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

Progress on EU Nature Restoration Regulation and Marine Strategy Framework Directive Seafloor Integrity (benthic habitats) threshold values

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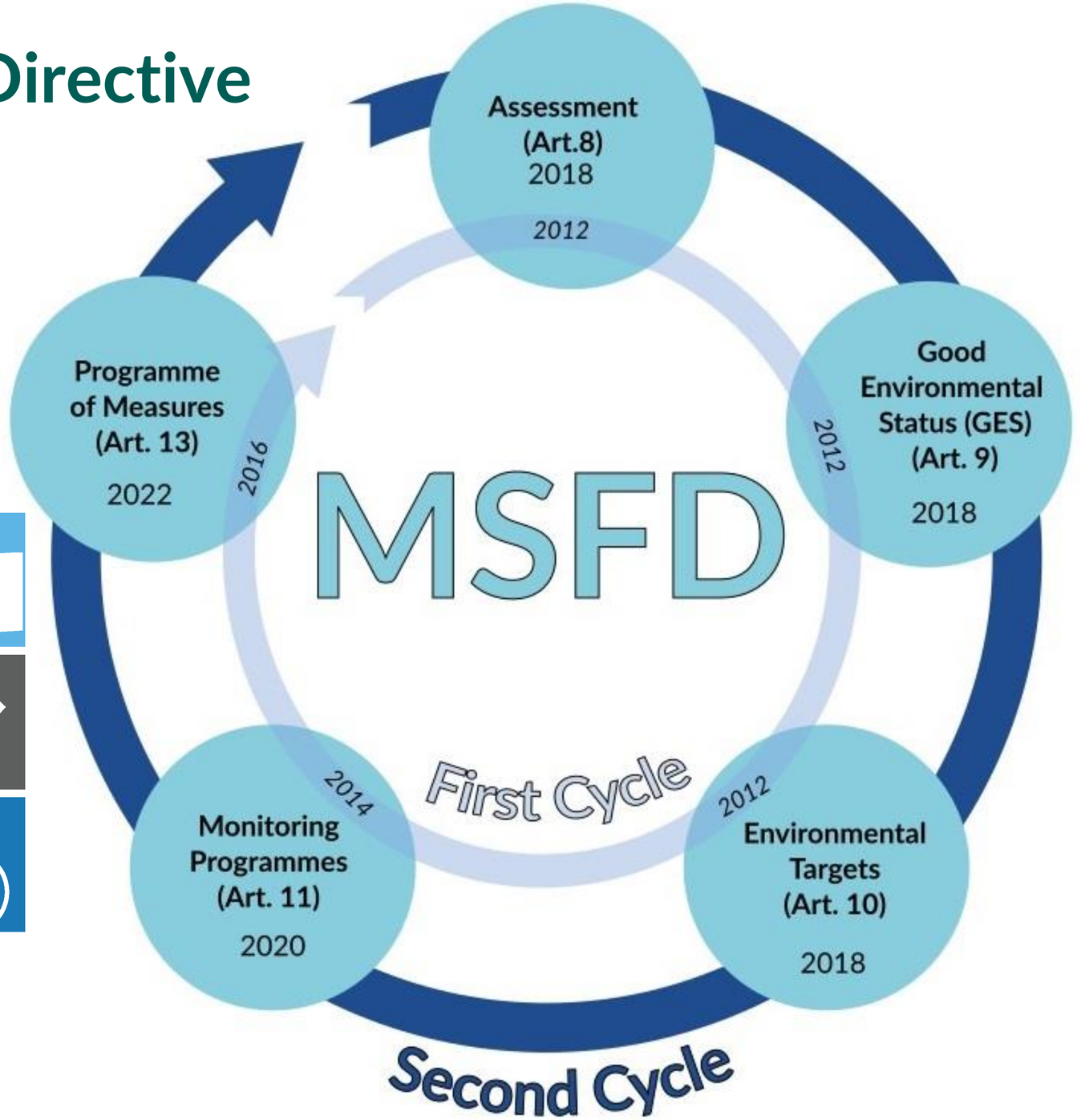
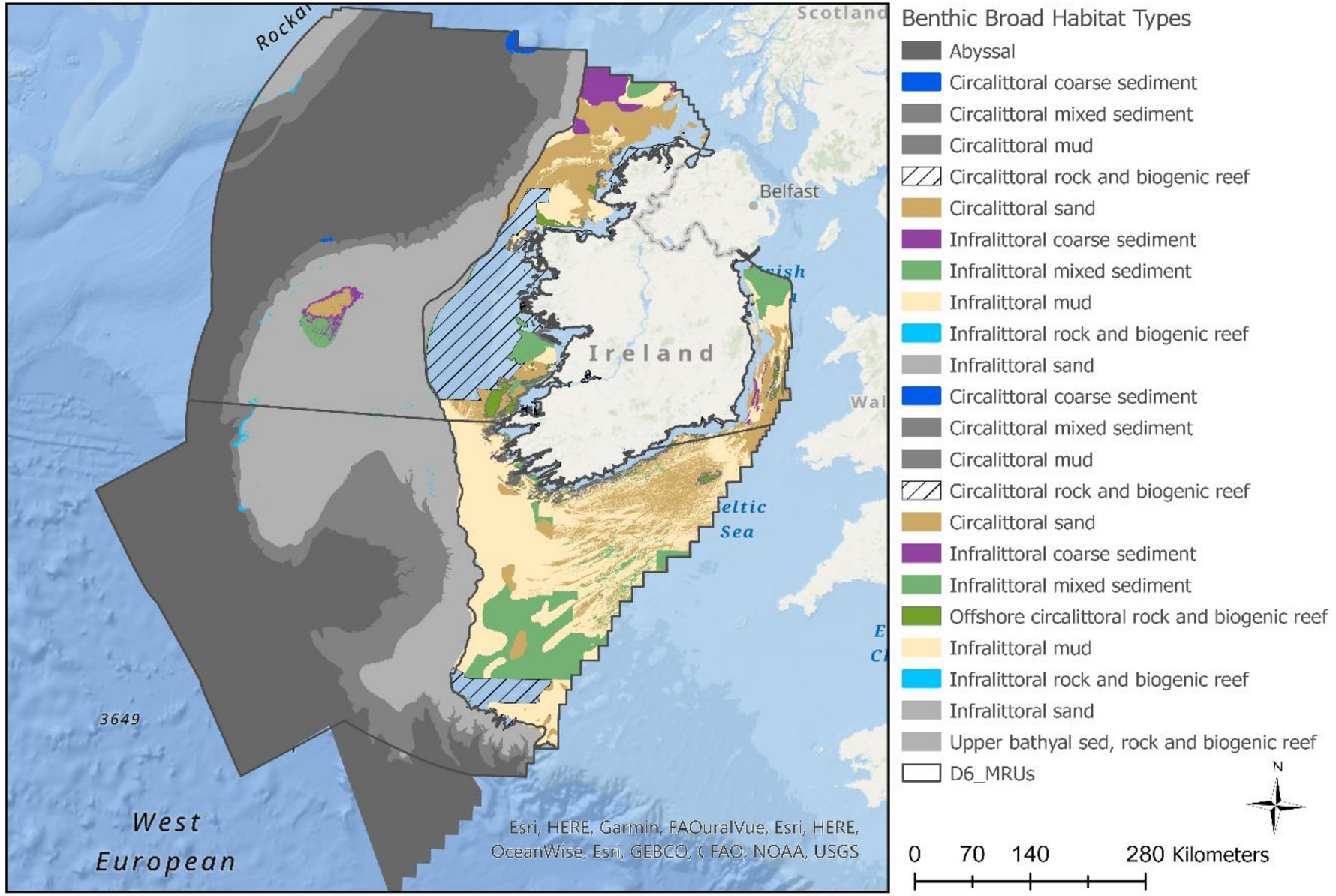
Marine Strategy Framework Directive

