# Showcase of planning sites

Funded by the European Union

UKRI

MarinePlan

AZTI
MEMBER OF BASQUE RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE

# Bay of Biscay PS

Olga Lukyanova, Sarai Pouso, Ibon Galparsoro

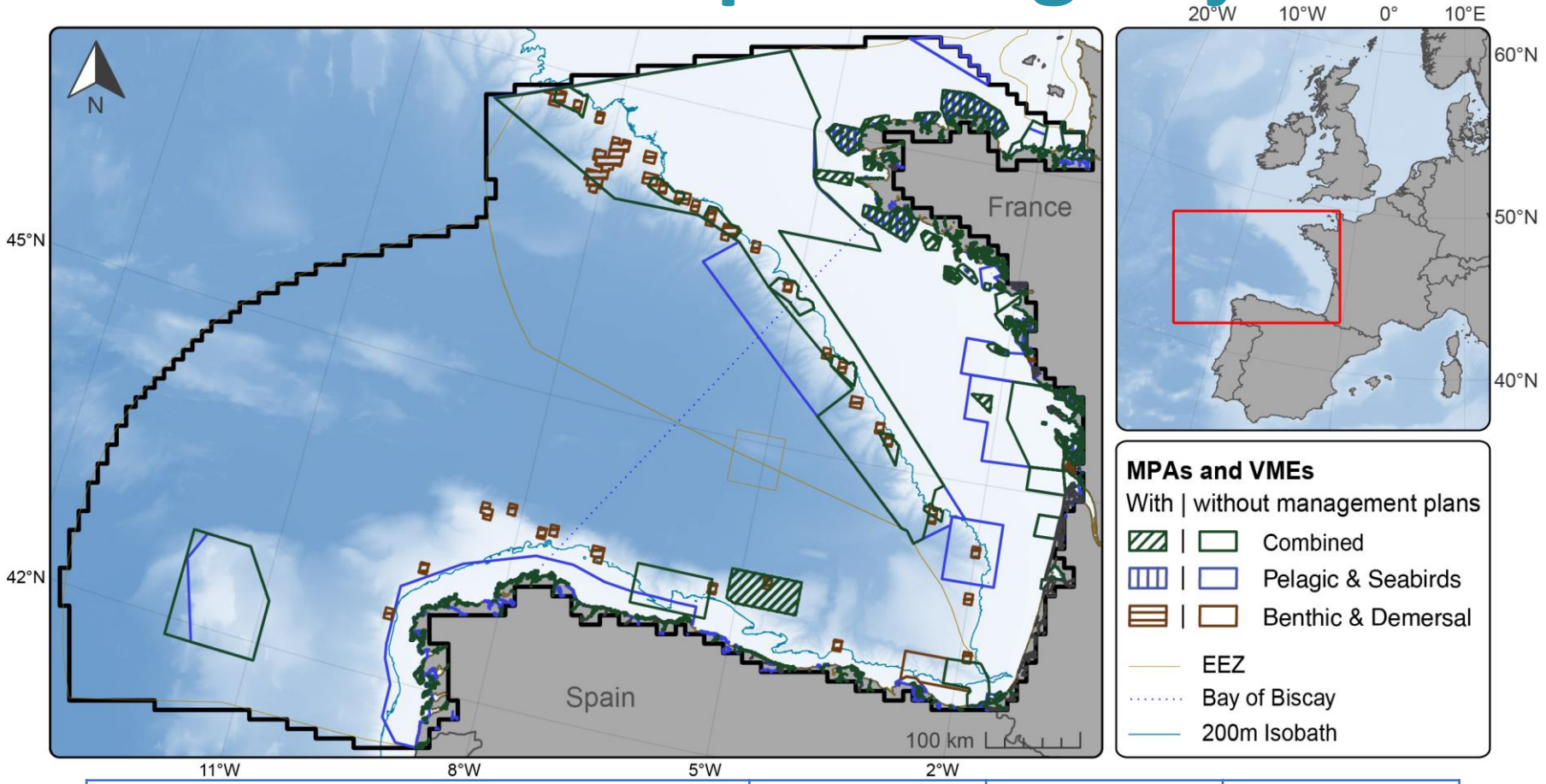
Funded by the European Union

UKRI

MarinePlan

AZTI
MEMBER OF BASQUE RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE

# Key characteristics and planning objectives



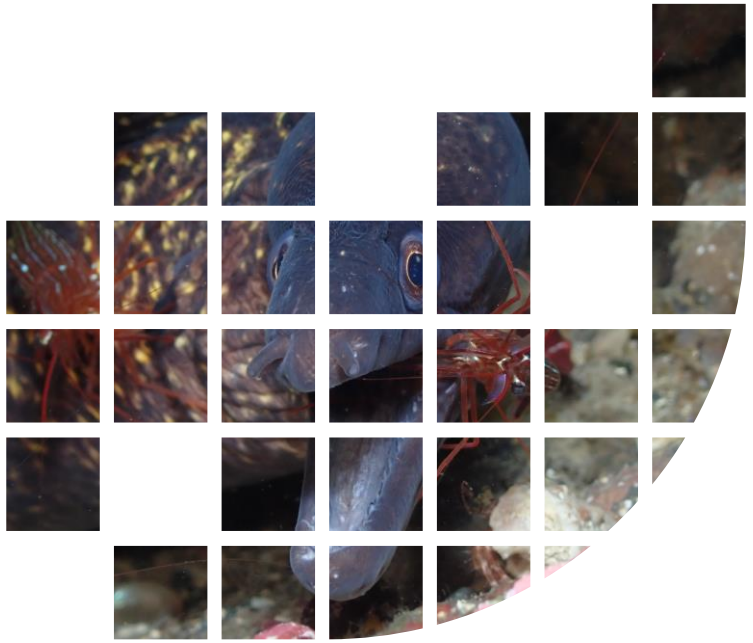

| Designated under | Spain (% of EEZ) | France (% of EEZ) | Overall (% of Study Area) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birds Directive | 5.4% | 41.3% | 20.9% |
