



Online Event: European marine cooperation in the Mediterranean and beyond: networks of marine protected area managers, key allies!



Thursday 12 May 2022, 15:00 - 17:00 CEST

Online Event

Co-hosted by MEP Stéphane Bijoux and MEP Catherine Chabaud

Speakers:

- **MEP Stéphane Bijoux**
- **Veronica Manfredi**, Director, DG ENV, European Commission
- **Emma Nohrèn** (SE/Greens), Vice Mayor of Lysekil, Rapporteur for the CoR opinion on 'Local and regional authorities protecting the marine environment', Committee of the Regions (CoR)
- **Marie Romani**, Executive Secretary, MedPAN (Core activities and MPA NETWORKS project example)
- **Renaud Dupuy de la Grandrive**, Forum des AMP (French MPA network)
- **Martina Hervat**, Senior Expert Advisor for Nature Conservation, Brijuni National Park (Croatian MPA Network)
- **Jorge Alonso Rodríguez**, Spanish MPA network RAMPE
- **MEP Catherine Chabaud**
- **Dr. Puri Canals**, Technical Coordinator EU Ocean Governance Project, MedPAN President (Ocean governance twinning network)
- **Joe Appiott**, Coordinator for Marine, Coastal and Island Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- **Carsten Rasmussen**, Head of Unit Cyprus & Greece, DG Regio, European Commission

Opening Remarks

MEP Stéphane Bijoux

“Today, I wish to share with you a strong belief that cooperation is the only way to success in facing global challenges”

MEP Stéphane Bijoux started the event by expressing that **all stakeholders must urgently join forces to ensure the preservation of marine biodiversity and of the ocean**, the blue lung of the planet. Moving on, MEP Bijoux shared a strong belief with the audience that **global cooperation is the only way to success**. *“We must pull on all our experiences, our knowledge, our talent, in order to fight together and find solutions to protect our oceans while saving the extraordinary biodiversity that they shelter”*. **The important role of Marine Protected Areas’ (MPA) Networks** was observed, which have become key elements in the conservation of marine biodiversity and in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, strong commitments have been made towards the ocean during the One Ocean Summit, while **strong hopes persist regarding the outcomes of the upcoming Lisbon conference**. He also mentioned the significance of a strong regional dimension, which is for instance put forward through the Mediterranean Protected Area Network (MedPAN) but also in Overseas Territories. In the long term, a global Blue Belt of MPA is desired.

Keynote Intervention

Veronica Manfredi, Director, DG ENV, European Commission

“My final message is very simple: we are on the same boat with all other species, and I don’t see how, without making the ocean our biggest ally, we can go very far”.

Ms. Veronica Manfredi shared her delight with the audience that the event focused on MPA managers, as the opinions of these leaders are often insufficiently valued. Furthermore, an overview was given on **how the European Commission (EC) is implementing the Biodiversity**

Strategy. First of all, **reaching the policy goals set out in the Strategy requires the support of all actors**, particularly from the Member States. Also, **environmental protection cannot be separated from economic activities** but must be considered together. In addition, **all assessments must be based on reality**: currently, only 8.3% of all marine Mediterranean areas benefit from any protection, out of which only 0.04% are under very strict protection. **More must be done** to increase this coverage to the stated goal, 30% by 2030. To enhance the efforts of Member States, **the EC has produced specific guidelines on how to designate the areas that should most urgently be protected**. Ms. Manfredi observed that **the managers of MPAs can make an important contribution** to this by identifying technical solutions and design innovations. In the coming months, **the EC is planning to come forward with an action plan on conserving fisheries resources** while protecting marine ecosystems. **The upcoming COP15 meeting** was highlighted as well to **emphasise the political duty of the European Union (EU) to come forward with a strong position**, setting the tone worldwide regarding ocean preservation. Ms. Manfredi concluded her intervention with **the final message that the oceans must become our biggest ally**, endorsing MEP Bijoux's statements.

Panel Discussion 1: European marine cooperation in the Mediterranean

Speakers that took part in the first panel discussion:

- **MEP Stéphane Bijoux**
- **Emma Nohrèn** (SE/Greens), Vice Mayor of Lysekil, Rapporteur for the CoR opinion on 'Local and regional authorities protecting the marine environment', Committee of the Regions (CoR)
- **Marie Romani**, Executive Secretary, MedPAN (Core activities and MPA NETWORKS project example)

MEP Bijoux echoed Ms. Manfredi's comments that **the EU must bring answers**, including on how to cooperate. Tools such as the Interreg Program demonstrate that the EU can accelerate pivotal projects. In this context, **trust in local actors - authorities, associations, scientists etc. - is**

essential, since they are in direct contact with the realities of the field. For example, **the Interreg Program has contributed to funding the MedPAN Network**. This project brings together seven Mediterranean countries and **exemplifies the joint efforts that must be carried out to better protect marine biodiversity**. MEP Bijoux asserted that **the key to success is the EP**, which has been very ambitious on the Interreg Program, as he experienced firsthand as Rapporteur for his political group. He also advocated for the creation of specific compartments for the EU Outermost Regions, as **the common challenges can only be tackled effectively by working together**. *“Therefore, I am calling to replicate such initiatives in order to bring local actors together and build cooperation programs between MedPAN and the MPA of the Outermost Regions, with the support of Europe”.*

