



Seminar report

Marine introductory seminar for the pledge and review process in the context of commitments under the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

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Online

Consortium Information:

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Information about the event:

[More information on the Natura 2000 Biogeographic process](#)

[Link to the site](#)

[Other relevant documents](#)

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Cover photo: Aphrodite's birthplace, Cyprus – Paul Goriup, NatureBureau

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1. Introduction

In 2012, the European Commission re-launched the Natura 2000 biogeographical process to help implement the Natura 2000 network to its full potential both on land and at sea and thus to contribute significantly to achieving the objectives of the Nature Directives (Birds and Habitats Directives). Today, the Natura 2000 biogeographical process organises and triggers cooperation between authorities, experts and stakeholders at the scale of the 9 terrestrial biogeographical regions and the 5 marine biogeographical regions. It involves seminars, workshops and cooperation activities to enhance effective implementation, management, monitoring, financing and reporting of the Natura 2000 network.

In 2020, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives set targets for protected and strictly protected areas coverage, as well as for improvement of the conservation status of species and habitats protected under the Nature Directives. The Natura 2000 biogeographical process was therefore expanded to support discussions between EU Member States, stakeholders and experts on the steps to take to meet these new targets.

After the launch of the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, online introductory seminars were organised for the marine and terrestrial biogeographical regions. The online marine seminar took place on the 9th and 10th of December 2021. The seminar focussed on non-deterioration, alongside the 30% conservation status improvement target and 30% protected areas target - launching discussions on the implementation of the guidance on the targets under the pledge and review process for all biogeographical regions.

Some 106 registered participants from 21 countries attended the online marine seminar, in addition to the 11 people from the supporting team. The aims for the introductory seminar were:

- To inform about the intended process for the pledge and review process for the targets on protected areas and for the status improvement target for species and habitats;
- To inform about the baseline and distance to target at biogeographical level for both targets;
- To share experiences on promising approaches, processes or strategies undertaken by Member States to achieve the targets;
- To stimulate joint work on cross-border issues, e.g. on transboundary populations or connectivity.

The seminar focused on knowledge sharing, with many high-quality presentations. Besides larger plenary sessions and presentations, it included facilitated sub-group meetings.

The two-day seminar was organised around three groups of marine biogeographic regions: the Atlantic and Macaronesian, the Baltic, and the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Discussions were held in parallel sessions with all participants discussing the same topics (see Annex 1). Highlights on the outcomes of the group sessions were presented in the final plenary session on the second day.

2. Opening and plenary sessions

2.1. Day 1, Targets on protected areas

The seminar was introduced by Nicola Notaro, Head of the Nature Conservation Unit of the Directorate General for the Environment (DG ENV) of the European Commission, who highlighted the importance of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and that this seminar will instigate a discussion on aims and targets for years to come and provide opportunities for joint action and cooperation by Member States.

After the opening, Joaquim Capitão, DG ENV of the European Commission, introduced the new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 “Bringing nature back into our lives”. The Strategy entails the development and strengthening of a coherent network of protected areas within the EU, which includes legal protection of a minimum of 30% of its marine area, to form a Trans-European Nature network. This includes strict protection of at least 10% of the sea area, including carbon-rich ecosystems (e.g. sea grass meadows) and other ecosystems of value such as fish spawning and nursery areas. The Commission, working with the EEA, Member States and stakeholders, produced criteria and guidance for identifying and designating additional areas, including a definition of strict protection, as well as for appropriate management planning. This would be published at the beginning of 2022 as a Commission Staff Working Document.

Ellen Kenchington, chair of ICES/IUCN-CEM FEG Workshop on Testing OECM Practices and Strategies (WKTOPS), introduced several case studies on Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the marine environment, to illustrate the range of additional management measures which, if they meet relevant criteria, might be able to contribute to the marine protected area targets. Examples included the North-western North Sea sandeel fishery closure, NAFO seamount closure in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the Atlantic and the *Lophelia* coral conservation area in Canadian waters. Signposts to several relevant guidance documents were also provided.

Johnny Reker of the Biodiversity Ecosystems Assessments group of the European Environment Agency (EEA) provided an overview of the current context for the marine protected area targets, setting out the baseline from which progress is to be assessed. In 2019, the marine protected area network covered 12% of EU waters though there are large differences between marine regions and sub-regions, and between coastal and offshore waters. The EEA hosts the Natura 2000 database, including the Natura 2000 barometer, and the Common Database on Protected Areas (CDDA).

Finally, participants from Finland, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain gave examples of the work carried out to support the marine protected area targets as well as raising some key questions for discussion.

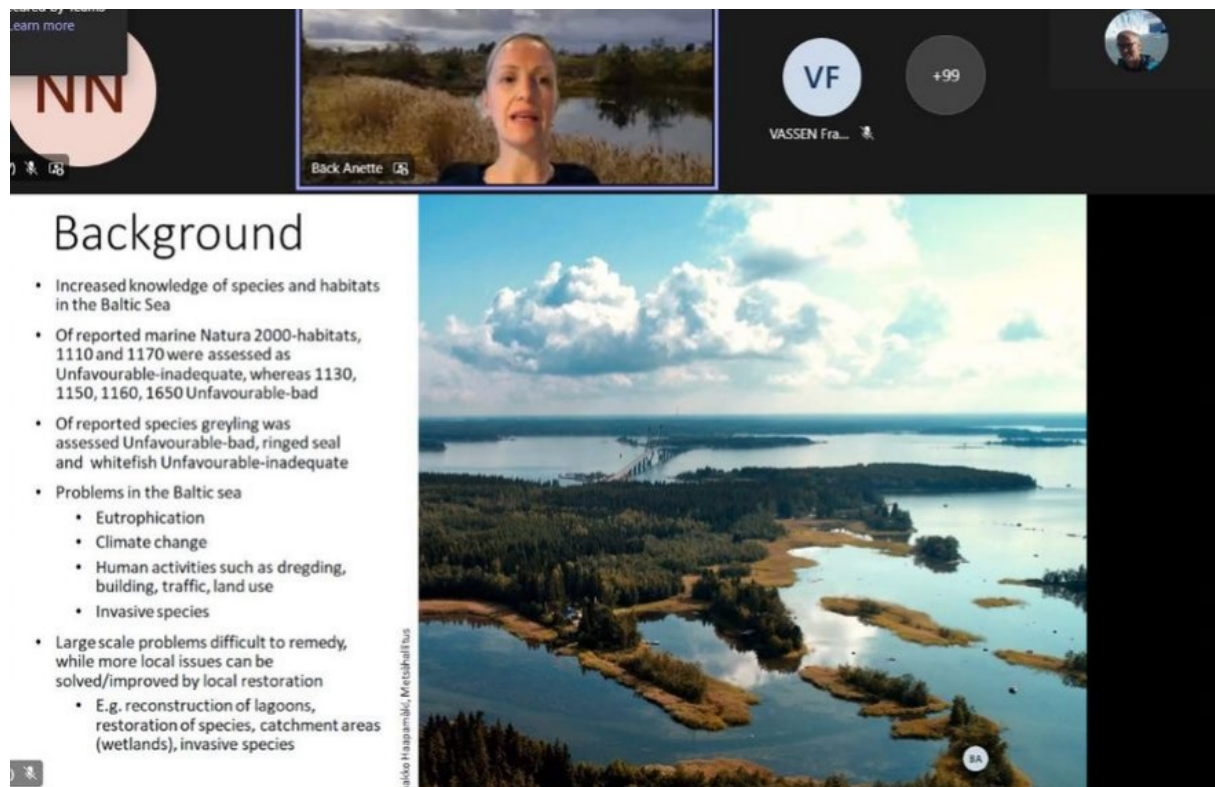


Figure 1: screenshot from presentation by Anette Bäck, from Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife on the Baltic Sea.