| Habitats Directive | 5.9% | 33.6% | 17.8% |
| VME Bottom Gear Closures | 0.4% | 1.5% | 0.9% |
| **Total** | **11.1%** | **41.8%** | **24.0%** |

# Key characteristics and planning objectives

1. Scenarios for achieving **10%** and **30%** spatial protection targets with priority areas that represent not only selected **species** and **habitats**, but also **key ecological processes** crucial for **ecosystem functioning** and **services**

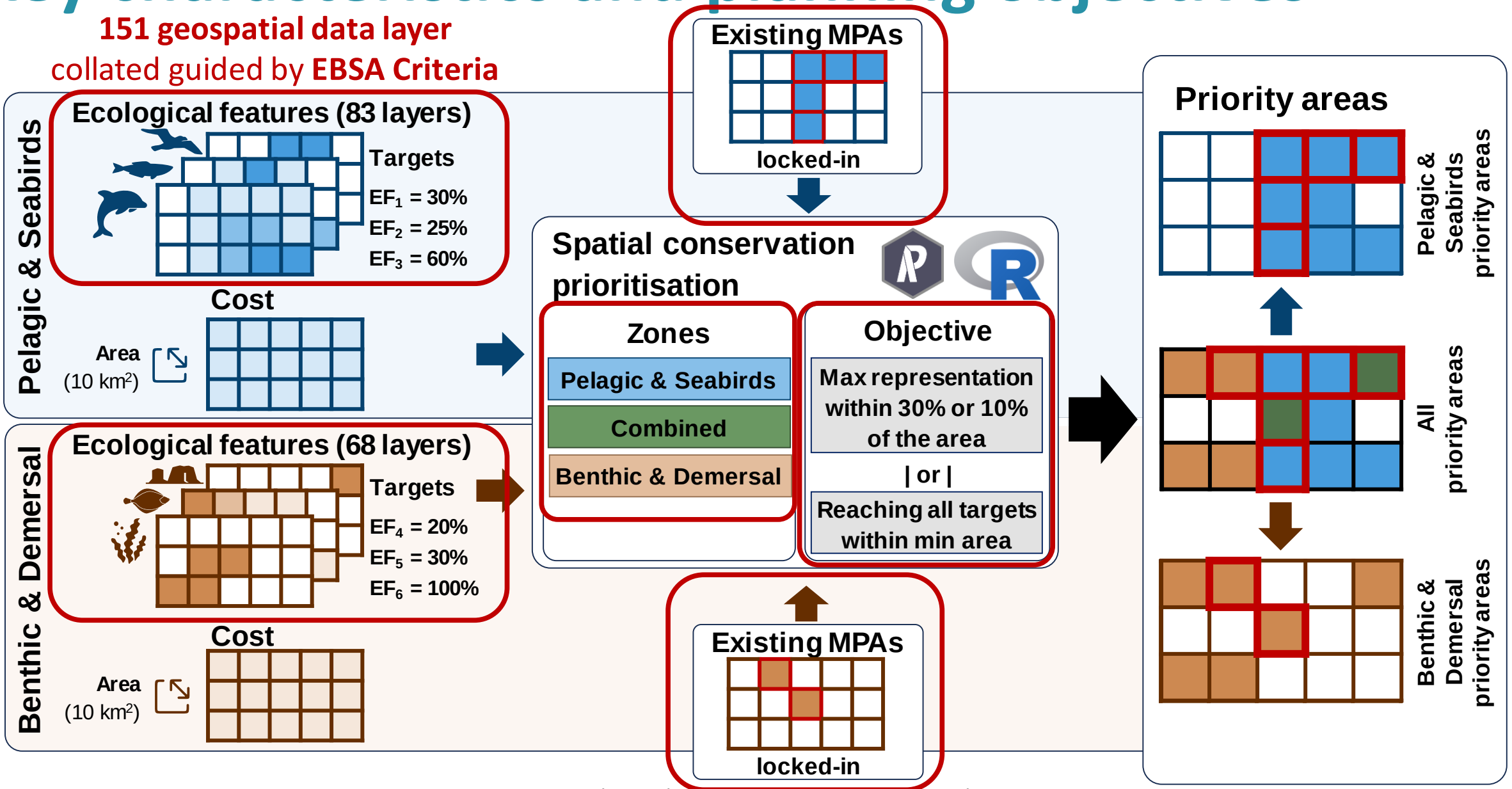
2. Inform **targeted management measures** through evaluating the **significance** of the priority conservation areas for **pelagic** (including **seabirds**) and **benthic-demersal** ecosystems

