



Sector characteristics

Commercial fisheries

Commercial fisheries represent an important economic sector for coastal regions and communities in many EU countries.

Fishing in the EU is regulated through the Common Fisheries Policy. National quotas for fish stocks in the northeast Atlantic are based on estimates of maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

Fleet capacities have been reduced, but the sector is generally profitable at present.

Access to reliable fishing grounds is an important prerequisite for sustainable fisheries, especially small-scale fisheries near the coast.

Area-based marine conservation

Marine conservation can be broadly differentiated into approaches that target overall ecosystem health (such as reducing fishing pressure or reducing pollution), approaches that target specific species (such as marine mammals), and area-based approaches (such as MPAs).

Impacts caused by fishing can reduce the conservation benefits of area-based marine conservation. Even when MPAs themselves are well managed, they can still be affected by pressures originating outside of the protected area.

Conflict description

Spatial exclusion

Spatial management measures for conservation proposed by the authorities are usually the main source of conflict. Fishers often object to such proposals, given that they might have to relocate to other less productive fishing grounds further from the fishing port. It may also mean changing fishing gear, all implying additional costs.

Destructive practices

Some fishing practices, such as some bottom trawling, gill-netting and longlining techniques not only harvest the target species but also kill non-target species and damage the broader ecosystem (incl. sea bottom morphology, sediments structure, biochemical balance). Litter such as lost gear can lead to ghost fishing.

Synergies

No-take areas can lead to the recovery of commercially important species. Benefit to nearby fisheries through spill-over and export of offspring from protected stock has also been recorded. Well-managed MPAs also have tourism benefits by helping to protect attractive megafauna or supporting recreational fishing.

Drivers of conflict

Restriction of fishing in areas of environmental importance

Restricting fishing areas is likely to increase pressure on the sector, especially smaller operations working closer to the coast. Economic pressure on fisheries is likely to grow.

Conservation targets

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive expects Member States to reach "good environmental status" of marine waters by 2020. Descriptor 3 on commercial fish and shellfish states that "populations of all commercially exploited fish and shellfish are within safe biological limits, exhibiting a population age and size distribution that is indicative of a healthy stock."

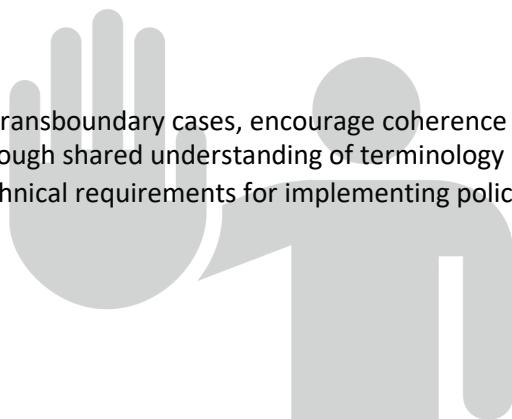
Lack of knowledge on pressures

Lack of data, information and overall uncertainty about future environmental trends such as climate change affects the ability to make decisions.

Possible solutions

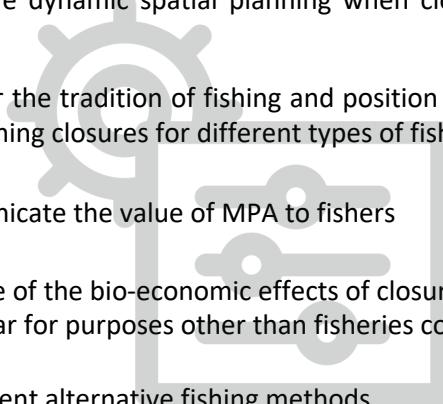
Prevention

1 In transboundary cases, encourage coherence through shared understanding of terminology and technical requirements for implementing policy



Mitigation

- 2 Use more dynamic spatial planning when closing areas to fishery
- 3 Consider the tradition of fishing and position of ports when determining closures for different types of fishery
- 4 Communicate the value of MPA to fishers
- 5 Estimate of the bio-economic effects of closure(s), in particular for purposes other than fisheries conservation
- 6 Implement alternative fishing methods



Future trends

More environmentally friendly fishing practices may mean less bottom trawling as this has major environmental impacts, therefore reducing conflicts with environmental protection.

There is a fundamental shift within the industry, with fewer persons entering the profession and an overall reduction in the size of the fleet.

Synergies may increasingly be explored between the two sectors, also considering spill over effects and temporal closures, leading to new concepts of multi-use.

Member States are required to implement measures to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES) in line with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). More MPAs are likely to be designated by countries to implement international targets.