2.2. Day 2, Conservation status improvement targets

After a welcome and introduction to the second day from Nicola Notaro, Head of the Nature Conservation Unit of the Directorate General for the Environment (DG ENV) of the European Commission, Frank Vassen from the Nature Conservation Unit of DG-ENV introduced the '30% improvement target' under the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. This requests Member States to '...ensure no deterioration in conservation trends and status of all protected habitats and species by 2030.' and that '... at least 30% of species and habitats not currently in favourable status are in that category or show a strong positive trend.' Following the finalisation of formats and guidance, national authorities are asked to develop pledges for action by the end of 2022. Support for this will be provided by the EU Commission through, amongst other things, the Biogeographical Process.

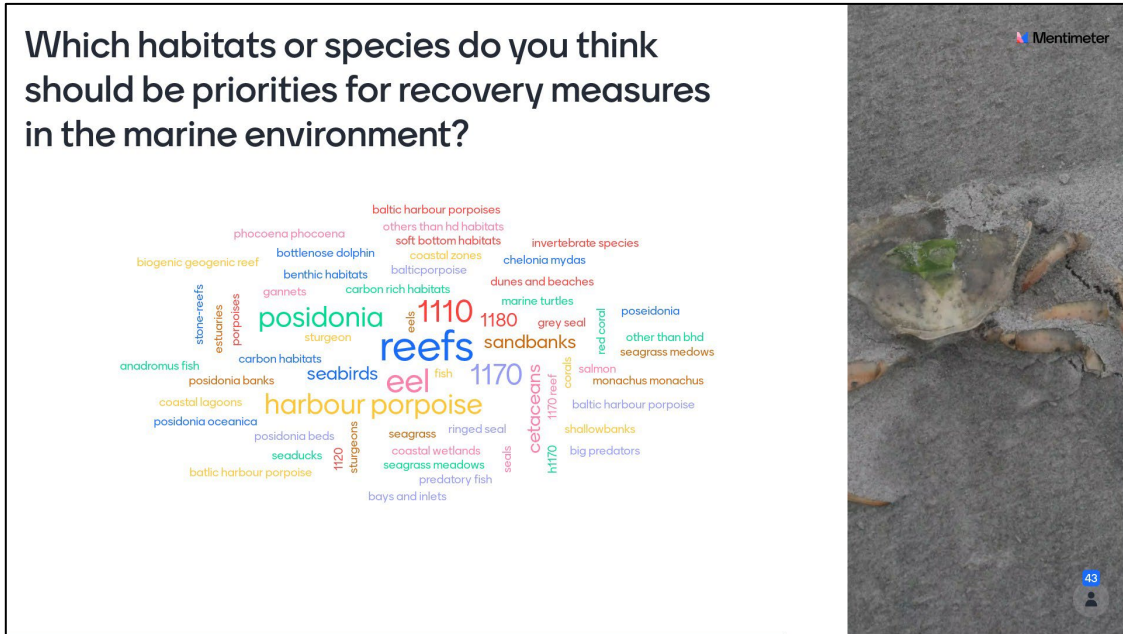


Figure 2: Outcome of a mentimeter poll, based on 43 responses

Carlos Romao of the European Environment Agency then presented the results of the latest assessment of the condition of key habitats and species, focussing on both status and trends, across all EU waters and across the Atlantic and Macaronesian, Baltic, and Mediterranean and Black Sea marine regions. These results highlight the need for action to improve the conservation of both habitats and species.

Finally, participants from Finland and representing Birdlife provided examples of the work carried out to assess priorities for action to improve conservation status as well as raising some key questions for discussion.

3. Discussion group sessions

Participants were divided into discussion groups based on marine biogeographical regions:

- Atlantic and Macaronesian
- Baltic
- Mediterranean and Black Sea

The same questions and issues were proposed to all groups, who discussed all or part of them in the context of their regional marine areas. If any group was deemed too large for effective discussion, it was further divided into two, with separate facilitators and rapporteurs.

Below follows a summary of the main points raised by participants during the sessions. The ideas presented and reported were not all endorsed by all participants not do they all reflect the point of view of the European Commission.

3.1. Day 1, Targets on protected areas

3.1.1. Topics and questions

Topic – Complete the existing MPA network

- What existing information or methods, especially scientific, can be used to define new areas for designation?
- What other information relating to designation of additional areas have you found useful?

Topic – Improve coherence of the network

- How are you assessing coherence in your MPA network?
- What needs or opportunities are there for co-operation about assessment of MPA networks across national boundaries?

Topic – Identify and develop strictly protected areas

- Which species or habitats are likely to benefit most from strict protection?
- What are the main benefits of strictly protected areas for different stakeholders ('win-win' opportunities)?

Topic – Ensure adequate management of protected areas

- How are you going to monitor and ensure effective management of MPAs in your network?
- What opportunities exist for co-operation in addressing management challenges, especially for wide-ranging species or where pressures are transboundary

3.1.2. Atlantic and Macaronesian

Group A Chair: Richard White; Rapporteur: Kristina Wood

Group B Chair: Irene Bouwma; Rapporteur: Rene Henkens

Complete the existing MPA network

Experience of identifying and designating areas under various regional approaches and protection frameworks (e.g. regional sea conventions, UN processes, regional fisheries management organisations) could be valuable. Selection criteria have undergone rigorous scientific scrutiny and so are a good starting point for what needs to be considered. For example IBA criteria for identifying sites are quite similar to those for SPAs¹. Germany already has some 30% of its seas declared as MPAs,

¹ <https://www.birdlife.org/news/2021/12/08/protect-restore-eu-seas-mpa-biodiversity-strategy/> and <https://www.havochvatten.se/en/our-organization/publications/swam-publications/2021-10-06-the-swedish-approach-to-mpa-network-design--management.html>

however their effective management is challenging. The main problem is achieving the 10% target of strictly protected areas, because of the economic values and space needed for fisheries, wind energy and other uses. Belgium is in a similar situation and these problems are also recognised by others like Denmark and the Netherlands.

There are new scientific questions to consider, such as how to protect species affected by climate change and habitats loss, and natural carbon sequestration processes. When we look at MPAs as an environmental management tool, they have many functions: we focus on conservation and restoration but climate action plans can now include MPAs and there is also a convergence between climate action, biodiversity action and action against pollution.

For some topics, such as marine mammals, lack of information is a problem. We focus on species we know best and overlook those we do not understand as well. If we address biodiversity, we must pay attention to those we know less about. We can do this with wide-scale surveys and modelling to identify the more important areas on a large scale, recognising that this may not work for all taxa.

However, we cannot continue to collect information and do nothing. Information is still missing and we need to therefore work on both in parallel. To designate MPAs we need the data, but yes, we must start applying this data to management starting now and not postpone until we have all the details. There is a difference between postponing and creating a baseline. Focus on action is needed now.

Improve coherence of the network – At what scale are we talking? Coherence must be assessed at a relevant, often transboundary, scale. In the framework of regional processes, criteria have already been agreed for assessing coherence of networks and there are periodic, peer reviewed, reports: there are thus already systems in place for assessing transboundary coherence.

At least for the better-known species, we need to look at population structures and connectivity between populations. For example, we know there are two population types of porpoises (genetically separated) that inhabit different areas. But for some species we don't know population structures.

Much depends on Member State policies for establishing MPAs, especially since they should often cross administrative and national boundaries: if it is difficult if one part of an important area is protected and another is not. Ways of fostering transboundary cooperation are needed, and some Member States are working on this issue.

Targets in the biodiversity strategy are not legal targets but are endorsed by governments and we expect them to implement what their leaders supported. The Natura 2000 network has a legal framework – we know there are insufficiencies and we must work to make sure they are addressed.

New partnerships are needed for good management, while not overlooking existing partnerships or regional bodies for example. There is an opportunity for a LIFE project on management across national (or federal) boundaries.

Identify and develop strictly protected areas – The benefit of strictly protected areas is not clear. Currently there are few examples within the EU, especially because of the extensive footprint and impact of fisheries. It is known that strictly protected areas will provide benefits, both for other species and fisheries, but to what extent is not clear. One of the most important tasks is to both clarify the potential benefits of strictly protected areas, but equally to assess their impact on user groups. Overall, the group expected that the 10% target would not be achieved in the foreseeable future, given the issues on restricting activities, but having this ambition is important to move things along.