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

Good Environmental Status





Distribution of broad habitat types occurring within Ireland's MRU's, based on MSFD habitat classification and current data. (INFOMAR, Marine Institute)

EU Nature Restoration Regulation (EU) 2024/1991

Objectives

- The law aims to restore ecosystems, habitats and species across the EU's land and sea areas in order to
- enable the long-term and sustained recovery of biodiverse and resilient nature
- contribute to achieving the EU's climate mitigation and climate adaptation objectives
- To meet international commitments

17 June 2024 Council adopts Nature Restoration Law

18 August 2024 Nature restoration Law enters into force - National Restoration Plans due in Mid-2026

Article 5 – restoration of marine ecosystems – restoration measures to be in place

2030 – 30%

2040 – 60%

2050 – 90%

Some exemptions exist – force majeure, climate change, IROPI (also Art. 6 on energy from renewable sources), third country

Article 18 Common Fisheries Policy procedure

Ad-hoc technical meetings commenced in late 2023 focusing on reporting formats – no guidance in interpretation.

D6. Seafloor Integrity: Threshold Values

What is Seafloor Integrity ?

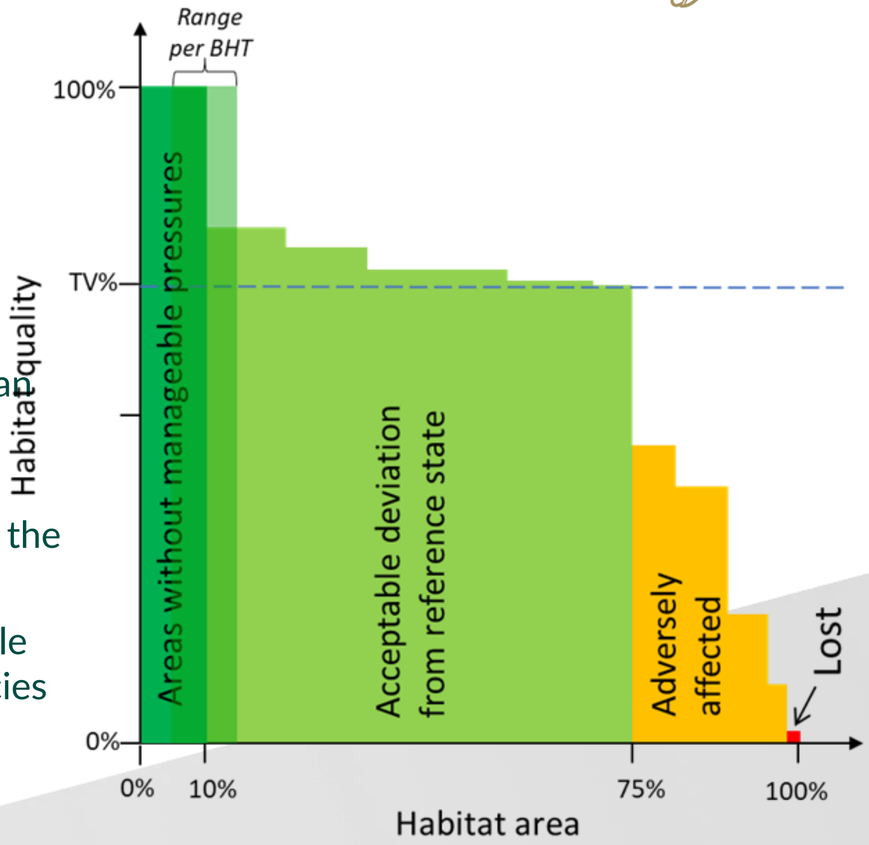
The integrity of the sea-floor reflects the characteristics and condition (physical, chemical and biological) of the sea bottom. These characteristics determine the type of marine ecosystems that exist at certain locations, especially for species and communities living on the sea floor (benthic ecosystems).

Threshold Values are one of the characteristics that determine Good Environmental Status (GES)

D6C4 (loss) The maximum proportion of a benthic broad habitat type in an assessment area that can be lost is 2% of its natural extent (≤ 2%)

D6C5 (adversely affected) 25% The maximum proportion of a benthic broad habitat type in an assessment area that can be adversely affected is 25 % of its natural extent (≤ 25 %). This includes the proportion of the benthic broad habitat type that has been lost (D6C5).

A benthic broad habitat type is adversely affected in an assessment area if it shows an unacceptable deviation from the reference state in its biotic and abiotic structure and functions (e.g. typical species composition, relative abundance and size structure, sensitive species or species providing key functions, recoverability and functioning of habitats and ecosystem processes) (D6C5).



Additional proposed value for D6C5: **(not yet adopted)**

A minimum of 10% of the entire seabed, of which between 5 and 15% of each benthic broad habitat type in an assessment area, should be free from all **manageable** anthropogenic pressures affecting the seabed. Where necessary, restoration can be undertaken in these areas to enable the ecological succession towards recovery.

Issues to consider

- Biodiversity protection and restoration is becoming “real”. It will have an effect on the scope and distribution of human activity including food production methods.
- What will it mean for the seafood sector in terms of ability to adapt?
- How will Member States integrate nature restoration targets into Marine Strategy Framework Directive measures and Natura Priority Action Frameworks?
- Where are the Union guidelines?
- Can “knowledge gaps” be used to forestall actions?
- How will public and stakeholder participation take place with such pressing timelines?
- What role will there be for National MPAs to deliver restoration targets?
- How will the anticipated re-fit of MSFD affect the achievement of GES and marine environment targets?
- Who pays? Public goods and private profit.

Thank you

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