

A network of managers for marine protected areas in the Mediterranean - Mediterranean

1. Policy Objective & Theme

- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment

2. Key Approaches

- Knowledge-based
- Ecosystems based approach
- Socio-economic

3. Experiences that can be exchanged

A network of managers responsible for marine protected areas has been created. It contributes to achieving the specific objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and in particular its protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean. It encourages countries to establish and manage specially protected areas, to implement research programmes and exchange of scientific and technical information, to prepare management plans and design cooperation programmes.

4. Overview of the case

Setting up a network of like-minded individuals and institutions in order to work collectively to share knowledge and reach agreed targets.

5. Context and Objectives

a) Context

The Mediterranean is characterized by a great specific diversity, with a high rate of endemism. Amongst the emblematic species are Posidonia, red coral, brown grouper, bottlenose dolphin, fin whale, loggerhead turtle and monk seal. However, the Mediterranean is ecologically vulnerable. For centuries, it has been subjected to growing human pressure: demography, waste, increased exploitation of resources, tourism and maritime transport which has caused various types of damage to the marine environment and exercised a direct negative impact on species and their habitats.

It is therefore important to protect sites of great natural value, particularly the representative ecosystems of the Mediterranean and the habitats important for threatened or endangered species. The creation of marine protected areas is an effective tool for providing lasting protection, enabling restoration and the careful use of this natural heritage. Marine protected areas should not be considered as "pieces of nature placed under a bell jar" but as tools in the service of the sustainable management of oceans and littoral spaces. If they protect sensitive environments and threatened species, they also contribute to increasing the productivity of fishing areas, to regulating the different uses of the sea, to fostering sustainable tourism and to creating new job-generating activities.

Since 1990, the Mediterranean Protected Areas Network (MedPAN) has sought to bring together the managers of Mediterranean marine protected areas (MPAs) and to support them in their management activities. The MedPAN network today counts over 18 members, mainly managers of marine protected areas from the entire Mediterranean basin, and 6 partners that are keen to contribute to the strengthening of the network. They manage more than 20 marine protected areas and are working towards the creation of several new sites.

b) Objectives

The objective of the network is to improve the effectiveness of marine protected areas management in the Mediterranean. It facilitates the exchange of knowledge in order to improve the efficiency of the management of these areas. Specifically, the network:

- promotes the sharing of experiences and good practices amongst managers;
- suggests solutions to management problems of marine protected areas;
- improves the capacity of managers ;
- makes the role of marine protected areas known and encourage their recognition ;
- disseminates messages common to all marine protected areas.

6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

a) Management

MedPAN is an Association with the following organs: comprised of members and partners that are current with their statutory obligations. It is presided over by the Chairman of the Board of Directors: comprised of 7 to 13 directors elected by the General Assembly for a term of 3 years from among the members and/or partners of the Association: elected by the Board of Directors from amongst its members: of 5 to 15 members and partners appointed for three years: the Scientific Committee of 5 to 15 natural persons elected for a term of 3 years from among suitably qualified persons. It is staffed by a permanent secretariat, established in Hyères, France.

b) ICZM tools

MedPAN works with its members and partners as well as with local, national, regional and international governmental and NGOs to develop its activities. In 2010, MedPAN focussed on:

Analysis of the MPA network:

- Develop and maintain a database of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean
- Draft a report on the state of Mediterranean MPAs in relation to the 2012 CBD objectives

MPA management support:

- Develop multi-disciplinary projects on the management, follow up and evaluation of existing and new MPAs
- Collaborate with members or partners in the field on specific technical studies

Information exchange:

- Follow up on news and activities related to MPAs
- Organize yearly workshops on specific issues to promote best practice sharing

MPA managers training:

- Build capacity of MPA managers around the Mediterranean
- Develop and publish tools to improve MPA management

Regional and International coordination:

- Represent the network in related agencies as well as regional and international conferences

Communication and education:

- Publicize the role of MedPAN and spread awareness to marine protected areas with all audiences involved in or affected by Mediterranean MPAs
- Resource centre for MPAs in the Mediterranean

Governance of the network:

- Coordinates the governing bodies of the organization
- Develop strategic partnerships

7. Cost and resources

Not known.

8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Although the primary mission of most marine protected areas is the preservation and management of biodiversity, management of the marine domain in protected marine areas enables a more harmonious co-existence between users. They also often prove to be an instrument of local development, especially in the areas of fishing and tourism; from an economic point of view, they provide added value for activities taking place within them, thanks to the preservation of the quality of the environment for divers and recreational boaters, and to the conservation of the resources for professional fishermen. Marine protected areas also play an important role in receiving and educating the public. Some protected areas also create quality labels to enhance the value of productions originating from their territory.

There are also gaps in knowledge on the exact status of populations of many (endangered) species. Indeed, compared to other eco-regions, and on a different scale, the Mediterranean has been less well studied by ecologists. If more accurate data exists for the European part of the region, the same cannot be said for North Africa and the eastern side of the basin. In the coastal zone, where most of the present protection is focussed, countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean need to be better represented. The management effectiveness of Mediterranean marine protected areas must be improved. Furthermore, marine protected areas are threatened by substantial external pressures at local, regional and global levels.

9. Success and Fail factors

The 2010 Action Plan will be implemented and since the recruitment of the Executive Secretary and the Communication Officer it is progressing well. However, many Mediterranean marine protected areas do not have the necessary means of providing proper management and ensuring the implementation of real conservation measures. The organization and the regulation of the different uses of the sea, professional or recreational fishing, underwater fishing, diving, mooring, boating, scientific research, swimming are not always optimal. Often they lack qualified staff, financial and material means (boats, buoying, infrastructure) or even a management body.

10. Unforeseen outcomes

The geo-political complexities of the region and its disparate cultures have often delayed the proper execution of agreed commitments and the CBD 2012 objectives are unlikely to be attained..

11. Prepared by

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12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.


13. Sources

- Charter of the MEDPAN Association (2009)
- Status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean Sea: A collaborative study by IUCN, WWF and MedPAN (2008)
A. Abdulla, M. Gomei, E. Maison, and C. Piante, Association MedPAN
- 2010 Action Plan (2009) C. Piante & M. Romani, Association MedPAN



MEDPAN Charter (518.56 KB) 



MEDPAN MPAs in the Med (3.15 MB) 



MEPAN Action Plan 2010 (68.54 KB) 