

The EU framework for conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity

Issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosf stems and biodiversit *f* in the EU are inï uenced b*f* a number of Communit *f* polic *f* sectors. While conservation of the marine environment has traditional *f* been addressed as a part of EU environmental polic *f*, including biodiversit *f* polic *f*, the management of EU î sheries falls e, clusivel *f* under the Communit *f* & Common Fisheries Polic *f* (CFP). In addition, a number of other EU legislative and polic *f* instruments can also pla *f* a signi cant role in this conte, t.

Marine conservation within EU policy on biodiversity and nature conservation

Conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversit*f* has al a*f*s formed an integral part of EU polic*f* on biodiversit*f* and nature conservation. In this conte, t, the Birds and Habitats Directives à the cornerstones of nature conservation in the EU à provide for legal provisions to establish the Natura 2000 net ork in marine areas as ell (Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC).

The marine Natura 2000 net ork introduced a series of kef elements in nature conservation related to the marine environment. The net ork provides protection for a number of valuable marine/coastal habitats and species, including specific habitat tfpes listed in Anne, 1 of the Habitats Directive. The net ork also enables open sea areas functioning as speciesabreeding, feeding or resting "ones to be included in the net ork. The Directives also stipulate that the individual marine protected areas (MPAs) should not be managed in a vacuum but the f should form a coherent ecological net-

ork. This should be made possible bf guaranteeing connectivitf both bet een sites and ithin the ider seascape (e.g. Articles 10 and 3 of the Habitats and Birds Directives, respectivel f).

The establishment of the marine Natura 2000 net ork is to be \hat{i} nalised bf 2008 and the management priorities and necessarf conservation measures for sites should be set up e seould foooouA

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During recent decades the CFP has been stronglf criticised for its negative effects on marine biodiversitf, namelf bf supporting and/or inadequatelf addressing unsustainable e, -

absent species in aquaculture as adopted bf the Commission in April 2006 (COM/154/2006). The proposed Regulation ould require Member States to establish a permit sfstem for the introduction of ne aquaculture species. It further provides for quarantine measures, pilot releases, monitoring, contingencf planning, and the keeping of national registers of introductions and translocations of alien species. The Regulation is still in the pipeline but hen adopted it ill improve the frame ork for control of marine and coastal alien species in the EU.

With regard to the effects of EU î sheries outside the EU, the EU is no orking to ards a more integrated frame ork for accessing third countrf î sheries resources through î sheries partnership agreements (FPA), as set out in a Commission Communication in December 2002 (COM/2002/637). The Communication states that, in the future, the EU & î nancial contribution under the FPAs ould be based on the âmutual interestã of the t o parties to invest in a sustainable î sheries policf, rather than onlf as a pafment for access rights. The EU also considers that the î nancial contribution is not to be considered as a subsidf to the European \hat{i} shermen but ould have to be regarded as investments for the improvement of responsible and rational î shing. In addition, in 2002 the Commission adopted an action plan for the eradication of illegal, unreported and unregulated î shing (IUU) (COM/2002/180). The action plan addresses prevention of illegal î shing also in the conte, t of third countries and it supports assistance for developing countries to control unla ful î shing.

The implementation of the CFP is î nanciall *f* supported b*f* the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). One of the main EFF objectives is to promote the sustainable e, ploitation of î sheries resources, including the application of environmentall *f* friendl *f* î shing and production methods. In this conte, t, the EFF offers a number of possibilities for supporting the management of marine and fresh atno d

designation of Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversit*f*, including the establishmentand management of marine Natura 2000 areas, can be foreseen to form an integral part of the good environmental status of marine ecos*f* stems. Ho ever, as measures regulating î sheries management can onl*f* be taken in the conte, t of the CFP, the conservation and sustainable e, ploitation of î sheries resources fall outside the scope of the proposed Directive.

The role of a maritime policy

In addition to the Marine Thematic Strateg f and related Directive, an EU maritime polic f Green Paper as launched in June 2006 (COM/2006/275). While the Marine Thematic Strateg ffocuses on protection of the marine environment in the EU, the objective of the Green Paper as to initiate a discussion on a broader future maritime polic f for the Union. The launch of the Green Paper is accompanied b f a one-fear-long public consultation process, lasting until the end of June 2007.

The Green Paper suggests that the aims of an EU maritime polic*f* should be to manage the EU marine areas in a holistic manner and to strike the right balance bet een the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in the marine environment. The Lisbon Agenda for competitiveness, jobs and gro th forms one of the main bases for the suggested future maritime polic*f*. In addition, it suggests that the ecos*f* stem approach forms an integral element of the polic*f*. The environment is not neglected as the Green Paper seeks to stimulate gro th and jobs in the EU maritime sector in a sustainable manner that also ensures the protection of the marine environment.

As for sustainable use and conservation of biodiversit*f*, the Green Paper recognises the threats posed b*f* the reduction of marine biodiversit*f*, notabl*f* due to pollution, impacts of climate change and overî shing. The Paper does not, ho ever, speciî call*f* focus on addressing these threats in the conte, t of a future maritime polic*f*. It mainl*f* highlights the socio-economic value of marine biodiversit*f*, including blue biotechnolog*f* (i.e. ne products that can be obtained through the e, ploitation of marine biodiversit*f*).

The links between the initiatives

The parallel developments related to the Marine Thematic Strateg *f* and Maritime Green Paper has led to some confusion on the relationship bet een these t o initiatives. In general,

hile the Marine Thematic Strateg*f* has its roots in the EU environmental polic*f* (the 6EAP), the Green Paper can be seen as an initiative of t o specific Commissioners; Jos Barroso (Commission President) and Joe Borg (Commissioner for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs). In terms of scope and content, the

main difference bet een the Green Paper and the Thematic Strateg *f* is that the former takes a broader perspective, including all socio-economic activities in the marine environment,

hilst the latter takes an entirel f environmental perspective. In summar f, it is likel f that the Maritime Thematic Strateg f and related Directive ill be forming the environmental pillar of the future maritime polic f.

As regards future developments, the Council is to adopt a common position on the Marine Strateg *f* Directive in Spring 2007. The Directive ill then be e, amined b*f* the European Parliament. The Directive is envisaged to be adopted b*f* the end of 2007. The Consultation on the Maritime Green Paper is to be î nalised b*f* June 2007. In November 2007, the Commission is e, pected to adopt a Communication containing political conclusions on the consultation. On the basis of the Communication a ider action plan is to be launched in 2008.

More information on EU Maritime Strateg*f* and related Maritime Strateg*f* Directive: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ ater/ma-rine.htm

More information on the Marine Green Paper, including the public consultation process: http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/inde, _ en.html

Other Community instruments relevant in the context of marine conservation

In addition to policf sectors outlined above, there are a

Implementation of measures under the CFP

According to the European Commission, substantial progress has been made in the implementation of the CFP in recent fears to better integrate biodiversitf requirements.⁶ Ho M ev ever, there remain serious shortfalls in implementation at Member § tibm "rC ma

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In general, the Action Plan provides a good basis for the con-