EU Habitats Directive and Natura 2000:
a framework for conservation of cetaceans and sea turtles in the Adriatic Sea

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NETCET final conference
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State of nature in the EU: status and pressures

Protected areas: Marine Natura 2000 network

Species protection under Habitats Directive
7th Environment Action Program
“Living well, within the limits of our planet”

- **2020** timeframe, **2050** vision, **9** priority objectives
- Commitment by EU and its **Member States**

**THEMATIC OBJECTIVES:**
- Protect, conserve and enhance the EU’s natural capital
  - Fully implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy
- Green & competitive growth – low-carbon, resource-efficient economy
- Health & environment, human well-being

**LOCAL, REGIONAL, GLOBAL DIMENSION:**
- Urban environment
- International

**ENABLING FRAMEWORK:**
- Implementation
- Information, knowledge base
- Investment
- Integration, coherence
EU biodiversity strategy to 2020
"Our life insurance, our natural capital"

A 2050 VISION
European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored.

A 2020 HEADLINE TARGET
Halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU and restore them insofar as feasible, and step up the EU's contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

6 TARGETS
- Enhance implementation of nature legislation
- Restore ecosystems, establish Green infrastructure
- Sustainable Agriculture & Forestry
- Sustainable Fisheries
- Combat Alien Invasive Species
- Contribute to averting global biodiversity loss

ACTIONS
EU Biodiversity Strategy

Target 1 - Nature conservation

➢ To halt the deterioration in the status of all species and habitats covered by EU nature legislation and achieve a significant and measurable improvement in their status by 2020

• Complete the establishment of the Natura 2000 network, incl. in the marine part, and ensure good management
• Ensure adequate financing of Natura 2000 sites
• Increase stakeholder awareness and involvement and improve enforcement
• Improve and streamline monitoring and reporting
Only one quarter of EU non-bird species has favourable conservation status, while 60% has unfavourable status.

Conservation status of non-bird species, EU level:
- Favourable: 42%
- Unfavourable-inadequate: 23%
- Unfavourable: 18%
- Unknown: 7%

Conservation status of habitats, EU level:
- Favourable: 47%
- Unfavourable-inadequate: 16%
- Unfavourable: 30%
- Unknown: 7%
The share of **favourable assessments** of marine habitats is **very low** and for some the status is still unknown.

**Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources** is the highest ranking pressure and threat to species and habitats of coastal, shelf and open ocean areas.
Conservation status and trend of (non-bird) species associated with marine ecosystems
Conservation status and species distribution

**Tursiops truncatus**  
U2 Unfavourable-Bad

**Caretta caretta**  
U2 Unfavourable-Bad

**Ziphius cavirostris**  
U1 Unfavourable-Inadequate

**Stenella coeruleoalba**  
XX Unknown
Progress to 2020 target for species and habitats
Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources and pollution of marine waters are top two pressures/threats for species associated with coastal/shelf ecosystems.

The two most common types of reported conservation measures for species are 'legal protection of habitats and species' and 'establish protected areas/sites'.
EU Habitats Directive: two pillars of protection

• **Natura 2000 sites**
  *Tursiops truncatus, Caretta caretta*: core areas of their habitat should be designated as **special areas of conservation** - must be protected under the Natura 2000 network and the sites managed in accordance with the ecological requirements of the species.

• **Strict protection of species**
  A strict protection regime for all cetaceans and sea turtles must be applied across their entire natural range within the EU, both within and outside Natura 2000 sites.
Marine Natura 2000 Network

State of play

• More than 3000 marine sites (out of 27000)
• Covers over 5% of EU seas (≥ 300,000 km²)
• Network is not complete in the offshore area
• Differences across regional seas

• Cornerstone of EU nature protection policy: aims to ensure long-term survival of Europe's most valuable/threatened species and habitats
• Human activities can take place if they are compatible with nature conservation objectives
• Conservation measures in the sites help maintain and restore habitats and species to a favourable conservation status
• Economic benefits (whole network): 200-300 billion €/year, in the marine e.g. benefit to fish stocks (current coverage): 1.4-1.5 billion €/year
# Sufficiency of marine SCI network

