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Answer given by Ms Roswall
on behalf of the European Commission
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The EU has not conducted a specific assessment of artificial islands or fixed sea stations for Mediterranean coral protection. However, existing EU legislation, notably the Habitats Directive¹, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive², the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive³ and the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive⁴, provides a framework within which Member States may consider, depending on the specific activities involved, such artificial structures in the marine environment, subject to assessment of their environmental impact before authorisation. Although artificial structures may bring certain ecological benefits, their impact on the marine environment should be carefully assessed.

EU funding programmes such as the EU programme for the environment and climate action (LIFE)⁵, Horizon Europe⁶ and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund⁷ include possibilities for support. Concepts as those described in the question can be covered under climate adaptation, nature-based solutions or ecosystems restoration, without explicitly referring to the specificities of the case. For example, the LIFE NatuReef project⁸, is deploying oyster reefs.

Information about current and past projects, including their results, can be found in the CORDIS database⁹ or in the LIFE project database¹⁰.

It is for Member States to ensure that the authorisation of such infrastructure is done in accordance with applicable EU legislation.

¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, pp. 7–50.

² Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) (Text with EEA relevance). OJ L 164, 25.6.2008, pp. 19–40.

³ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (codification) Text with EEA relevance. OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, pp. 1–21 as amended by 2014/52/EU.

⁴ Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning. OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, pp. 135–145.

⁵ https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en.

⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/horizon-europe_en.

⁷ https://oceans-and-fisheries.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-investment/emfaf_en.

⁸ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/project/%20LIFE22-NAT-IT-LIFE-NatuReef-101113742/nature-based-reef-solution-for-coastal-protection-and-marine-biodiversity-enhancement>.

⁹ <https://cordis.europa.eu/>.

¹⁰ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/search>.