Ensure adequate management of protected areas – Fisheries practices and an excess of nutrients (from land-based sources) may be considered the key management issues for MPAs, though both are difficult to manage; especially because there is no consensus among stakeholders on the impacts of certain activities. Monitoring is necessary and it is important to make use of existing examples of best practice and existing structures (e.g. OSPAR) in order not to spend time and resources reinventing the wheel.

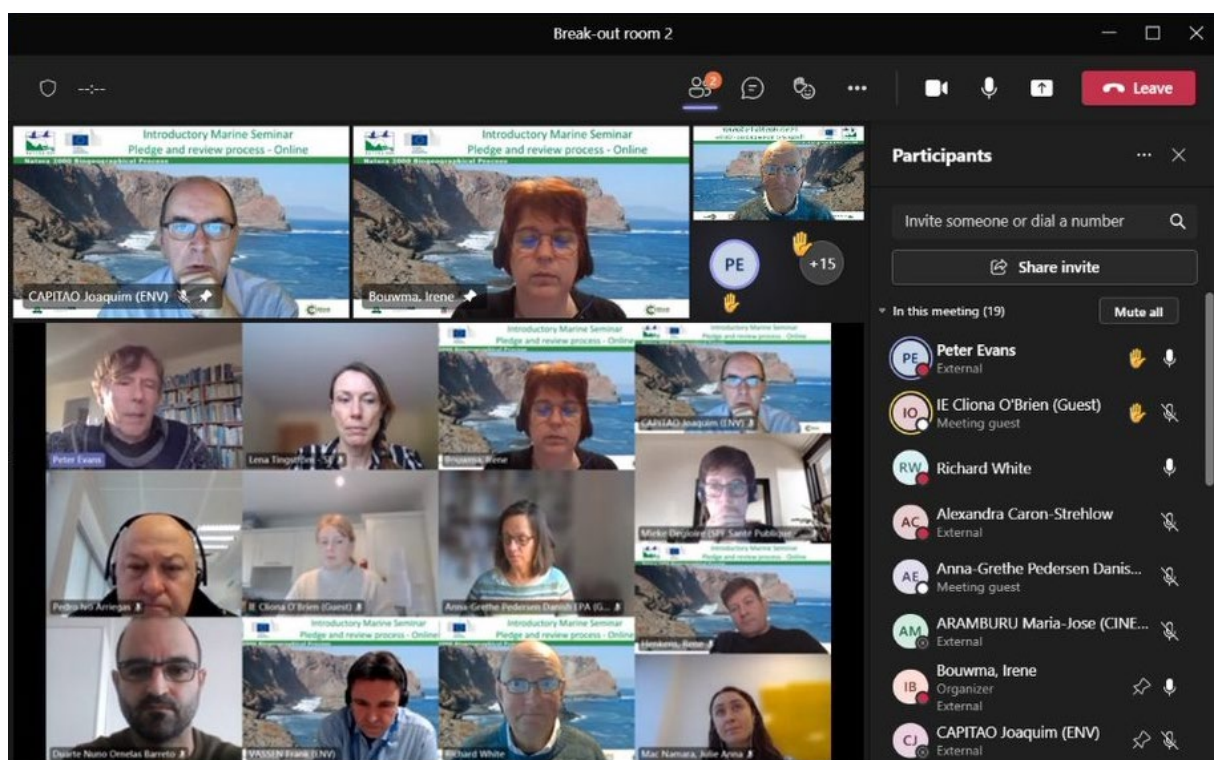


Figure 3: Screenshot from the discussion in the break out group on the Atlantic and Macaronesian sea.

3.1.3. Baltic Sea

Chair: Theo van der Sluis; Rapporteur: Diana Pungar

Complete the existing MPA network – Prioritization methods and tools (e.g. Maxent) and datasets for modelling are available, as well as existing sources of information for new MPAs: (e.g. <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/00564ca7-9d16-4b81-bac5-b35fcb84aa33/library/1c4a66a0-ff79-40ad-9570-3c0d716406a2/details>). The Baltic is mostly shared by EU countries: as a result,

protection should be thought through at wider scale than the national level. A bigger picture of protected habitats and species is needed. A good example is the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (30% and 10% protected areas). LIFE projects (mapping habitats, territories, collect data, etc.) provide valuable resources, for example, the LIFE project in Finland looking at MPA conservation targets.

The bottleneck is availability of data on species and habitats necessary to produce species distribution models. Discussion was held on which Baltic countries have already national processes and national working groups in place which explicitly are working on a strategy to achieve 30% MPAs network. A paper on how the *Fucus* (bladderwrack) habitat was assessed was highlighted: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S027277142030754X>.

Improve coherence of the network – It was agreed that further discussion on the components of coherence would be useful and that there is a great need for co-ordination of effort. Cross border co-operation, with support from the Commission, is needed though it also needs to be recognised that there is a lack of both time and funding. There is already good co-operation between Sweden and Finland (see <https://www.seacomb.com/>). Connectivity analysis is important, but this is tricky, as organisms are transported by ocean currents. There is an up-coming webinar on this topic: Marine Connectivity Conservation “Rules of Thumb” for MPA and MPA Network Design <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8577761218815699212> Stakeholder involvement is seen as crucial for success. The Commission commented that according to the Biodiversity Strategy, it will have to assess, by 2024, whether we are on the right track to achieve 2030 targets, to frame future actions.

Identify and develop strictly protected areas – There was discussion on definitions of MPAs that are used in different Member States, concluding that the guidance note is useful to ensure common understanding and approaches. It was felt that, when looking at strict protection, it is important to look beyond the Habitats Directive and beyond rare species in order to cover important components of biodiversity and it is important as well to take functionally important species, nutrient cycles and area-based measures into consideration. Improvement of coastal habitats and the consideration of nutrient flow from rivers is also essential. It was agreed that ‘win-win’ is hard to achieve and that it is hard to convince stakeholders especially commercial fishers. Surveillance of fisheries is important and the issue of establishing fishery no take zones within large wind parks was raised, though this needs research.

Ensure adequate management of protected areas – Achievement of management targets and the management of areas that were already designated is seen as an issue. It was commented that conservation value needs to be considered in management planning, along with the setting of relevant restrictions. Monitoring is an important component of management. Habitats outside HELCOM designations need legal instruments for protection. LIFE projects can provide examples of good practice (e.g. <https://www.eu-platform-meeting2022.fr/>). Underwater noise is an area for further research, as is the possible use of wind farms as no-take zones.

3.1.4. Mediterranean and Black Sea

Chairs: Paul Goriup and Carlos Sunyer; Rapporteurs: Rui Rufino and Orsolya Nyárai

Discussion were held in two groups and reports from both have been combined. All topics were discussed.

Complete the existing MPA network - At present, 90% of the Mediterranean MPAs are in EU waters, especially in the western part. The main gap in both seas is with offshore MPAs. It is costly to research, identify, map, and manage new offshore areas so it is important to identify and secure the needed resources at the outset.

- Cyprus is in the process of finalising the identification of MPAs
- Romania and Bulgaria held a successful Natura 2000 Biogeographical process event focusing on the Black Sea last year and there is ongoing cooperation and several common projects in hand, e.g. on tasks from the Marine Framework Directive
- Under the RAMOGE Agreement, Italy, France and Monaco work together to study the seafloor and marine biodiversity, and seamounts and canyons.

Science should come first but public consultation is crucial, especially with the fishing, mineral and tourism sectors, to promote acceptance of MPA designation. Different stakeholder groups are involved from the inshore to offshore zones. Easier to work with those inshore as they are closer to the problems because they live by the coast. Local stakeholders can also provide useful information concerning socio-economic issues, including defining usage rights. Good examples in this respect are the LIFE INTEMARES project in Spain.

Improve coherence of the network – A difficult process, as it involves many factors concerning habitats and species, dispersion models, nurseries and connectivity. There is a need to improve the Article 17 reporting of the Habitats Directive, but also to look beyond the Natura 2000 network to designate areas in need of specific protection such as important fish spawning grounds.

