

Fishery Restricted Areas and Marine Protected Areas – is trawling a major pressure and how much of the Mediterranean is protected?

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Summary

The ecosystem approach and marine conservation are high on the Mediterranean regional agenda as seen through recent targeted data calls and directives.

For the EU Member States, obligations arising from the Habitats Directive (e.g. for the protection of regional priority habitats) and the recent Marine Strategy Framework Directive (e.g. for the achievement of GEnS) are significant additional drivers for mapping the status, as well as the extent and frequency of pressures acting on predominant and sensitive habitats.

Within the framework of the DG MARE MEDISEH Mediterranean Sensitive Habitats project and the MAREA Consortium, regional experts have worked together to review and map a) existing marine NATURA 2000 and other MPAs, b) MPA network proposals, and c) **Mediterranean Fishery Restricted Areas (FRAs)**.

FRAs include applied EU and national gear specific closures (e.g. for trawl, purse seines) and measures with a spatio-temporal dimension aiming to protect marine species and habitats from fishing activities in the Mediterranean basin.

The overarching aim was to relate findings to sensitive and priority Mediterranean habitats and the CBD objective (Aichi target 11) to protect 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, with well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

This review highlights the still limited extent and mainly coastal nature of MPAs, the considerably larger extent of FRAs that mainly protect very deep grounds from trawling, and the still limited and geographically patchy efforts to map sensitive and essential fish habitats.

In the Mediterranean, an area with a large variety of species, gears, economies, cultures and languages, where spatial control is the one of the key pillars of an effort-based management system, accessing national management measures that cover existing fishing gear spatial restrictions is a major challenge! Gear exclusion zones or areas closed to types of fishing have no publicly available maps or no linked open access geospatial information. National laws defining temporal patterns of gear closures is often very hard to find. Many countries have numerous small, and of varied duration, trawl (and other gear) closures registered in a maze of legal texts.

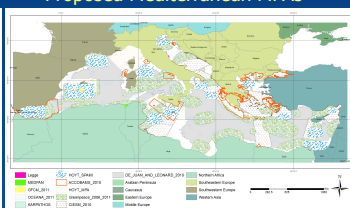
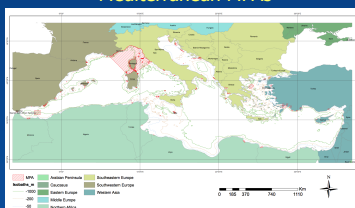
Greece is a good example of many closed bays to trawling for 12 or minimum 4 months (annual closure for the trawl fishery all over Greece), and additional closures for some bays for up to 9 months as well as more additional closures based on distance from shore, depth zones or distance from protected areas, aquaculture farms, other installations etc.

Our review identified over 400 cases of spatial closures in the Mediterranean – our database includes gear group, total closures, gear closures, temporal closures, distance and depth restrictions, exclusion zones on protected species such as Posidonia and maerl, national MPAs and others.

The study also looked at the spatial overlap of FRAs with existing MPAs and NATRURAs, with protected species such as Posidonia or sensitive habitats such as nurseries of demersal fish species, and with proposed MPAs and MPAs network in the Mediterranean.

Mediterranean MPAs

Proposed Mediterranean MPAs



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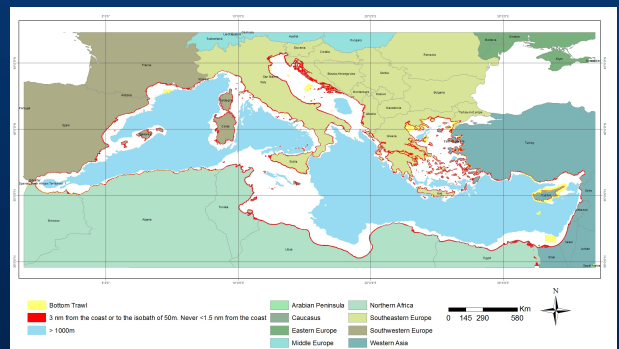
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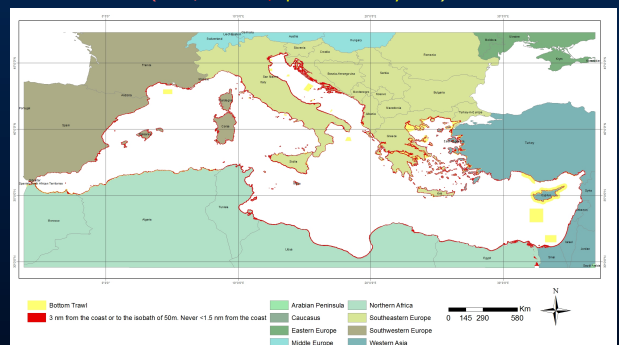
Keywords

Fishery Restricted Areas, trawling, MPAs, spatial controls, Mediterranean

Mediterranean Bottom Trawl FRAs
(3 nm/50 m red, specified areas yellow, 1000 m blue)



Mediterranean Bottom Trawl FRAs Excluding 1000 m regulation
(3 nm/50 m red, specified areas yellow)



Major findings for trawl areas

- 65% of the Mediterranean Sea is covered by bottom trawling exclusion zones.
- 58% of the sea is comprised of the trawl exclusion zone for waters deeper than 1000 m (General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean and the EU regulation).
- Excluding the 1000 m exclusion zone, trawl ban areas cover only 8%.
- 57% of bottom trawl FRAs are within the 1.5 nm coastal zone.
- MPAs cover less than 5% of the sea (only 1% if the Pelagos Sanctuary is excluded) with very uneven coverage
- 49% of MPAs are in bottom trawl exclusion areas
- There are approximately 100 current proposals for MPAs from States, Regional Bodies and NGOs. But progress is slow.

Website: www.mareaproject.net

www.mareaproject.net/contracts/5/overview/

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MAREA



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