EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

SPECIAL REPORT 25/2026
Marine protected areas

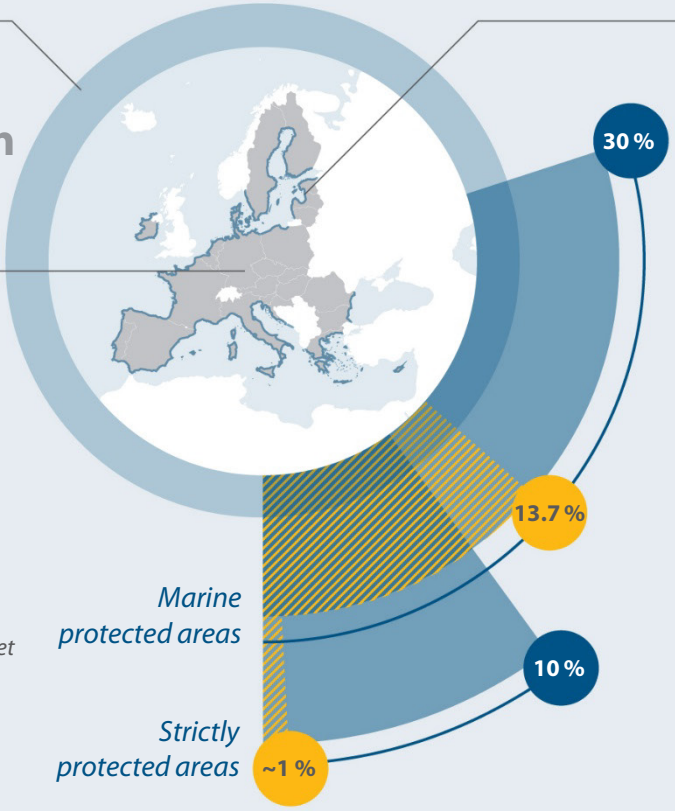
Key facts and findings

5 million km²
EU seas*

4 million km²
EU land*

* *excluding EU outermost regions and overseas territories*

40 % of the EU population in 22 member states live within **50 km of a coast**



Marine protected areas

aim to

protect ecosystems and preserve biodiversity

EU funding for marine biodiversity
(2021-2027)

~€600 million

What did we find?

- Ambitious targets are unlikely to be met without more concerted efforts at EU and national level
- Designation of marine protected areas does not guarantee their protection
- Balance between socio-economic interests and maritime protection is not consistently achieved
- Most protected areas lack resources and make insufficient use of proven management approaches

The EU has not yet established effective protection of its marine environment

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