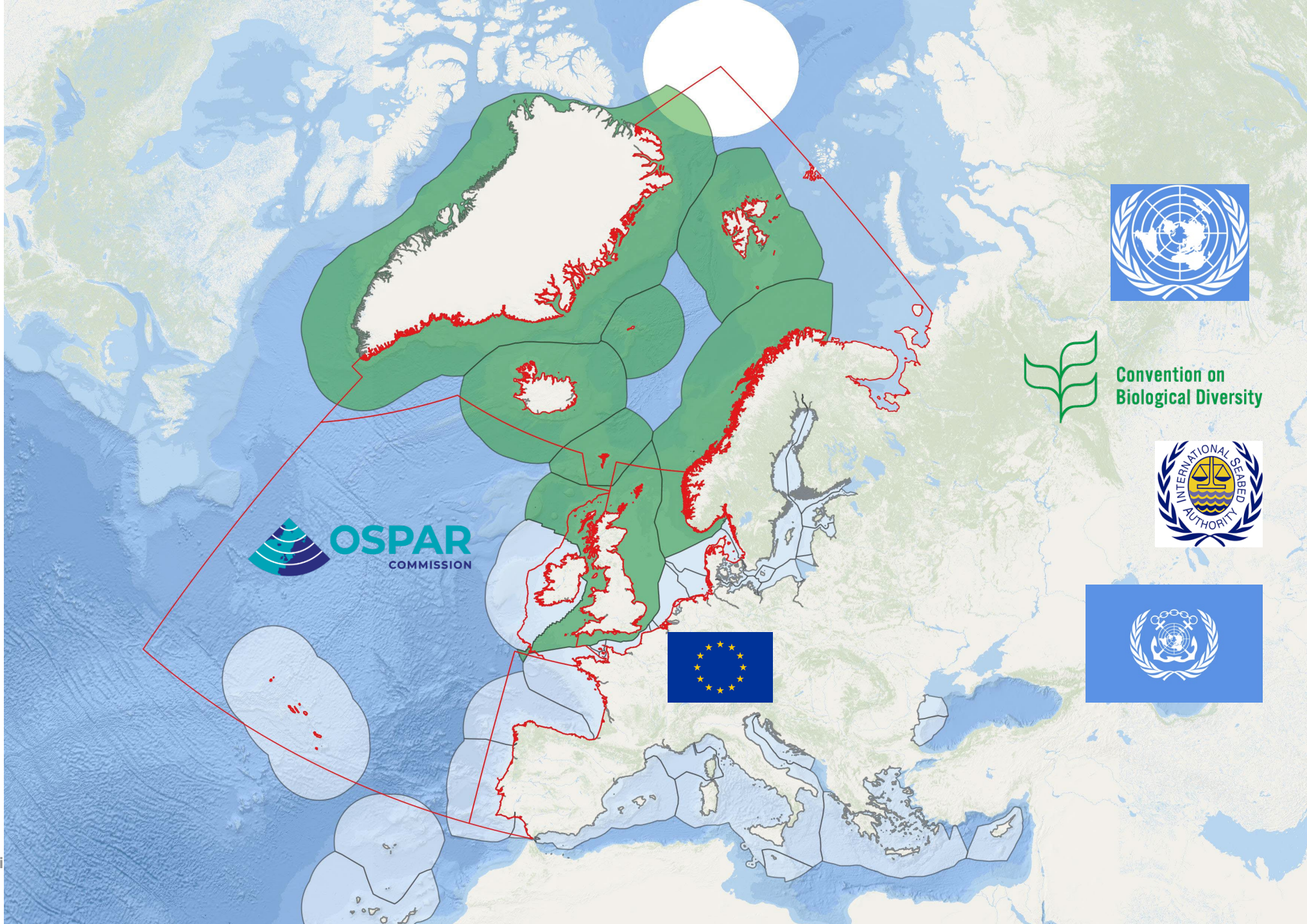


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- Some key concepts for marine environment and biodiversity
 - Current state of marine environment/biodiversity
 - Policy tools including progress on a new Marine Protected Areas Law
 - Future Challenges