Ms. Emma Nohrèn continued by mentioning that the Committee of the Regions (CoR) is involved in discussions such as these, mainly through its Opinions. Since **marine protection is a big issue for local and regional communities**, a multi-level governance which includes all perspectives is necessary to reach functional solutions. Ms. Nohrèn stressed that as **rapporteur for the CoR Opinion called ‘Local and regional authorities protecting the marine environment’**, she discovered that **local and national governance levels are crucial to safeguard the MPAs**. Endorsing Ms. Manfredi, the importance of the 30% objective was made clear: a large marine area is already protected, but this protection must be meaningful. In general, **all maritime issues should be considered simultaneously**; for this, the CoR has suggested the creation of an EU Ocean Law, to mainstream ocean protection. The final message of the CoR Opinion was that all governance levels must tackle these issues collectively in a connected way to ensure a healthy sea with restored biodiversity.

To end the first panel discussion, **Ms. Marie Romani presented the MedPAN Network**. Beginning with an overview of the MPAs in the Mediterranean, Ms. Manfredi’s point that **the current coverage is quite far away from the 30% objective** was reiterated. Moving on, it was stressed that **knowledge about MPA management is indispensable**. Additionally, a recent analysis by MedPAN showed that gaps are present in terms of available staff, budget, regular surveillance but also suitable regulations. **When these fundamental aspects are lacking, the effective**

management of MPAs is severely impacted. Continuing with the 2030 MPA targets, Ms. Romani indicated that these are defined in several institutional frameworks, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy. Elaborating further, **a Mediterranean MPA Forum was organized last year with many pivotal stakeholders.** *“The idea was to **define together the road to 2030**; this roadmap must boost the implementation of the MPA policy commitments”.* Developing on the role of MPA managers, MEP Bijoux’s remarks on **the significance of human networks of MPA managers as catalysts for the establishment of ecological MPA systems** were reaffirmed. Focusing on MedPAN, it was explained that governmental and non-governmental actors dealing with MPAs are brought together to engender bottom-up cooperation.

Interventions

Renaud Dupuy de la Grandrive, Forum des AMP (French MPA network)

“We are linked with other national and international exchanges; for example, we participate in IMPAC conferences, most of the time with MedPAN.”

Mr. Renaud Dupuy de la Grandrive described the French MPA Forum as an informal network, established to **link MPA managers in mainland France and in the Overseas Territories.** This technical platform was launched in 2001 in order to improve the knowledge of different MPA stakeholders and capitalize on their field experience to improve their site projects. Currently, **the Forum focuses primarily on technical and strategic exchanges.** It is assisted by the French Biodiversity Agency through human and financial support, while also collaborating closely with three regional MPA networks. International MPA networks that the forum works with include MedPAN but also TransAtlantic and Indian Ocean. Recapping past activities of the network, Mr. Dupuy de la Grandrive conveyed **the large variety of technical workshops, guides and documents, local and international exchanges and studies that the Forum has elaborated or participated in.** Regarding next steps, it was declared that **the Forum is constantly improving the coordination with its members. A common vision is needed** to be effective in promoting managers’ ideas strategically towards French institutions and international networks.

Martina Hervat, Senior Expert Advisor for Nature Conservation, Brijuni National Park (Croatian MPA Network)

“It is not only about hitting numbers; we know that now we have more tangible biodiversity goals, which is really useful in achieving efficient nature conservation; however, we also know that we need to do more in the field of MPA, particularly reinforcing the managers.”

Ms. Martina Hervat started by summarizing that **only reaching the tangible biodiversity goals is insufficient**; these are useful for effective nature conservation, but **more must be done**. In this context, **MPA managers were identified as cornerstones for the protection of marine and coastal biodiversity**. Furthermore, in the framework of the MPA network project, the Croatian MPA Network has exchanged with other actors such as MedPAN. *“We are practitioners at different levels, however **we all share the same or similar challenges**”*. These include the focus of MPA on tourism, a shortage of monitoring and research as well as overlapping regulations and jurisdiction. At **the upcoming Croatian Final Conference of the MPA Networks project**, the objective is to engage with the MPA community, expand their knowledge and present findings from their own projects. **The benefits of such exchanges will show the need to perpetuate the Croatian MPA Network.**

Jorge Alonso Rodríguez, Spanish MPA network RAMPE

“A necessity lies ahead for the approval of management plans, through participatory process and to implement these plans using effective surveillance.”