Connectivity includes the human level: there is need to improve efficiency of management by engaging more people and forming cooperative networks such as MedPAN.

Regional sea conventions and other multilateral forums provide opportunities to collaborate and exchange knowledge and ideas, including developing common standards, protocols and guidelines.

Identify and develop strictly protected areas – Criteria are important, and the primary objective should be to restore/strengthen the resilience of ecosystems. For example look at 1. species and habitats in the worst conservation status and map their distributions; 2. Locate carbon-rich habitats for additional benefits for climate action (mitigation and adaptation); 3. habitats with important functional roles (e.g. spawning grounds, nurseries for fish). However, it is difficult to establish strictly protected areas for dispersed metapopulations and migratory species.

Buffer areas should be established around strictly protected areas, where some types of usage could be allowed and avoid creating “green fortresses”. Demonstrating multiple benefits from strictly protected areas is important:

- There is a successful example of spill-over with fisheries in the Adriatic Sea with the creation of a permanent fisheries restricted area (FRA) in the Jabuka Pit where Italian and Croatian administrations together with scientists and fishermen, found a common compromise, through the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean.
- Development of tourism
- Contribution to reducing atmospheric greenhouse gases
- In Malta, the imminent arrival of invasive species could be mitigated by having strictly protected areas.
- Collateral improvement for a broad range of habitats and species - an MPA may be designed to protect one species, but strict protection benefits all species and habitats

In the Black Sea, there are ongoing conflicts with the fisheries and the oil industry. There is also an issue with designating areas for strict protection since the Black Sea is not so rich in marine biodiversity as other marine regions. At the moment, it is hard to think of win-win opportunities.

Ensure adequate management of protected areas – There is strong experience in Spain with the monitoring and control of coastal MPAs with stakeholder involvement. Modern technology/equipment can greatly support the monitoring/control processes.

Synergies with other EU policies (e.g. MSFD, WFD) and collaboration with other EU and non-EU stakeholders should be identified and built upon, especially for monitoring offshore areas and mobile/migratory species.

3.2. Day 2, Conservation status improvement targets

3.2.1. Topics and questions

Topic – Identify the target species and habitats

- Where are the biggest gaps in our understanding of trends in extent and condition of species and habitats?

Topic - Reduce the unknowns

- What are your priorities for the gathering of new habitat and species information to reduce the 'unknowns'?
- What opportunities are there for collaborative actions at the marine regional level?

Topic – Identify resources and foster synergies with other policy areas

- What MS and EU level collaborative and governmental structures would be useful for delivering cross-sector gains?

- How might existing mechanisms be more effectively used?

Topic – Organise regional cooperation on non-deterioration and status improvement

- What legal and institutional tools are available to improve regional cooperation?
- How might existing mechanisms be more effectively used?

Topic – Plan and harvest the benefits of strictly protected areas for status improvement

- Where are the opportunities for using strict protection measures to progress conservation status targets?

3.2.2. Atlantic and Macaronesian

Chair: Richard White; Rapporteur: Irene Bouwma

Identify the target species and habitats – At the start of the discussion it was noted that it would be helpful to have some idea of the number of marine species Member States should select. It is not only about improvement but for many marine species the challenge is to ensure non-deterioration. Given the many stakeholders in the marine environment with different aims it is important to work on maintaining good relations with them and to involve them from the start in plans and activities. Only then plans can be put into action.

It was stressed that we should use the information gathered in the framework of other processes such as OSPAR and MSFD. This information is useful to identify status as well as major threats that need to be addressed. OSPAR is currently working on an assessment of the status of several cetaceans in the Atlantic (and part of the Macaronesian) region. Also it was mentioned that the article 12 report of the MFSD will be published in January 2022 which will contain relevant information which MS can use to identify species and habitats requiring further action.

It was felt that it would be good to have better regional co-ordination as several of the marine species are wide ranging. In the discussion that followed, several cetacean (killer whale, beaked whale, Risso's dolphin, harbour porpoise) and bird (shearwater and auk) species and species groups were mentioned as a focus for further joint action.

It was stressed that for several habitats and species, pressures of land-based activities have a large influence on their conservation status. Close co-operation needs to be developed between the Ministries responsible for the marine and terrestrial environment. Ireland is reviewing several marine habitats in particular mudflats and sandflats and large shallow inlets and bays for which in many instance the threats arise from land.

Reduce the unknowns – It is important to gather information on unknowns, but this should not be done to avoid action on conservation improvement target. It is important to balance between research and monitoring and taking conservation actions, particularly as costs of research to reduce the unknowns in the marine environment might be considerable. We need a balance between social partners calling

for more action and policy makers who refrain from action due to lack of information. Two approaches were suggested to tackle the issues. First, select species and habitats where it is easy to gather data to enable early progress and second, expand research into pressures and how these impact several species.

Plan and harvest the benefits of strictly protected areas for status improvement – The discussion focused on the experience MS have in selecting and designating strictly protected areas. Overall there is limited experience with this in the marine environment. Denmark indicated that they are in the process of identifying them in the framework of the MFSD; 11 areas have been proposed but they are not designated yet. Also issues on managing the areas after designation still need to be solved. In these areas only maritime transport is allowed. Sweden indicated that they already have a national strategy in place that proposes these areas and the criteria are rather like the ones suggested in the EC guidance note. They are looking to select areas which are already no-take zones. These might be considered in the future as strictly protected areas.

At the same time it could be considered that the marine environment could have different levels of protection – some uses might not conflict with conservation. It might be difficult to show why areas should be completely closed to all activities given that we need to show why it is necessary for the conservation of the species and habitats under the Habitats Directive. The experience is that if you propose strict protection during stakeholder consultation the agreed area is reduced. We need to deal with the fact that some species are very important for recreation so it will be difficult to close areas completely. Finally, it was suggested that we need to gather more evidence on how successful non-intervention (natural processes) is to restore nature in the marine environment. If this works it is also much cheaper than active restoration.

Identify resources and foster synergies with other policy areas (this fourth topic was discussed for a short time only)

– Overall participants try, with more or less success, to influence the programming of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF). They also call upon DG-ENV to scrutinize the EMFAF proposals put forward to see if they take the Birds and Habitats Directives into account sufficiently. It was also mentioned that the various Court of Auditors' reports on fisheries could provide a good opportunity to promote better fishing practices to reduce biodiversity impacts.

3.2.3. Baltic Sea

Chair: Theo van der Sluis; Rapporteur: Diana Pungar

Identify the target species and habitats – It is recognised that we do not have enough knowledge about the extent of habitats or of the distribution of species and habitats and therefore, what species should be targeted. It is suggested that we can look at typical species in relation to both habitats and threats – the umbrella species. We should include endangered species, coastal lagoons, sandbanks and

habitats not listed in the Habitats Directive's Annexes, if these are linked functionally to those habitats. We need to be aware of the challenges posed by issues overlapping marine and terrestrial areas, the coastal interface. The Commission suggested that if there is a need for a discussion on estuaries and lagoons, this would be a good option to organise.

Co-ordination of targets is important at national and regional levels, including in relation to endangered species and habitats (although they are not included in the Habitats Directive, eels should be a prioritised species in the Baltic for monitoring, assessment and protection). It is recognised that Member States may have different understanding of definitions and trends. Co-ordination can be supported by projects through LIFE, HELCOM etc.

Reduce the unknowns – We have expert groups and knowledge, but a split situation in marine management. There needs to be cooperation between ministries within Member States. Co-operation within marine regions is also important. HELCOM is a good example, but still the status of the Baltic Sea is not good, despite all regulations. There is still a long way to go and need for more action. Knowledge needs cooperation, but lack of knowledge is not a sufficient excuse for not implementing change. The process tends to be stuck in decision making stage, thus prevent reaching agreements, developing restoration plans, and doing monitoring.