3. Explore an **alternative scenario** (**"Battles and Breaths"**), where **international conflicts** and **geopolitical turmoil** drive Spain and France to **prioritise energy** and **food security** over conservation

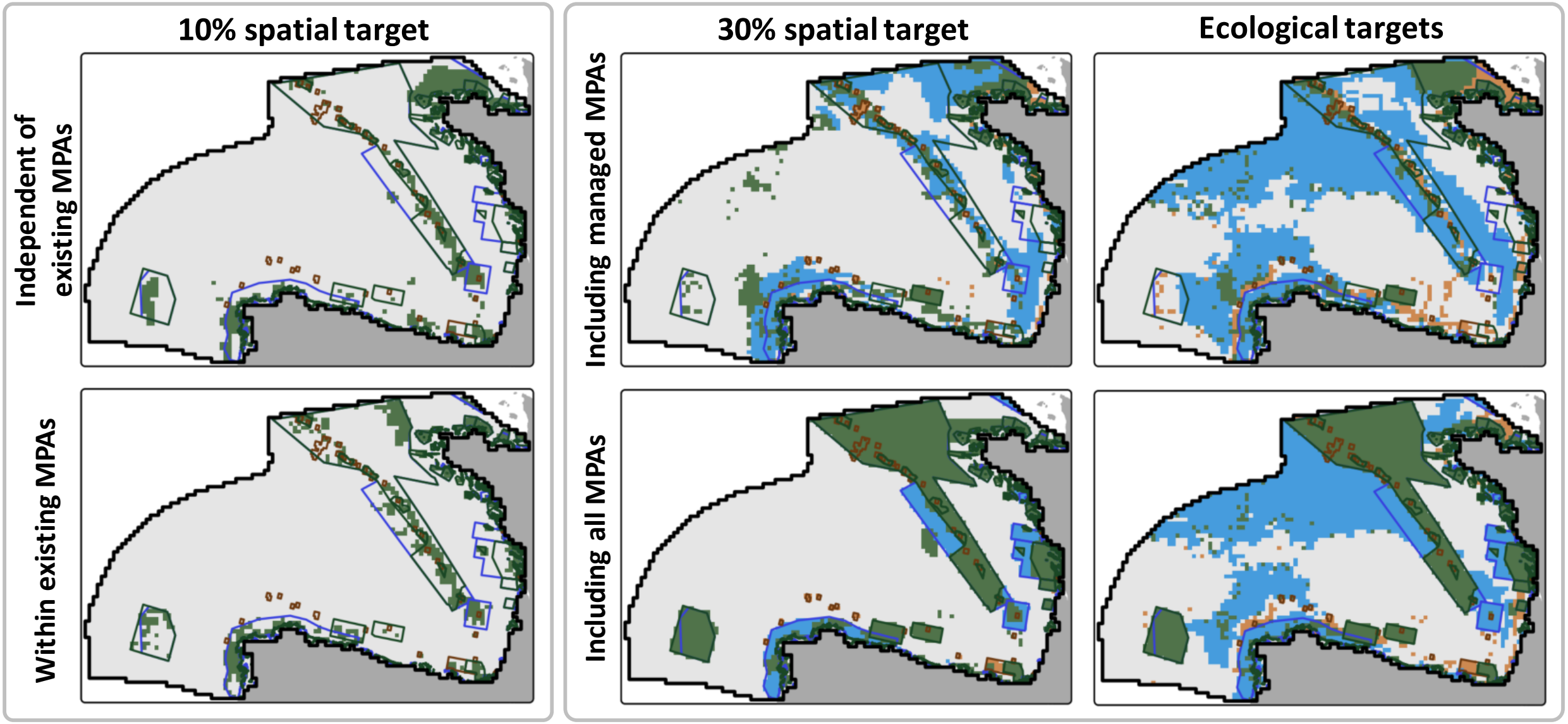


# Key characteristics and planning objectives

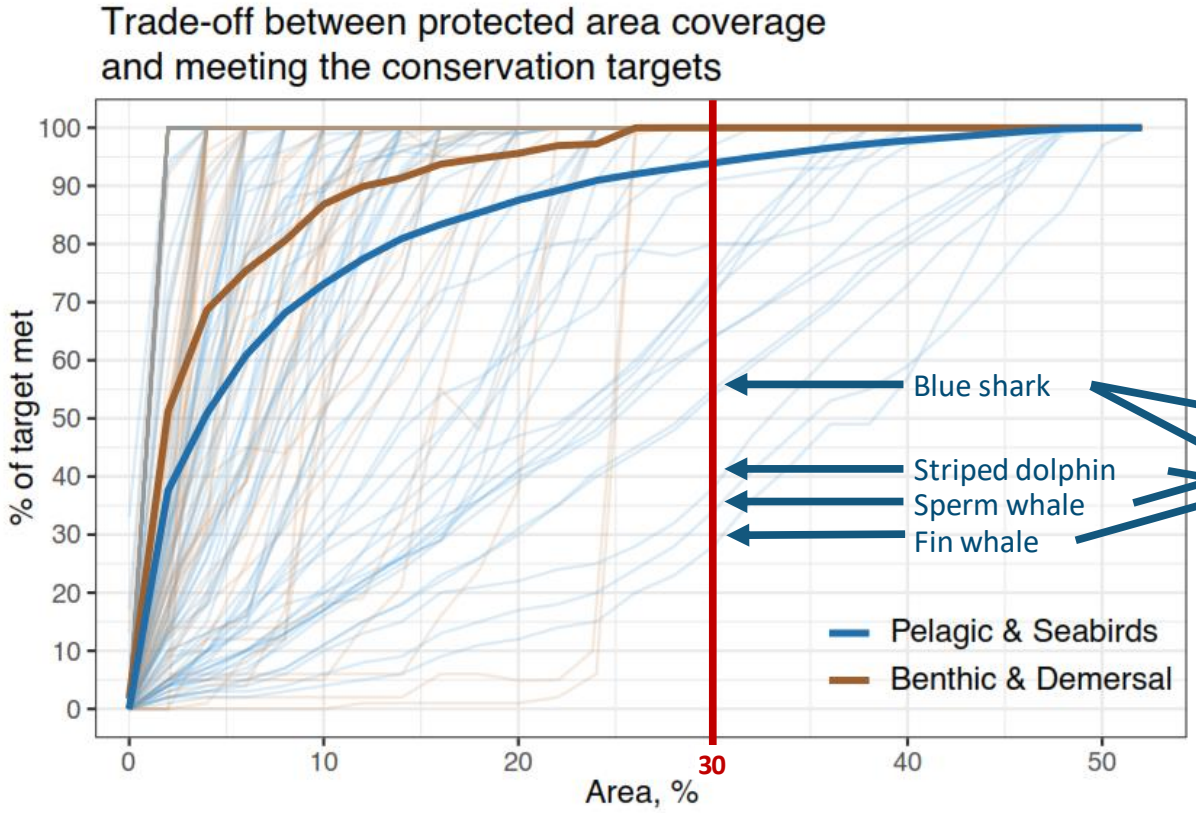
**151 geospatial data layer**
collated guided by **EBSA Criteria**