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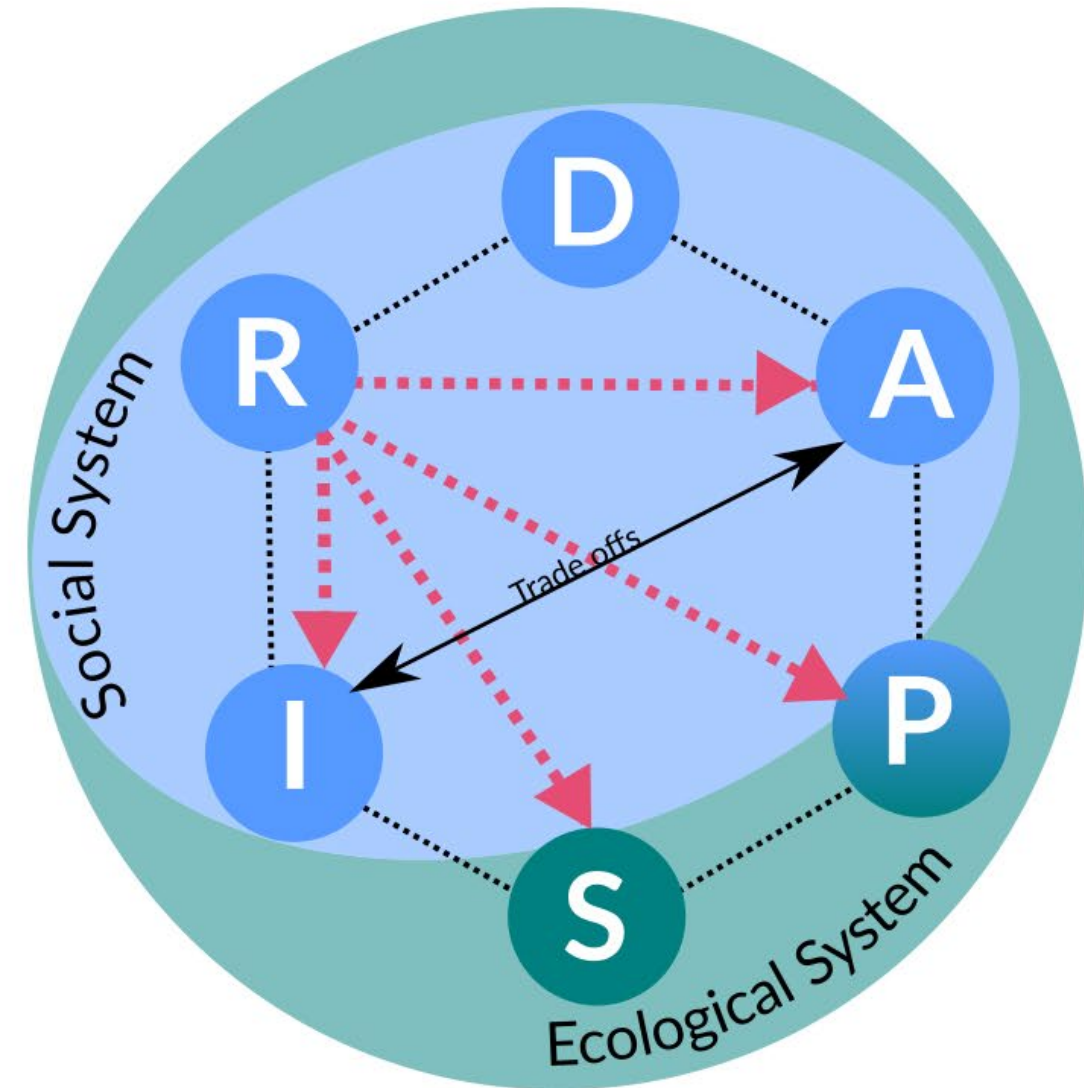




Ecosystem based approach – include the humans

An ecosystem based approach is one which integrates the connections between land, air, water, all living things including beings and their institutions.