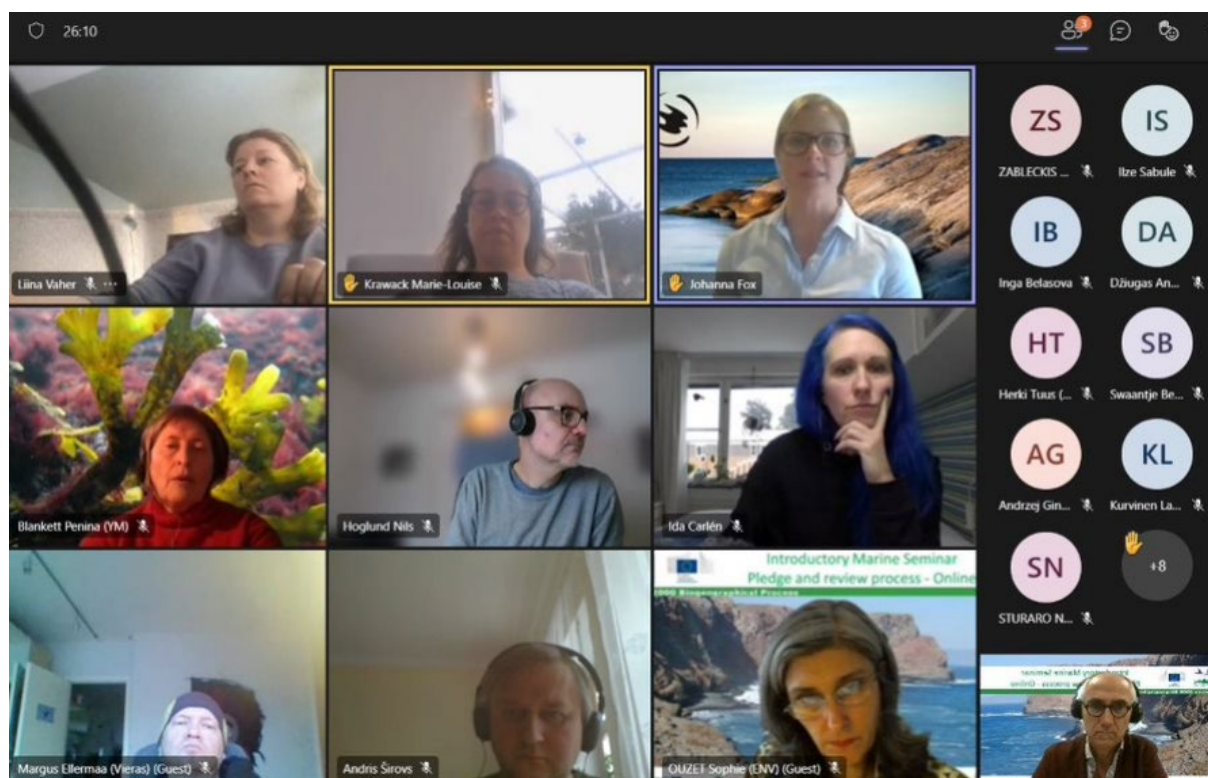


Figure 4: Screenshot from the discussion in the break out group on the Baltic sea.

Could synergies help to push the process? There are many policies and regulations, but still a decline in habitat quality. The gap is dysfunctional cooperation between different sectors (e.g. fisheries and environment). Holistic marine management is needed, not separate fisheries or environmental

management. A framework or directive is needed to implement the actions. We need to recognize biodiversity and its usage in strategic planning and ensure it is added to the agenda. The Commission should look to wider, combined, targets, not focus on specific areas and issues.

Plan and harvest the benefits of strictly protected areas for status improvement – Win-wins should be identified. If some habitats need strict protection, this should be considered. We should take a holistic view in considering how to specify strictly protected areas. If these are only based on the Habitats Directive, many species and habitats will be missed. Functionally important species and ecosystems are also important; common ecosystems should be a target as a connecting system is important for lifecycles. The 30% / 10% targets are not enough. The target should include all important ecosystems and habitats – eutrophication has a clear link to terrestrial habitats and nitrogen flow into the seas.

Strictly protected areas can improve the status of fisheries, as well as having conservation benefits; unfortunately, there are very few in the Baltic. Fishing impacts on coastal fish and predators have a large effect on coastal habitats. Integration with wider fisheries management is needed.

We know what the problems and actions are, but little remediation or action is implemented, because of competing interests. All authorities should be invited to a round table to make things happen; willingness is also needed.

Identify resources and foster synergies with other policy areas – Funding is based on national agreements, which are hard to achieve. In some cases, conflicts between policies block funding for environmental issues (see e.g. the difficulties in agreeing on a PAF in certain Member States). Setting and agreeing coherent targets is a long process, with much discussion, thus implementation suffers. Projects can be funded through schemes such as LIFE and Interreg Europe. The European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund is another of the possible sources of funding for marine projects and there would be benefits from co-ordinated actions between different Member States. That NGOs are not able to access some European funds is also an issue.

Synergies between different policies can be useful (e.g. nature conservation, water management, energy crisis, climate change). Marine and freshwater cooperation and cooperation with fisheries are essential, as well as cooperation between ministries and stakeholders. The Water Framework Directive and other relevant legislation are essential, especially in addressing eutrophication and other issues linked to riverine inputs. Marine policy needs to fully integrate marine conservation – mapping, balance of fisheries, restoration issues, upcoming action plan.

Organise regional cooperation on non-deterioration and status improvement – The main points brought forward from the session were:

- Adequate management and protection are needed.
- Coordination is essential, and more, Baltic-wide, cooperation.
- Do not forget to look for funding programmes for restoration.
- More guidance is needed for whether funds have been properly used.
- Environmental issues should be included in a wider range of funding programmes.

- Decision processes are complex, but feedback on proposals is important to improve practice.
- Promote round table working as an important tool to progress implementation.

3.2.4. Mediterranean and Black Sea

Chair: Carlos Sunyer; Rapporteur: Rui Rufino

Identify the target species and habitats – Suggestions for marine species and habitats included *Posidonia* beds, red coral, Black sea sturgeon, dolphins, monk seal and birds. However, most Mediterranean marine mammals have an unknown status, and none is in a favourable status. *Posidonia* is reported unfavourable in France, Greece and Croatia, with declining trends, but favourable in all other Mediterranean Member States.

It was agreed that coordination between Member States is needed for some “easy wins” and for specific actions to stop declining trends. The EU promotes the cooperation and the use of EU funds. It is better to develop joint programmes for species and habitats. There is money available for scaling up. Coordination should not only be between member States, but also with non-EU member countries (e.g. for migratory species, in the Black Sea some species have ranges outside the EU).

Reduce the unknowns – The unknown is blocking the establishment of a baseline for status improvement. Coastal areas are better known but additional resources are needed for the open sea. For cetaceans, acoustic surveys are needed. Synergies with monitoring for MSFD should be considered as addressing the unknowns is relevant to this as well as nature directives.

Identify resources and foster synergies with other policy areas – examples of good practice include cooperation between Romania and Bulgaria, oceanographic research projects between France, Italy, and Monaco. There are project calls under Horizon 2020, along with upcoming Horizon mission on oceans that can be used.

There are good examples of collaboration, sometimes based on the personal rather than institutional relations, such as the ones in relation to maritime spatial planning, or with fishing sector, including the common use of EU funds. Local partnerships are important to build on the community’s social, environmental, and economic strengths to create an integrated development strategy.

Plan and harvest the benefits of strictly protected areas for status improvement – it was agreed that all benthic habitats and sedentary species would benefit from strict protection, along with monk seal, especially in breeding areas. National strategic thinking about ways to achieve win-win solutions, particularly considering fisheries, is needed.

Identify and organise regional cooperation on non-deterioration and status improvement – It was suggested to establish a working group similar to that that led by the Spanish Ministry of Ecological Transition on terrestrial habitats. With regards the Barcelona Convention, there is a target on species included in the strategic action programme for the conservation of biological diversity (SAPBIO), but this goes beyond the Birds and Habitats Directive lists. Also, there are no objectives relating to strict protection objectives since most countries were not in favour. This might increase the gap between EU and non-EU countries.