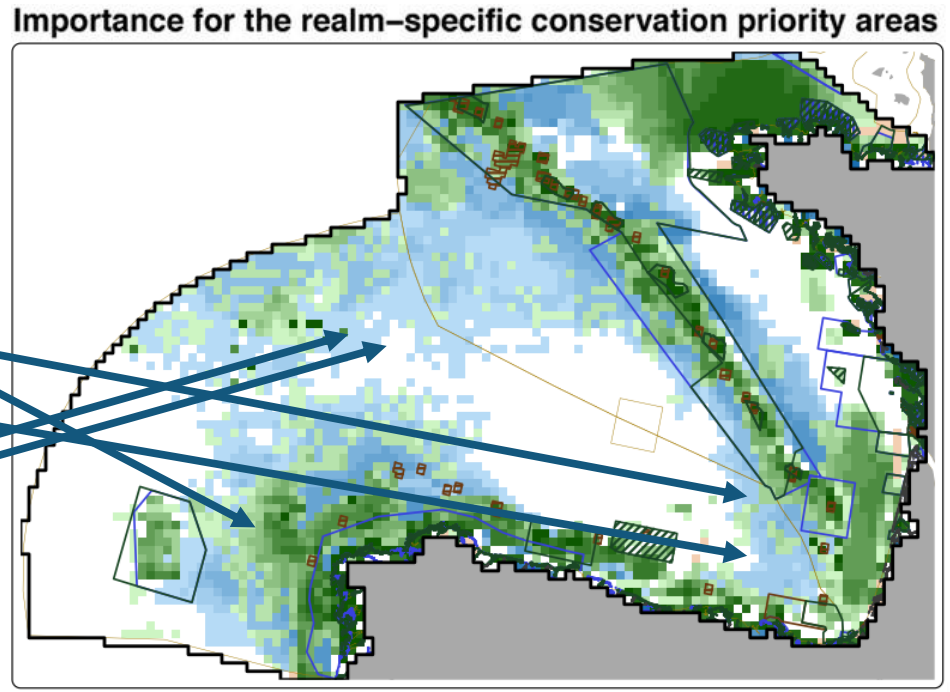


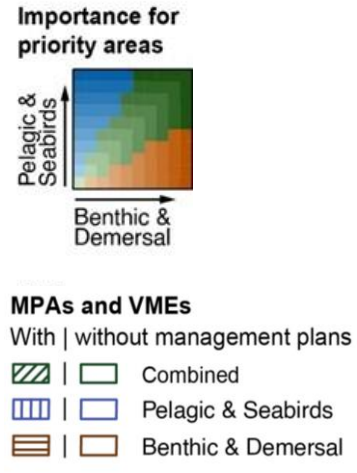
# Key results: 10% & 30% Conservation priority areas



