Joint Cooperative Audit

Are mechanisms in place to ascertain the designation and effective management of MPAs within the Mediterranean Sea?

EUROSAI WGEA
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Main reasons for selecting this topic

- Mediterranean SAIs acknowledged the various problems relating to the sustainability of the marine environment
- Subject of concern for all Mediterranean SAIs
- Importance of the Mediterranean as a habitat for endangered/critically endangered species
- Importance for the recreation of civilians and for the economy as a significant tourism product
- High risks and threats stemming from urbanisation, tourism, shipping traffic, overfishing, pollution, climate change
- Relatively limited scope of the audit, therefore easier to manage
Participating SAIs

SAIs participating in the cooperative audit

Other contributory SAIs
Milestones

• Albania, Cyprus, France, Greece, Malta, Portugal, and Slovenia concluded national audits

Conclusion of National audits by mid 2018

Consolidation of joint report

• National report findings shared between cooperative audit partners

Publication of joint report by July 2019

• Dissemination of joint report in main environmental meetings
Main audit questions

- Are MPAs appropriately safeguarded across Mediterranean countries?
- Were MPAs designated following the carrying out of adequate assessments?
- Were management plans drafted?
- Are national strategies robust?
- Are MPAs being effectively managed?
- Is the legislative framework comprehensive?
- Are responsible entities monitoring MPAs?
Methodology

Audit objectives

- Documentation review
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Observation in national conferences
- Benchmarking
- Site-visits

In many instances the legislative framework appropriately mandates countries to establish and manage MPAs.

The Legislative Framework

Some MPAs were designated through various legislation resulting in multi-protection status.

Limited coordination exists in situations where multiple legislative responsibilities are assigned.
Countries have completed various studies to assess the feasibility of designating MPAs.

Limitations of assessments undertaken:

- Assessments did not extend to cover all waters within jurisdiction.
- Assessments were of limited technical scope as certain types of threats and pressures were not specifically assessed.
Strategies

Most of the participating SAIs noted that their respective countries have a national strategy.

However, the following issues were noted:

- In one case, the national strategy covers biodiversity but is not MPA specific.
- Some SAIs reported that national strategies are fragmented.
- National strategies lack specificity, time frames and measurable targets.
- In cases, resources have not been allocated to enable the full and timely implementation of strategies.
The management of MPAs is mainly dependant on Programme of Measures and Management Plans.

MPAs are still not supported by Management Plans.

In cases, there was an absence of:
- Measurable targets
- Identified responsibilities
- Plan reviews and updating

The appropriate level of resources has not been allocated to enable the implementation of management plans.

The implementation of management plans is subject to coordination limitations.
Monitoring

- Monitoring of MPAs by national authorities is generally incidental and reactive
  - There is no established programme based on risk assessments to monitor MPAs
  - Coordination between the stakeholders involved in the monitoring of MPAs is weak
Conclusion

- **Comprehensive legal framework but some minor inconsistencies prevail**
- **Strategic framework not supported by appropriate resources and, in cases, action plans**
- **Assessments follow generally accepted practices but limitations in scope prevail**
- **Monitoring and enforcement remains incidental and reactive as well as based on existing legislation rather than site specific management plans**
- **Prolonging of management plans raises the risk of marine environment degradation and possibly missing EU obligatory targets**
- **The better safeguarding of MPA is dependant on countries addressing these critical areas of concern**
- **Strategic framework not supported by appropriate resources and, in cases, action plans**
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Lessons learned (1 of 2)

- Understanding the complexities of competing interests
  - Diverse national priorities
  - Immediate economic interests vs sustainable blue growth

- Managing the fragmentation of responsibilities
  - Problems of coordination
  - Rationalisation of different organisational goals

- Not always a question of one size fits all
  - Different circumstances prevail for specific MPAs
  - Need to develop site specific audit criteria
Lessons learned (2 of 2)

• Managing expert advice
  ▪ We needed to broaden our knowledge on MPAs
  ▪ We needed to prioritise areas where we sought expert advice
  ▪ Attending conferences and seminars organised by stakeholders
  ▪ Exploiting knowledge sharing opportunities with other SAIs participating in the cooperative audit

• Understanding the tensions brought about by the international political scene
  ▪ Conflicts within the Mediterranean
  ▪ Priorities shift from environmental sustainability
  ▪ Understanding the political sensitivities concerning jurisdiction
Thank you