4. Concluding plenary session and following steps

4.1. Closing remarks

Nicola Notaro, Head of the Nature Conservation Unit in DG ENV, concluded the seminar with perspectives for the Natura 2000 biogeographical process. The process will both keep a focus on the exchange of experiences and the development of cooperative action, and become a forum for Member States to discuss their pledges for delivering on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. This strategic discussion will provide coherence on restoration targets and protected area targets at a biogeographical level.

Nicola Notaro gave a final comment of thanks to participants, speakers, chairs and the organising team.

All presentations from the Seminar are available on the [Natura 2000 biogeographical process webpage](#) or at the [Working together for Natura 2000](#) wiki.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 – Programme of the seminar

Agenda Day 1 (09 Dec. 2021): Targets on protected species

Day 1 (9 Dec. 2021) – Targets on protected areas		
Time	Topics	Speakers
08.45-9.00	Opening online channel for participants to test access to the session	
9:00-9:10	Opening and welcome.	Nicola Notaro, chair (Head of the Nature Conservation Unit, ENV D3)
9:10-9:15	Housekeeping (use of Mentimeter and chat).	Team supporting the Natura 2000 biogeographical process
9:15-9:35	The protected areas targets in the context of the EU's biodiversity strategy for 2030: role, guidance, criteria and format for the pledges.	Joaquim Capitão (ENV D3)
9:35-9:45	Questions from participants.	
9:45-10:00	OECMs in the marine context.	Ellen Kenchington [Fisheries and Oceans Canada (Maritimes Region), International Council for the Exploration of the Sea]
10:00-10:10	Questions from participants.	
10:10-10:25	Baseline for protected areas and distance to targets.	Brian MacSharry (EEA)
10:25-10:35	Questions from participants.	
10:35-10:50	Break	
10:50-11:35	Invited presentations and interventions	Finland, Portugal, Spain and Ireland
11:35-11:40	Housekeeping (organisation of breakout sessions).	Team supporting the Natura 2000 biogeographical process
11:45-13:00	Discussions in 3 break-out rooms (by marine regions: Baltic, Atlantic and Macaronesian, Mediterranean and Black Sea): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the existing MPA network • Improve connectivity and coherence of the network • Identify and develop strictly protected areas IF time allows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate management of protected areas 	Facilitators: Irene Bouwma Paul Goriup Diana Pungar Rui Rufino Theo van der Sluis Richard White
	Break out room 1: Baltic	
	Break out room 2: Atlantic and Macaronesian	
	Break out room 3: Mediterranean and Black Sea	
13:00	Day 1 closes	

Agenda Day 2 (10 Dec. 2021): Conservation status improvement target

Day 2 (10 Dec. 2021) – Conservation status improvement target		
Time	Topics	Speakers
08.45-9.00	Opening online channel for participants to test access to the session	
9:00-9:10	Opening and welcome.	Nicola Notaro, chair (Head of the Nature Conservation Unit, ENV D3)
9:10-9:15	Housekeeping.	Team supporting the Natura 2000 biogeographical process
9:15-9:35	The non-deterioration and 30% status improvement target in the context of the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030: context, guidance, criteria and format for the pledges.	Frank Vassen (ENV D3)
9:35-9:45	Questions from participants.	
9:45-10:00	Baseline and distance to target: conservation status and synergies with other policies.	Carlos Romao (EEA)
10:00-10:10	Questions from participants.	
10:10-10:45	Invited presentations and interventions.	Finland, Birdlife
10:45-11:00	Break.	
11:00-12:30	Discussions in 3 break-out rooms (by marine regions: Baltic, Atlantic and Macaronesian, Mediterranean and Black Sea): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the target species and habitats Reduce the unknowns Plan and harvest the benefits of strictly protected areas for status improvement Identify resources and foster synergies with other policy areas Organise regional cooperation on non-deterioration and status improvement 	Facilitators: Irene Bouwma Paul Goriup Diana Pungar Rui Rufino Theo van der Sluis Richard White
	Break out room 1: Baltic	
	Break out room 2: Atlantic and Macaronesian	
	Break out room 3: Mediterranean and Black Sea	
12:30-13:00	Closing plenary: first feedback on outcomes, next steps under the pledge and review process.	Nicola Notaro, chair (Head of the Nature Conservation Unit, ENV D3)

Annex 2a – List of Participants, alphabetical order²

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
Sabrina	Agnesi	ISPRA (ETC/ICM)	Italy
Jorge	Alonso	Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge	Spain
Joana	Andrade	SPEA/BirdLife	Portugal
DŽIUGAS	ANUŠKEVIČIUS	Ministry of Environment	Lithuania
Maria- Jose	Aramburu	CINEA	Belgium
Mora	Aronsson	ETC-BD	Sweden
Pedro Ivo	Arriegas	Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, I.P	Portugal
Nicola	Baccetti	ISPRA, Italy	Italy
Anette	Bäck	Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife	Finland
Duarte	Barreto	Institute of Forests and Nature Conservation from Madeira	Portugal
Nuno	Barros	ANP WWF	Portugal
Inga	Belasova	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Latvia
Alice	Belin	European Commission, DG Environment	Belgium
Swaantje	Bennecke	Ministry of Energy, Agriculture, the Environment, Nature and Digitalization Schleswig-Holstein	Germany
Adam	Billing	Ministry of Environment	Denmark
Penina	Blankett	Ministry of the Environment	Finland
Roos	Bol	Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management	Netherlands
Peter	Breckling	German fisheries association/Europeche	Germany
Rosalinda	Brucculeri	Ministry of ecological transition - Italy	Italy
Marc-Philip	Buckhout	Seas At Risk	Belgium
Flavia	Caramelli	Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition	Italy
Ida	Carlén	Coalition Clean Baltic	Sweden
Alexandra	Caron-Strehlow	LPO France	France
Guillaume	Carruel	CNPMEM Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Élevages Marins	France
Claudio	Celada	Lipu-BirdLife Italy	Italy
Alena	Chaloupkova	European Commission, DG ENV.D3	Belgium
Anna	Cheilari	European Commission, DG Environment	Belgium
Odran	Corcoran	WWF	Belgium
Richard	Cronin	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Ireland
Marta	Curmi	Environment & Resources Authority	Malta
Mieke	Degloire	Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety & Environment	Belgium
Floriana	di Stefano	Ministry of Ecological Transition	Italy
Asya	Doneva	Ministry of Environment and Water	Bulgaria
Margus	Ellermaa	BirdLife Finland	Finland
Carolina	Enhus	Havs- och vattenmyndigheten	Sweden
Kristian	Ersbøll	Ministry of Environment of Denmark	Denmark
Johanna	Fox	Coalition Clean Baltic	Sweden
Céline	Frank	European Commission	Belgium
Herdis	Fridolin	Ministry of the Environment	Estonia
Lara	Galea	Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)	Malta
Susan	Gallon	MedPAN	France

² Due to the privacy policy, eight people have been excluded at their own request.