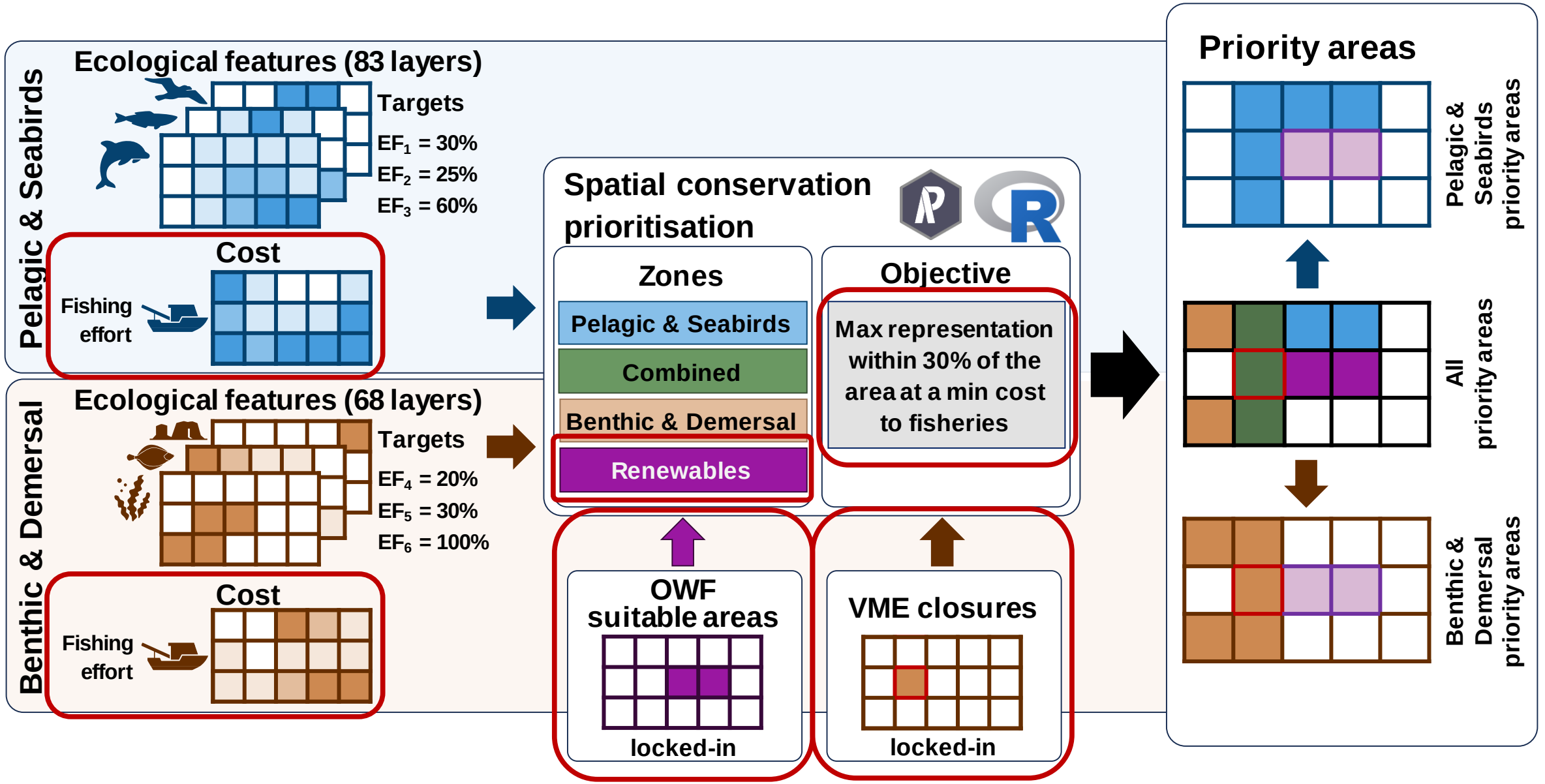
# Key results: Relative area importance



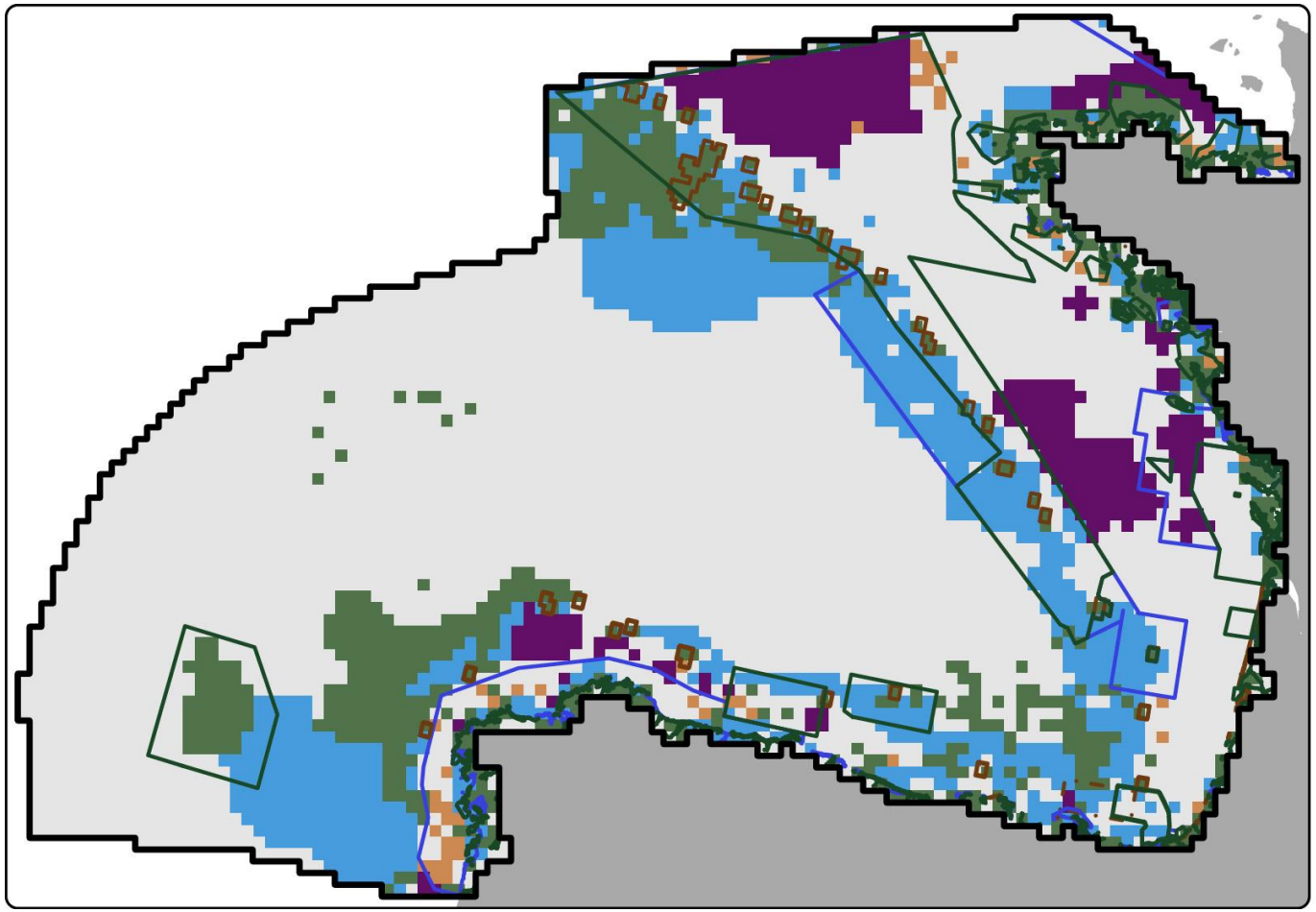



# Key characteristics: Battles and Breaths scenario



# Key results: Battles and Breaths scenario



- Priority protection areas **shift offshore** to the areas **with less human activity**
- **Reduced conservation effectiveness**, with **fewer conservation targets achieved**

**Priority Areas**

- Combined
- Pelagic & Seabirds
- Benthic & Demersal
- Renewables

**MPAs**

- Combined
- Pelagic & Seabirds
- Benthic & Demersal

# Key challenges

**Knowledge gaps:**

- Limited data on **deep-sea species, elasmobranchs,** and **non-commercial fish**
- Limited knowledge of **life-histories of foundation species** (e.g., corals, sponges) hinders **connectivity** assessment
- Poor understanding of **climate change impacts**

**Socio-political barriers**:

- Insufficient **cross-border cooperation** (ES-FR) and **inconsistent management** measures implemented by the two countries
- Lack of collaboration in **offshore energy** development
- **Conflicting stakeholder interests**, especially impaired interaction between the fisheries sector and policymakers

