



The European Ocean Act



Legislation, Implementation, Simplification



Second Progress Report and evaluation of the MSP Directive



Advancing EU Maritime Spatial Planning

21/22

Coastal Member States have MSP

- Transition Phase: MSP implementation is reaching maturity across the EU. We are shifting from initial plan preparation to routine cycles of implementation, monitoring, and revision.
- Eight Member States adopted plans between 2022-2024, demonstrating significant acceleration despite the 2021 deadline hurdles.

Key implementation challenges

Persistent issues:

➤ Cross-sectoral coordination:

Managing responsibility distributed across local, regional, and national authorities.

Need for multi-use by design (e.g., co-locating wind farms + aquaculture).

➤ Regional consistency: Sea-basin approaches needs strengthening

➤ Coherence: Clarifying how MSP supports climate adaptation and biodiversity protection and restoration goals.

➤ Data fragmentation: EU-wide marine data need to support adaptive planning.

➤ Stakeholder inclusivity: Small-scale actors (fisheries, coastal communities, NGOs) need better representation.

Way forward

Ocean Pact (2025)

Political framework to protect ocean health and develop the blue economy sustainably under one roof

Ocean Act (2026)

MSP as a strategic tool

Increased sectoral coordination

Better organised sea-basin approach

Reference targets

Ocean observation governance

Revision of MSPD

Alignment with MSFD

Climate-smart

Multi-use by design

Strengthened land-sea interaction

Improved stakeholder consultations

...

Results from the call for evidence

Total responses: 706 - Countries represented: 38 (EU + global, e.g. US, Canada, Australia)

Stakeholder

Academia/Research

EU/Non-EU Citizens

NGOs

Business Associations

Companies/Businesses

Environmental Orgs

Public Authorities

Other (e.g., EMODnet, CPMR)

Key Priorities

✓ Unified EU ocean governance ✓ Funded ocean observation system

🌊 Biodiversity protection 🐟 Sustainable fishing 🌴 Effective MPAs

📄 Binding Ocean Act 🚫 Ban harmful activities (trawling, deep-sea mining)

⚖️ Legal certainty via MSP 💰 Align data/investment with outcomes

🇪🇺 Operationalise EU ocean data 📁 Streamlined governance for SMEs

🌿 Ecological limits first (GES + 30/10%) 🔄 Coherent sea-basin MSP

⚖️ Respect subsidiarity 🤝 Multi-level governance

🔗 Binding policy alignment
💻 EOOS as public infrastructure

Notable Asks

Sea-basin governance, climate-smart MSP, data standards

Ban bottom trawling, enforce EU laws, climate resilience

30% MPA coverage (10% strict), precautionary principle, inclusive participation

Avoid regulatory duplication, support decarbonisation + competitiveness

Digital Twin of the Ocean, phase out destructive gears in MPAs

Ban bottom trawling/oil/gas, just transition for coastal communities

Avoid EU over-centralisation, fund outermost regions, sync with WFD/Habitats Dir.

Tackle pollution, inclusive participation



Legislation: Ocean Act - key elements

- Serve the **six priorities of the European Ocean Pact**
- Reference relevant **targets and objectives**
- Increase coherence and harmonisation with the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive**, use of environmental data in planning activities
- Include Ocean Observation governance and coordination
- Revision of the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive – **strengthen MSP, building on progress and practices:**
 - increased cross-sectoral coordination
 - Stronger **stakeholder engagement, co-existence , multi-use** by design
 - better organised sea basin approach,
 - making MSP “climate-smart” and ecosystem-based



LEAD WITH TRANSPARENCY

Principle #6

Honesty about limitations on space for certain activities or technical constraints for why infrastructure cannot be planned in a certain desired way is necessary, and must be repeated often, early and consistently. This openness can also contribute to an overall better relationship with stakeholders, as they understand decisions are not necessarily imposed top-down from the developer or government, but are instead related to external factors. Once certain limitations are clear and understood by stakeholders, conversations about possible solutions and compromises can begin. Belgium's recent MSP process ([page 28](#)) and approaches from Irish TSO EirGrid ([page 39](#)) provide good examples of the role honesty can play in successful engagement processes.