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
Zelmira	Gaudillat	ETC/BD	France
Andrzej	Ginalski	WWF Poland	Poland
Matthew	Grima Connell	Environment & Resources Authority	Malta
Susan	Gubbay	N2K	United Kingdom
Jannica	Haldin	HELCOM	Finland
Nils	Höglund	BSAC	Denmark
Marina	Illuminati	MEDAC	Italy
Katarzyna	Janiak	European Commission DG MARE	Belgium
Ivana	Jelenic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Nature Protection Directorate	Croatia
Katja	Jelic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Institute for Environment and Nature	Croatia
Jourdain	Jerome	Union des Armateurs à la Pêche de France	France
Jan	Kappel	European Anglers Alliance	Belgium
Algirdas	Klimavičius	Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania	Lithuania
Jochen	Krause	Federal Agency for Nature Conservation	Germany
Marie-Louise	Krawack	Danish Ministry of Environment	Denmark
Lasse	Kurvinen	Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland	Finland
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Anna	Lindhagen	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	Sweden
Camille	Loth	WWF Mediterranean	France
Mette	Lund	European Environment Agency	Denmark
David	Lyons	Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	Ireland
Julie	Mac Namara	International Association of Oil & Gas Producers	Belgium
Melina	Marcou	Department of Fisheries and Marine Research	Cyprus
Claire	Maudet	French ecological ministry	France
Dilia	Menezes	IFCN - Instituto das Florestas e da Conservação da Natureza, IP-RAM	Portugal
Giulia	Mo	ISPRA (ETC/ICM)	Italy
Helena	Moreno Colera	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge	Spain
Oliver	O Cadhla	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Ireland
Iva	Obretenova	European Commission	Belgium
Manuela	Osmi	CINEA	Belgium
Joana	Otero Matias	DGRM	Portugal
Merit	Otsus	Ministry of the Environment	Estonia
Paloma	Pacheco	Fundación Biodiversidad	Spain
Vassilis	Papadopoulos	Department of Fisheries and Marine Research	Cyprus
Jacopo	Pasquero	EBCD	Belgium
Dominic	Pattinson	OSPAR	United Kingdom
Anna-Grethe Underlien	Pedersen	The Danish Environmental Protection Agency	Denmark
Francesco	Pezzo	ISPRA	Italy
Alain	Pibot	Office français de la Biodiversité	France
Marzia	Piron	Mediterranean Advisory Council	Italy
johnny	Reker	European Environment Agency	Denmark
Juan	Ronco	EU COMMISSION	Belgium
Claire	Rutherford	BirdLife International	United Kingdom
Sofie	Ruyschaert	BirdLife Europe and Central Asia	Belgium
Ilze	Sabule	Nature Conservation Agency	Latvia
Andreea	Savu	Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests	Romania
Andris	Širovs	Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia	Latvia
Saulis	Skuja	State Service for Protected Areas, Ministry of Envir.	Lithuania

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
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Axel	Ssymank	Bundesamt für Naturschutz (German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation)	Germany
Nicolas	Sturaro	European Commission - DG MARE	Belgium
Despina	Symons	EBCD	Belgium
Lena	Tingström	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	Sweden
Ramona	Topic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Institute for Environmental and Nature Protection	Croatia
Eleni	Tryfon	European Environment Agency	Denmark
Rosalie	Tukker	Europêche	Belgium
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Herki	Tuus	Ministry of the Environment	Estonia
Liina	Vaher	Ministry of the Environment	Estonia
Lavrentios	Vasiliades	Department of Fisheries and Marine Research, Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	Cyprus
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Markku	Viitasalo	Finnish Environment Institute SYKE	Finland
Marina	Xenophontos	Department of Environment	Cyprus
Sarunas	Zableckis	CINEA	Belgium
Jadwiga	Ziomacka	WWF Poland	Poland

Annex 2b – List of Participants, country order³

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
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Marc-Philip	Buckhout	Seas At Risk	Belgium
Alena	Chaloupkova	European Commission, DG ENV.D3	Belgium
Anna	Cheilari	European Commission, DG Environment	Belgium
Odran	Corcoran	WWF	Belgium
Mieke	Degloire	Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety & Environment	Belgium
Céline	Frank	European Commission	Belgium
Katarzyna	Janiak	European Commission DG MARE	Belgium
Jan	Kappel	European Anglers Alliance	Belgium
Julie	Mac Namara	International Association of Oil & Gas Producers	Belgium
Iva	Obretenova	European Commission	Belgium
Manuela	Osmi	CINEA	Belgium
Jacopo	Pasquero	EBCD	Belgium
Juan	Ronco	European Commission	Belgium
Sofie	Ruysschaert	BirdLife Europe and Central Asia	Belgium
Nicolas	Sturaro	European Commission - DG MARE	Belgium
Despina	Symons	EBCD	Belgium
Rosalie	Tukker	Europêche	Belgium
Irene	Vecchiato	European Commission - DG MARE	Belgium
Sarunas	Zableckis	CINEA	Belgium
Asya	Doneva	Ministry of Environment and Water	Bulgaria
Ivana	Jelenic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Nature Protection Directorate	Croatia

³ Due to the privacy policy, eight people have been excluded at their own request.

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
Katja	Jelic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Nature Protection Directorate	Croatia
Ramona	Topic	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Nature Protection Directorate	Croatia
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Vassilis	Papadopoulos	Department of Fisheries and Marine Research	Cyprus
Lavrentios	Vasiliades	Department of Fisheries and Marine Research	Cyprus
Marina	Xenophontos	Department of Environment	Cyprus
Adam	Billing	Ministry of Environment	Denmark
Kristian	Ersbøll	Ministry of Environment of Denmark	Denmark
Nils	Höglund	BSAC	Denmark
Marie-Louise	Krawack	Danish Ministry of Environment	Denmark
Mette	Lund	European Environment Agency	Denmark
Anna-Grethe Underlien	Pedersen	The Danish Environmental Protection Agency	Denmark
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Flavia	Caramelli	Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition	Italy
Claudio	Celada	Lipu-BirdLife Italy	Italy
Floriana	di Stefano	Ministry of Ecological Transition	Italy
Marina	Illuminati	MEDAC	Italy

First Name	Second Name	Organisation	Country
Giulia	Mo	ISPRA (ETC/ICM)	Italy
Francesco	Pezzo	ISPRA	Italy
Marzia	Piron	Mediterranean Advisory Council	Italy
Leonardo	Tunesi	ISPRA	Italy
Inga	Belasova	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	Latvia
Ilze	Sabule	Nature Conservation Agency	Latvia
Andris	Širovs	Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia	Latvia
DŽIUGAS	ANUŠKEVIČIUS	MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT	Lithuania
Algirdas	Klimavičius	Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania	Lithuania
Saulis	Skuja	State Service for Protected Areas under the Ministry of Environment	Lithuania
Marta	Curmi	Environment & Resources Authority	Malta
Lara	Galea	Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)	Malta
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Jadwiga	Ziomacka	WWF Poland	Poland
Joana	Andrade	SPEA/BirdLife	Portugal
Pedro Ivo	Arriegas	Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, I.P	Portugal
Duarte	Barreto	Institute of Forests and Nature Conservation from Madeira	Portugal
Nuno	Barros	ANP WWF	Portugal
Dilia	Menezes	IFCN - Instituto das Florestas e da Conservação da Natureza, IP-RAM	Portugal
Joana	Otero Matias	DGRM	Portugal
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Helena	Moreno Colera	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge	Spain
Paloma	Pacheco	Fundación Biodiversidad	Spain
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Johanna	Fox	Coalition Clean Baltic	Sweden
Anna	Lindhagen	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency	Sweden
Lena	Tingström	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	Sweden
Susan	Gubbay	N2K	United Kingdom
Dominic	Pattinson	OSPAR	United Kingdom
Claire	Rutherford	BirdLife International	United Kingdom

Team members for organisation of the Introductory seminar

First Name	Last Name	Organisation	Country
Irene	Bouwma	WENR	Netherlands
Joaquim	Capitão	European Commission - DG ENV.D.3	Belgium
Vedran	Nikolic	European Commission - DG ENV.D.3	Belgium
Nicola	Notaro	European Commission - DG ENV.D.3	Belgium
Sophie	Ouzet	European Commission - DG ENV.D.3	Belgium
Diana	Pungar	Estonian University of Life Sciences	Estonia
Rui	Rufino	Mãe d'Água	Portugal
Theo	van der Sluis	WENR	Netherlands
Frank	VASSEN	European Commission - DG ENV.D.3	Belgium
Richard	White	NatureBureau	United Kingdom
Kristina	Wood	NatureBureau	United Kingdom

Annex 3 – Questions from participants during the seminar

During and after the presentations and during the various sessions, participants had the opportunity to ask questions. Most questions were answered during the seminar, but for some the time was limited and have been addressed here. All questions are listed below, with answers from the European Commission.