# Scenarios vs MSP/Conservation planning

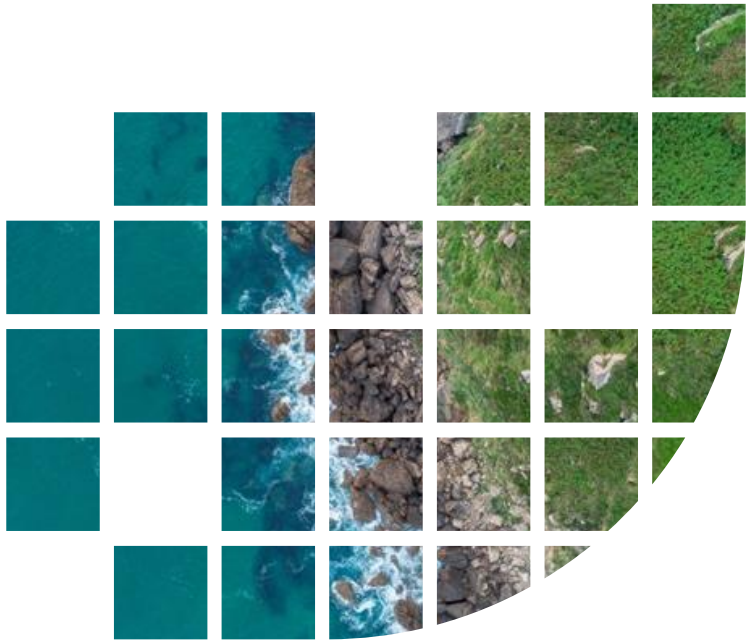
**Incorporating ongoing conservation efforts:**

- Both scenarios are **spatially aligned** with Spanish and French MSPs & they incorporate **existing and recently proposed MPAs** (e.g., Jaizkibel-Capbreton, summer 2025)

**Trade-offs of the 'Battles and Breath' scenario:**

- This scenario integrates planned **Offshore Wind Farm zones for 2030/2050**, linking to ongoing **national energy planning**, and explicitly models the **spatial trade-offs** between **conservation, fisheries,** and **offshore wind energy**

- **Prioritising human activities** displaces priority protection areas further offshore to less-exploited areas, which **reduces their effectiveness,** with **fewer biodiversity targets achieved**



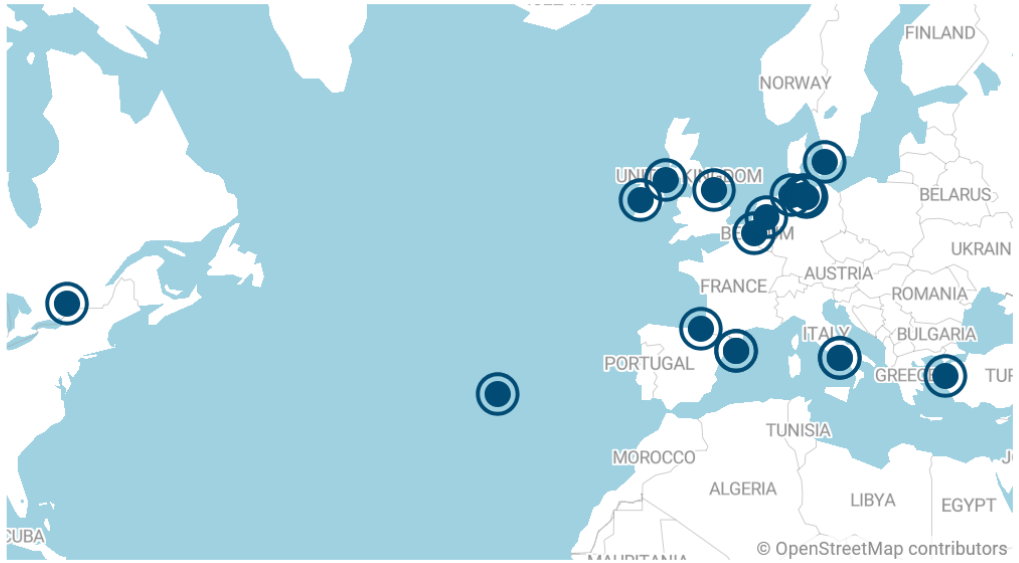
# Lessons learnt and opportunities

- Many priority areas **overlapped** with existing MPAs
- But several **key gaps** were identified (e.g., off Galicia, areas around deep-sea seamounts, off Brittany)

- These results can inform **future MPA designations** (e.g., 10% strict protection) & **development of the management plans** by guiding **targeted conservation measures** for benthic and pelagic ecosystems

- The **30% spatial target** met conservation targets for **benthic & demersal conservation features**, but some **pelagic** ecosystem elements **remained under-protected,** suggesting a need for supplementing MPAs with **non-spatial conservation measures** and/or **dynamic approaches**

# Thank you!




Funded by the European Union

MarinePlan

www.marineplan.eu

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme HORIZON-CL6-2021-BIODIV-01-12 under grant agreement No 101059407 and by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee grant numbers 10038951 & 10050537. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or UK Research and Innovation. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.