- Drivers
- Activities
- Pressures
- State
- Impact
- Response



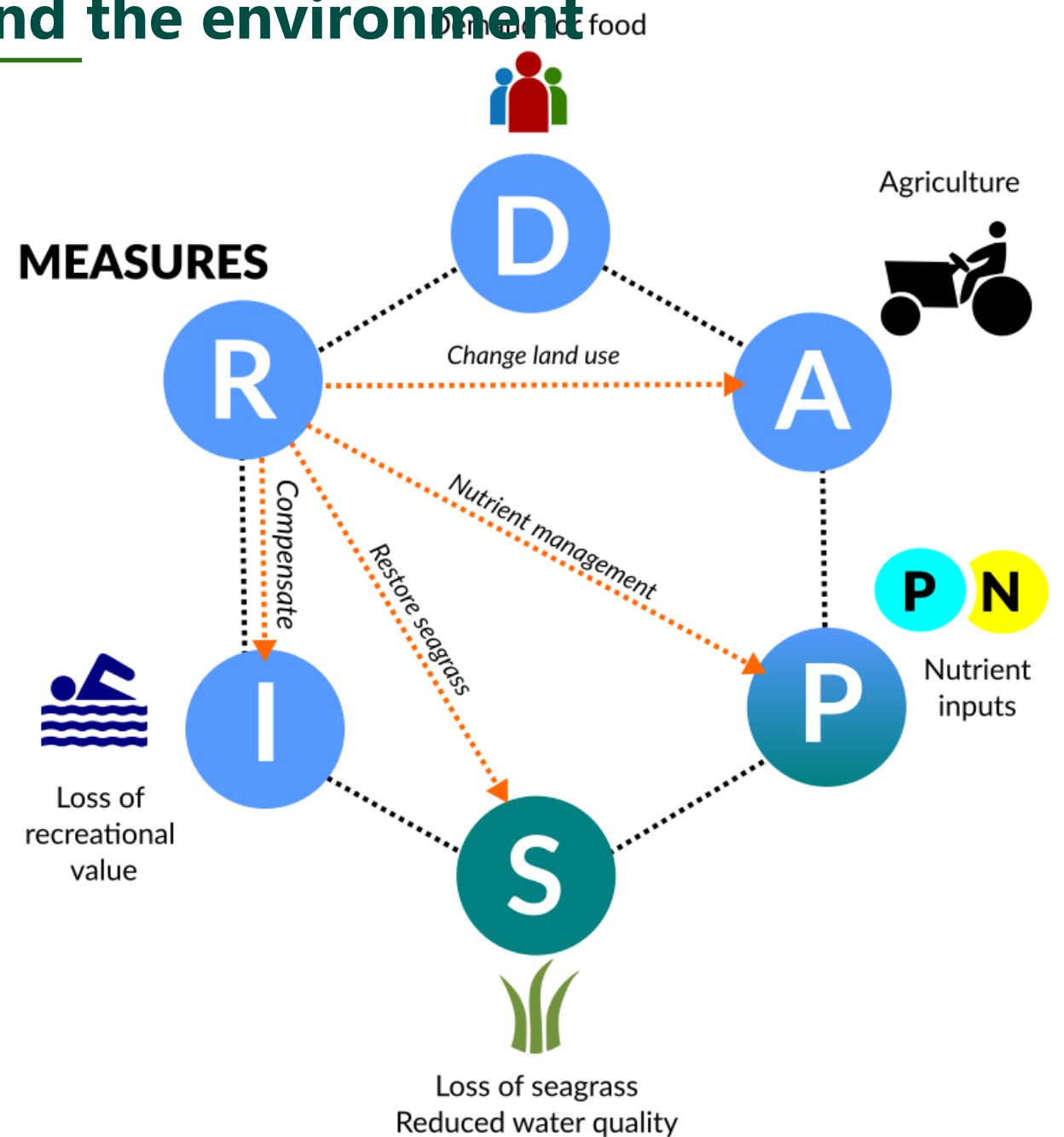


The relationship between society and the environment

Ecosystem Based Approach

Measures can be directed at any other element of the system.

- **Drivers** can change
- **Activities** can be limited or banned
- Practices can be changed to reduce **pressures** (eg. Mesh size)
- Restoration acts directly on ecosystem **state**
- Economic **impacts** can be compensated





Marine Strategy Framework Directive



Aim: Clean, healthy, biologically diverse and sustainably used marine environment

<p>1. Biological diversity</p> 	<p>2. Non-indigenous species</p> 	<p>3. Population of commercial fish/shellfish</p> 	<p>4. Elements of marine food webs</p> 
<p>5. Eutrophication</p> 	<p>6. Sea floor integrity</p> 	<p>7. Alteration of hydrographical conditions</p> 	<p>8. Concentrations of contaminants</p> 
<p>Good Environmental Status</p>	<p>9. Contaminants in fish/seafood for human consumption</p> 	<p>10. Marine litter</p> 	<p>11. Introduction of energy including underwater noise</p> 