1. Surely there is a need to extend the number of species within Annex II of the HD if biodiversity is to be protected?
The Fitness Check of the nature directives concluded that a revision of the directives, including their annexes, was not necessary. It is important to note, however, that the Biodiversity target for protected areas explicitly goes beyond the species and habitats protected under the directives.
2. Following up on answer re Annex II, if this is the driver for N2K sites then it needs to provide for more species (and habitats).
See previous reply.
3. It may be premature, but do you have any (new) thoughts on the review of pledges in the course of 2023?
The biogeographic seminars at the beginning of 2023 are expected to provide an occasion for a review of the national pledges by experts and stakeholders, including authorities from other Member States in the same biogeographical region. This review should indicate issues on which the pledges may be considered insufficient, and the Commission expects each Member State to take the conclusions of the meetings into account to revise, where necessary, the national pledges and to proceed to the actual designation of new protected areas.
4. Listening to Ellen Kenchington, it sounds as if areas targeted for restoration or in the marine setting, passive restoration by stopping certain damaging activities, would all be possible to consider as OECMs?
The conditions under which OECMs can be counted towards the protected area target in the Biodiversity Strategy are described in the guidance published by the Commission in January 2022.
5. What's the role of favourable reference value in the pledges, especially at the national level?
.....
6. As a follow up to the question on FRV and reply from Frank Vassen (thanks): if you look at trends then you have everything you need in the reporting for birds at the national level.

Annex 4 - Brief seminar evaluation (Mentimeter results)

During the last plenary session, an evaluation survey was carried out which was answered by up to 37 participants (response rate 46% of the total attendants). Most participants described the seminar as informative, helpful, interesting and interactive. A second cluster of terms highlighted this last idea. Some participants also highlighted that it is ambitious and that there are challenges, it requires coordination, knowledge exchange, funding, and above all urgent action (fig. 5)!

Which 3 words describe for you best the Marine Introductory Seminar?



Figure 5: Outcome of a mentimeter poll which summarises impressions of the seminar, based on 37 responses

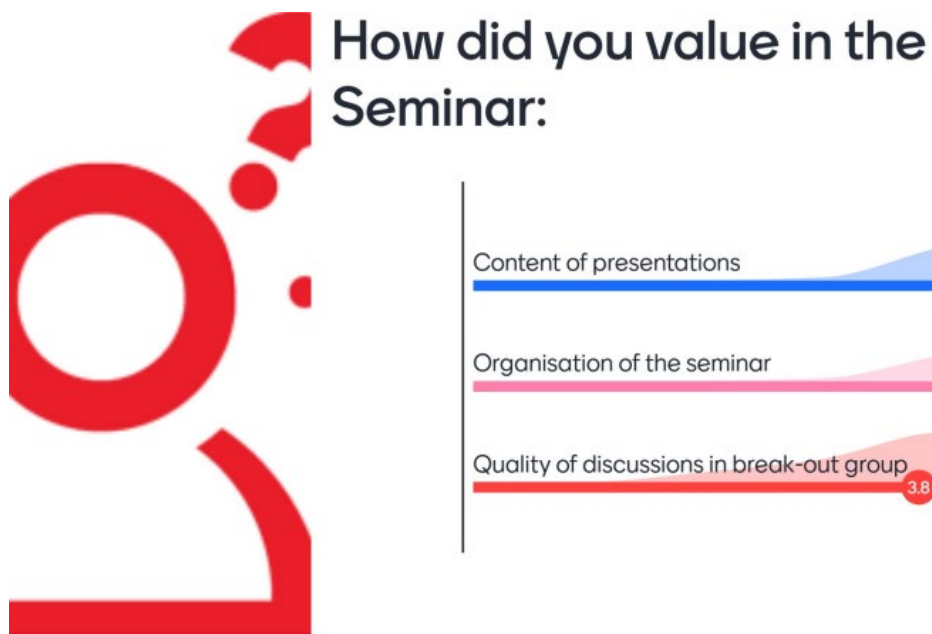


Figure 6: Outcome of the mentimeter poll on the quality of the seminar, based on 31 responses

Figure 6 shows that the seminar was highly appreciated by participants: in particular the presentations and the organisation of the seminar were considered good. The quality of the discussions in the break out groups scored a bit lower, but can still be considered good.

Finally, Figure 7 provides all suggestions to improve future seminars, out of which some main avenues should be noted in particular:

- Clarify how synergies can be created between the different targets of the strategy
- Clarify further how the 10% strictly protected area should be interpreted in the marine environment
- We need more in-depth discussions, involving all sectors, in a live setting (i.e. the marine seminars)

What could be better, how can we improve?

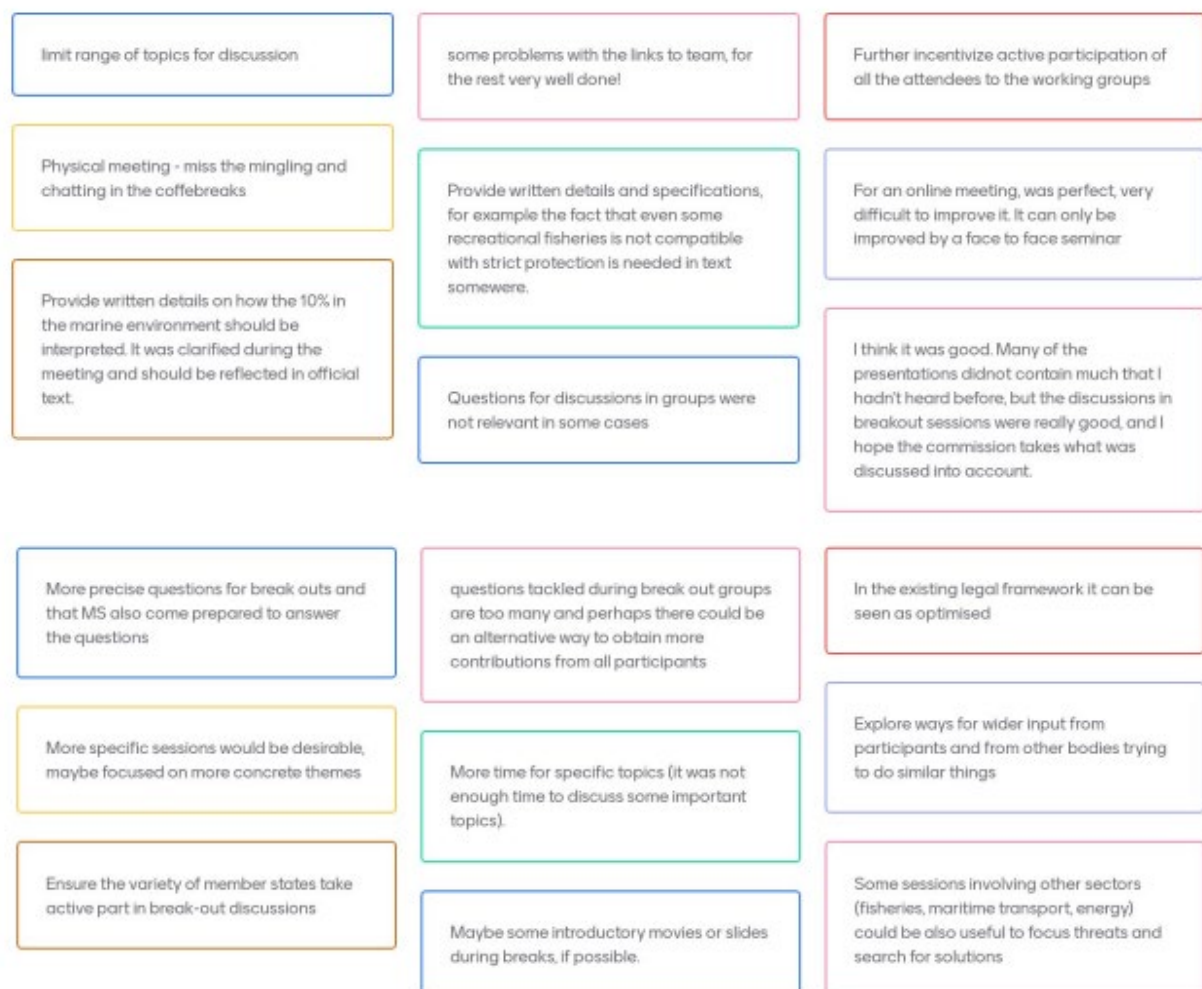


Figure 7: Suggestions for improvement of the seminars, open question in Mentimeter.