Mr. Jorge Alonso Rodríguez explained the legal framework surrounding MPAs, which is considered as basic legislation in Spain. It was highlighted that **the development of Spanish protected areas has accelerated significantly**. However, effectively protecting these areas remains a prime challenge. **A necessity lies ahead for the approval of management plans** through participatory processes; these can then be implemented using **effective surveillance**. **Monitoring is also pivotal to control the achievements of the conservation objectives**. In addition, Mr. Rodríguez emphasized the ongoing process to reach an effective protection of 30%

of areas, by creating a coherent network of MPAs. **A master plan for this MPA network is in place, which is the guide to reach the main objectives:** ensuring conservation, promoting the conservation of ecological corridors and contributing to the creation of European and pan-European networks. To conclude the presentation, **the value of coherence when working together with different networks was emphasized.**

Panel Discussion 2: Coordinating protection networks of MPAs as key allies

Speakers that took part in the second panel discussion:

- **MEP Catherine Chabaud**
- **Dr. Puri Canals**, Technical Coordinator EU Ocean Governance Project, MedPAN President (Ocean governance twinning network)
- **Joe Appiott**, Coordinator for Marine, Coastal and Island Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- **Carsten Rasmussen**, Head of Unit, Cyprus & Greece, DG Regio, European Commission

MEP Catherine Chabaud kicked off the second panel by emphasizing her support for the governance model of MPAs, involving all the relevant stakeholders. However, **huge challenges lie ahead for MPA managers to achieve the conservation objectives.** They must share their knowledge with each other, for instance on the precise impacts that affect MPAs, on the people with the power to reduce these impacts and on the messages that must be passed on to stakeholders. Furthermore, MEP Chabaud underlined that **this moment is a turning point because the amount of MPAs has increased to reach the 30 by 30 objectives.** Therefore, it is important that the feedback among MedPAN members is shared. Moving on, it was stressed that **an ecosystem approach is indispensable.** In the long term, the Blue Belt should help to remove obstacles for the creation of certain MPAs.

Moving on in the panel discussion, **Dr. Puri Canals** discussed an EU initiative called Ocean Governance Project. The overall objective of this project is to **increase the EU's role in**

international Ocean Governance. Furthermore, it was explained that the project has four components; the second component on the improved management of MPAs around the Atlantic Ocean was highlighted, which built on the heritage of **a previous project called ‘The EU Transatlantic MPA Network Project’**. One key message Dr. Canals underlined is that **due to the transatlantic exchanges and regional activities, financial means are provided** to fund networking activities. Finalizing the presentation, attention was drawn to the fact that managers take advantage of the scope of this project to connect with each other through transatlantic networks. The many different dimensions of networking were also outlined.

Following up, **Mr. Joe Appiott presented brief remarks and updates on the relevant elements of the global biodiversity goals.** It was highlighted that the focus of the global community has been on the Aichi Biodiversity targets, particularly on conservation, sustainable use and biodiversity. The development of these targets was informative for the development of the SDGs and of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. At the same time, **Mr. Appiott stressed the importance to consider the many targets from the draft Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework** that are highly relevant to marine conservation, to protected areas and to achieve collective goals. To conclude, the emphasis was put on the fact that these global targets cannot be achieved in a country or region alone, but that **a network of managers is key for building collective capacity while pooling resources and knowledge.**

In **Mr. Carsten Rasmussen’s** reaction, it was explained that the Greek Marine Territories have expanded in terms of biodiversity conservation, while the significant job that still lies ahead was stressed. Additionally, regarding the financial resources available for marine areas in Greece, it was mentioned that *“21 million euro is lined up to the next funding period, that is a sufficient amount of funding to make progress”*. However, **one of the main challenges is the establishment of targets for specific areas.** For each MPA, the conservation objectives need to be more concrete. At the same time, several Member States are dealing with capacity and commitment issues. It was concluded that the financial means are available, but that the effective use of these

funds on the ground must improve.

Q&A Session

The moderator of the event Mr. Ilias Grampas asked if the EP will launch a Blue Belt dialogue to follow up and expand on the transatlantic dialogue. **MEP Chabaud replied that a Blue Belt dialogue is a good idea.** A joint report is in process by the DEVE and ENVI committees on the SDGs, where the Blue Belt could be an answer to the several goals of the SDGs. A final question was addressed to the MPA network managers: what kind of further support is needed at the EU level? **Mr. Dupuy de la Grandrive** stressed that **more experiences should be shared with other sectors in the field of nautical tourism or other coastal sectors** in the Mediterranean. **Ms. Hervat** agreed on this point and added that **the MPAs' network is a great opportunity**, however concerns were expressed as well: *"It is useful to have the financial support for the coordination of this young network"*.

Closing Remarks

MEP Catherine Chabaud

"Human solidarity is crucial, and one of the opportunities is creating an international community of ocean managers, who should themselves take the lead".

As closing remarks, **MEP Chabaud** recalled the issues at stake. **The ocean is now more than ever under pressure**, from climate change and the accompanying consequences. MPAs are developing, and both women and men protect these areas using effective means. Moving on, the key challenges were underlined, particularly that the ocean is still far from being efficiently protected. **It is necessary to create regeneration zones**, and to limit the most destructive fishing gear. **Human solidarity is crucial, and one of the opportunities is creating an international community of ocean managers**, who should themselves take the lead in this. Finally, MEP

Chabaud supported the Blue Belt initiative while promoting the ideas of individual and collective responsibility.