State of the marine environment

Achieved Good Environmental Status

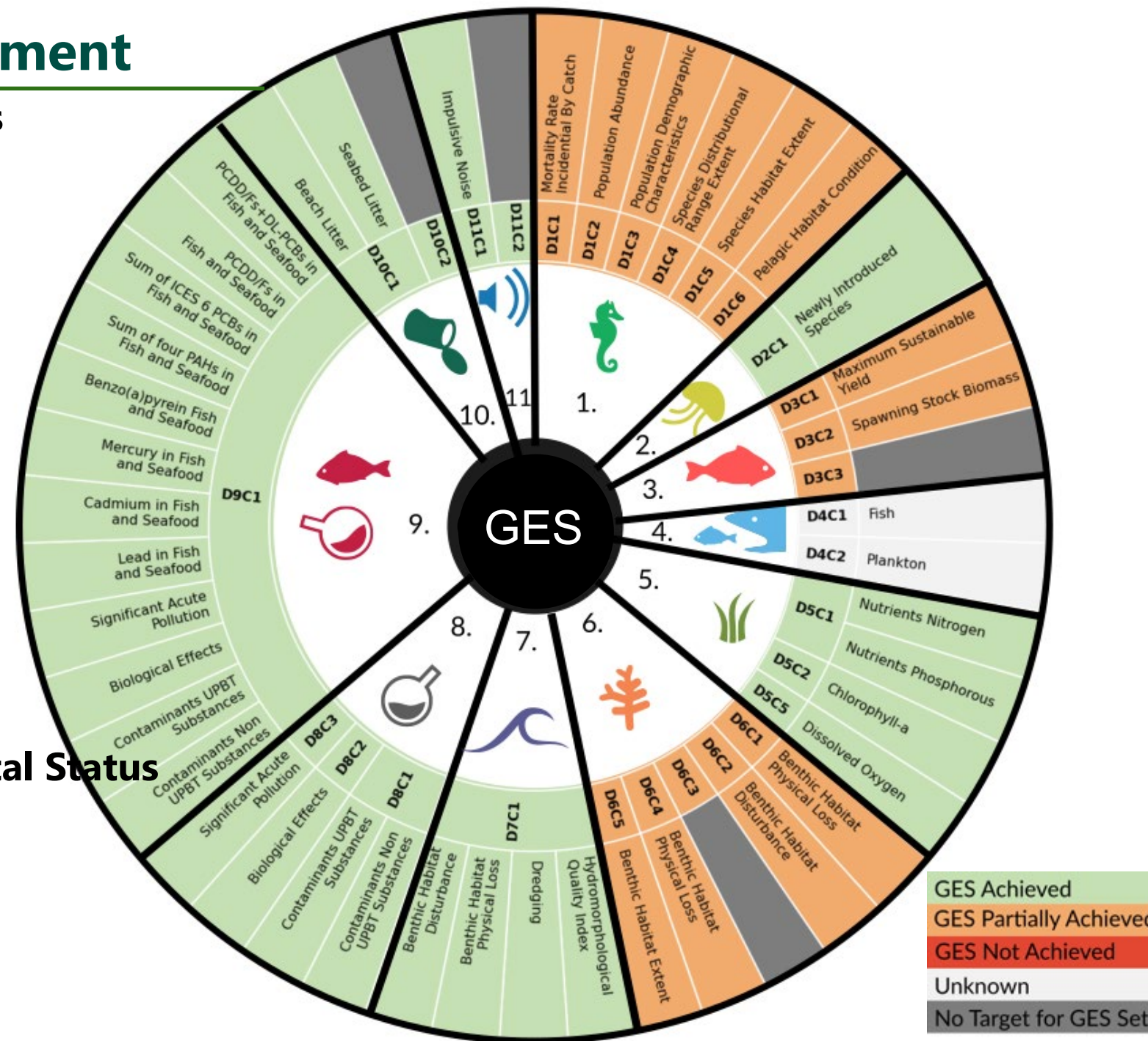
- Non-indigenous species
- Eutrophication
- Hydrographical conditions
- Contaminants
- Contaminants in seafood

Achieved for limited assessment

- Marine litter
- Noise

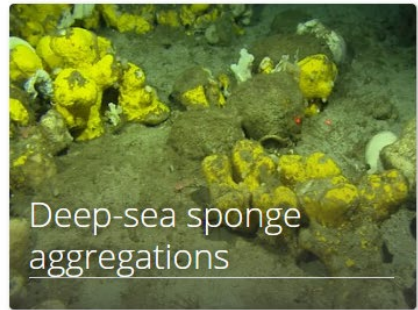
Partially achieved Good Environmental Status