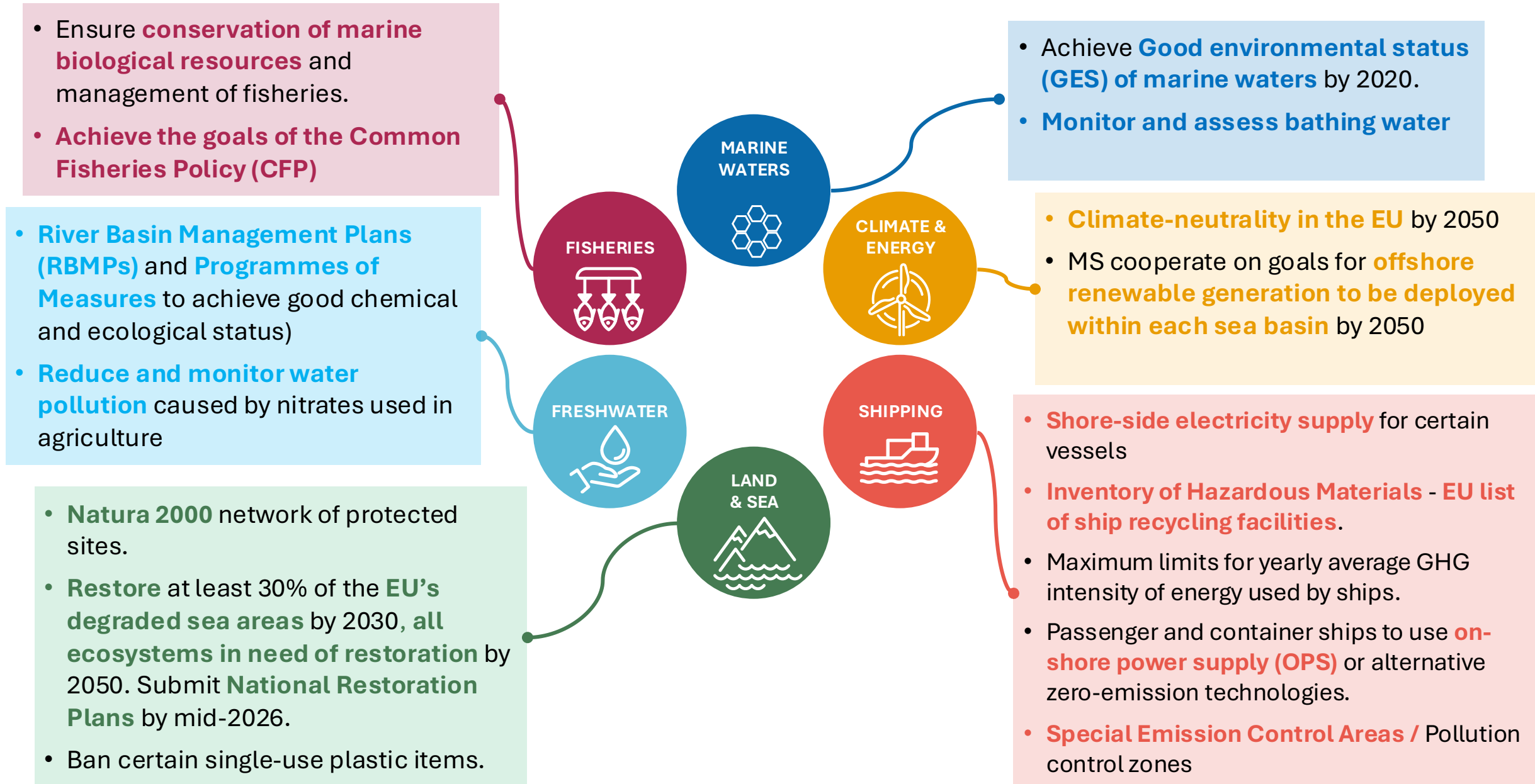


PROVIDING FUNDING AND STAFFING FOR MEANINGFUL PROCESSES

Principle #7

The competent MSP authorities and authorities approving permits for grid operators and wind developers **must have enough funding and staff support to prepare and analyse responses to consultations**. Properly funded and staffed authorities are an enabling factor for implementing engagement processes (in formats such as written feedback, workshops, events) and are necessary to demonstrate to stakeholders that they were listened to and their feedback was fairly considered. This includes responding to a large volume of opinions and drafting explanations for why certain feedback was taken into account while other feedback could not. These explanations, if communicated properly, can be a valuable trust-building exercise.

Ocean Act – reference targets (examples)



Thank you

© European Union 2026

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the [CC BY 4.0](#) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

Photos Source: Adobe.stock.com