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Dec 2014
Sufficiency of SCIs in Member States

Dec 2014
Within all Natura 2000 sites:

- Avoid damaging activities that could significantly disturb the species and/or habitats for which the site has been designated (Article 6(2)(3)(4))

- Positive measures are taken, where necessary to maintain and restore those habitats and species to a favourable conservation status in their natural range (Article 6(1))

Many examples of coexistence between maritime activities and N2000
Management of N2000 - priorities

- SCI ⇒ SAC
- Setting conservation objectives
- Application of appropriate conservation measures
- Legal, statutory or contractual arrangements
- Management plans
- Full stakeholder engagement and better regional cooperation

- EC guidance documents (N2000 and aquaculture/fisheries/ports,...)
- Economic benefits/win-win solutions and examples of good practice

Seminars on Natura 2000 management – forum for discussions
Towards a coherent MPA network in EU

- An extensive international and EU policy framework which supports the creation of MPAs in European seas already exists.

- Marine N2000 significantly contributes to establishing coherent and representative network of MPAs.

- The MSFD aims to launch measures for achieving or maintaining GES in the marine environment by 2020. The use of 'spatial protection measures' contributing to the creation of coherent and representative networks of MPAs.

- EU Directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning is to contribute to the effective management of maritime activities and the sustainable use of marine resources in the marine environment.
Strict protection of species

- **A preventive character**: to avoid and prevent a number of situations that could negatively impact a species.

- **Species-by-species approach**, taking account of the specific needs of each species.

- Most species are covered by more than one annex and therefore are subject to a combination of conservation approaches and measures.

- Close link to **Art. 6: management of Natura 2000**
System of strict protection is prohibiting:

• all forms of **deliberate capture or killing** of specimens of these species in the wild;
• **deliberate disturbance** of these species, particularly during the period of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration;
• deliberate destruction or taking of eggs from the wild;
• **deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places**.
• the keeping, transport and sale or exchange, and offering for sale or exchange, of specimens taken from the wild

• **A system to monitor the incidental capture and killing** of the animal species listed in Annex IV. In the light of the information gathered, take further research or **conservation measures** as required to ensure that incidental capture and killing does not have a significant negative impact on the species concerned.
Knowledge base

- **Good knowledge** of a species (range, distribution, occurrence, biology, ecology, threats and sensitivity, conservation needs, etc.) and **regular surveillance** of its conservation status over time are essential preconditions for any meaningful **conservation strategy**.

- **Cooperation at EU level** and transboundary cooperation is essential for mobile species.
Conservation measures

- **Conservation measures** should always be proportionate and appropriate to the objective pursued, i.e. maintaining and restoring favourable conservation status.

- Measures must be **coherent, coordinated and effectively enforced** on the ground.

- **Guidance** (COM guidance on Article 12 HD)
- **Codes of conduct** (e.g. for seismic surveys/noise mitigation)
- **Species conservation plans** (national, regional, int.)
Addressing pressures: links to other policy areas

- The Common Fisheries Policy
- Incidental catch
- Fisheries measures for Natura 2000
- Data collection

- Programme of measures
- Spatial protection measures

- The Maritime Spatial Planning Directive
- Maritime spatial plans
Towards a coherent protection regime

- **Full implementation** of EU policies, strategies, Regional Sea Conventions and other international agreements + national strategies
- **Policy integration** (ecosystem approach): MSFD/BHD/WFD/MSPD/CFP, ICZM – joint measures and adaptive management
- **Financing**: 2014-2020 programming period (-EMFF), LIFE, INTERREG-MED, CBC,…

**Working at regional level** on Natura 2000 management – a **biogeographical process** to promote the sharing of experience, good practice and cross-border collaboration on the management of Natura 2000.
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