- Biodiversity
- Commercial fish and shellfish
- Sea floor integrity



OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023

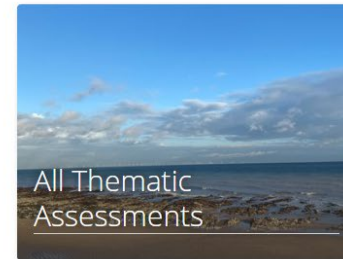
Status Assessments



Committee Assessments



Quality Status Report 2023



Policy approaches

- **Long term strategies** balancing between social and environmental timescales
- Robust **policy-science structures** for credible decision making (including decision making with uncertainty)
- Broad and deep **cooperation networks** – national and international, all voices and perspectives
- **Governance** – accountability, transparency
- **Soft law** - incentives, behavioural change
- **Hard law** that delivers positive outcomes
 - **National:** *Programme for Government – Our shared future (June 2020)*
 - **European Union & International:** *Marine Strategy Framework Directive, EU Green Deal, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (30% of marine waters, incl. 10% strict protection); OSPAR Strategy 2030*
 - **Global:** *UN Sustainable Development Goal 14 - Life Below Water, UN Convention on Biological Diversity: 10% (Aichi target) & COP15 30% (Dec 2022)*



Marine Protected Areas

- “A geographically defined area of marine character or influence which is **protected through legal means** for the purpose of conservation of specified species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated objectives over the long term.”

MPA advisory group report, Oct 2020

- Target: *10% by 2020, 30% by 2030; Ireland currently at ~2% protected sites*

- Expert Advisory Group 2019 - 2020
- Open public consultation 17 February – 30 July 2021
- July 2022: Government Decision for development of General Scheme of a Bill to provide for Marine Protected Areas (a new law)
- Drafting of General Scheme of new law to go to government in November
 - *Participation*
 - *Identification of sites*
 - *Designation and conservation objectives*
 - *Effective Management and enforcement*

DHLGH Marine Protected Area Advisory Group Report

“Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network”
– October 2020

Overview of Public Consultation Feedback 17 February - 30 July 2021



2,311 submissions received
> 1,431 written submissions
> 880 submissions to focused survey



Meaningful public and stakeholder engagement and involvement are key to MPA delivery

- > Coastal / Island Communities
- > Environmental Sector
- > Fisheries and Aquaculture
- > Offshore Renewable Energy
- > Tourism
- > Ports and Harbours
- > Science and Research
- > Other Government Departments

Strong Support & Positive Feedback

- > 99% of submissions supported MPAs
- > Strong support for the 30% MPA coverage by 2030 target

Survey Respondents Agree

- 89%** with the proposed MPA definition
- 87%** with the guidelines for successful stakeholder participation

On expansion of MPA Network

- 93%** support including existing conservation sites
- 84%** support including Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures
- 91%** support the key principles for ongoing MPA process

Ambition for MPAs

- > Conserve and protect marine habitats and ecosystems
- > Large enough to provide adequate protection
- > Connected
- > Achieve Good Environmental Status
- > Enhance water quality
- > Protect cultural, social and economic value of marine environment

Areas for Improvement

- > Current 2% MPAs coverage in Irish waters is not on target
- > Information and data gaps
- > Education and awareness raising

Benefits and Potential of MPAs



- > Biodiversity
- > Resilience and adaptation to climate change
- > Benefits to economy and society
- > Recreation and health
- > Position Ireland as world leader in MPAs

Calls for

- > Urgent Action
- > Evidence-based Approach
- > Ecosystem-based Approach
- > More Research
- > More Resources – staff and expertise
- > Legislation and Policies working together



Future challenges – Tread more lightly on the world



Pollute less, destroy less, waste less, protect Do no harm

- Sustainability and planetary limits
- Policy and funding misalignment – food security, nature, transport, energy
- Societal value systems and social justice
- Climate Change, biodiversity and shifting baselines - restoration challenges
- Wicked problems – we are the problem and the solution
- Complexity – adaptive non-binary solutions
- Fast or slow? - *Festina Lente*
- Cumulative effects - existing and new Drivers and Activities – e.g. Deep Seabed Mining
- Geopolitics

