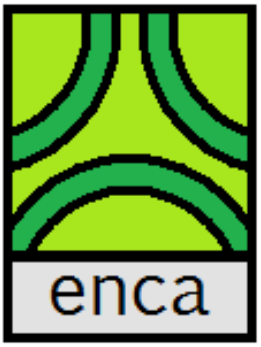


European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA). ENCA is an informal network which fosters exchange of information and collaboration amongst its partners, identifies future challenges and offers information and advice to decision-makers in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection. ENCA brings together scientific evidence and knowledge of practical application together with experiences in administration and policy advice in the context of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services.
More details can be found under www.encanetwork.eu

Working documents are conceptual works which aim at improving the networks functioning, increasing the transparency of its activities and the increasing the networks impact in terms preparing efficiently statements.

*ENCA Document 9/2010*

**Rationale behind ENCA activities in the field of MARINE BIODIVERSITY**

## 1. Introduction

Seas and oceans cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface, 95% of the biosphere.1 The seas harbour a number of species and habitats. They also provide a unique set of **goods and services**, including the regulation of climate, primary production, provision of food, medicines, processing of waste and toxicants as well as recreation and education. It has been calculated that the world's ecosystems goods and services are worth at least US$ 33 trillion annually, of which 63% (US$ 20.9 trillion) is contributed by the oceans. In addition, coasts provide space to live, and directly and indirectly create wealth, including millions of jobs in industries such as fishing, aquaculture and tourism. Perhaps as many as 500 million people draw their livelihoods indirectly from the sea. As for **biodiversity**, only about 275,000 marine species have been identified and described, compared to 1.5 million on land. **Biodiversity loss** has become one of the greatest environmental concerns of the last century, owing to increasing pressure on the environment by humans. Marine biodiversity in Europe is threatened by the fact that many of the goods and services provided by marine ecosystems are exploited in a non-sustainable way. The most serious **threats to marine biodiversity** are: over exploitation - recreational and commercial (fishery), pollution, habitat destruction and fragmentation, non-native species invasions and effects of global climate change.[2] By 2008, approximately 3,000 marine species will have been assessed for the threat of extinction by IUCN. These include comprehensive assessments of every known species of shark, ray, chimera, reef-building coral, grouper, marine turtle, seabird, and marine mammal. Of these groups, almost one-quarter (22%) have been listed in threatened categories (Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable).[3]

[1] www.cbd.int/marine

[2] www.marbef.org/wiki

[3] IUCN Red list (2008). Status of the world's marine species. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; Species Survival Commission.

The system of **protected areas** is envisioned as a mechanism to ensure conservation of biodiversity, both terrestrial and marine. The marine areas under protection amount only to 0.80% of the total ocean area or 2.9 million km$^2$.[4]

In addition, under the EU Habitats Directive, the ecological network NATURA 2000 is set up. According to the 2010 data, Special protection areas (SPAs) cover 102.663 km$^2$ and Sites of Community importance (SCIs) 132.923 km$^2$ of marine areas.[5]

## 2. International legislation and documents on conservation of marine biodiversity

The international community has recognised the importance of marine biodiversity and has adopted a number of agreements aimed to ensure conservation of this natural asset, as well as other agreements and documents on sectors having impact on marine biodiversity, which particularly refer to fishery.

I addition, more than 140 countries participate in 13 Regional Seas programmes established under the auspices of UNEP: Black Sea, Wider Caribbean, East Asian Seas, Eastern Africa, South Asian Seas, ROPME Sea Area, Mediterranean, North-East Pacific, North-West Pacific, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, South-East Pacific, Pacific, and Western Africa. Six of these programmes, are directly administered by UNEP. The UNESCO's programme "Man and biosphere" should be also mentioned, established to promote nature conservation and sustainable development through the establishment of biosphere reserves.

## 3. Marine biodiversity conservation operational structures

The agreements and programmes operate through different organisational bodies and units. The organisational structures follow the common pattern, including bodies covering scientific, expertise and administration issues and decision-making. Special working groups are formed particularly within regional conventions, either on permanent or *ad hoc* basis. Northern countries – the **North Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea** countries - cooperate on marine biodiversity issues through structures within the Helsinki and OSPAR convention. The Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), as intergovernmental body governing the Convention, has a *Nature protection and biodiversity working group* (HELCOM HABITAT). This group coordinates regional activities on conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use. The OSPAR commission established the biodiversity committee with two working groups, including the one on marine protected areas, species and habitats. The **Black Sea** Commission has advisory groups, including *Advisory group on conservation of biological diversity* that provides coordination and technical support for actions taken to protect biological diversity in the Black Sea.

[4] www.iucn.org/news_events/news/opinions/?2646/SOS---Save-Our-Seas

[5] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/barometer

The **Mediterranean Sea** is well covered regarding different organizational structures within the Mediterranean Action Plan and Barcelona Convention. In this regard, special regional activities centres are established, responsible for implementation of different components, including marine biodiversity. The Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) **is involved in the protection of Mediterranean species, habitats and ecosystems.** The Centre provides training and advice on the creation and management of protected areas and works on the implementation of specific action plans for the protection of endangered species. Working groups on different issues operate in the framework of Barcelona Convention and its action plans, including working group on sustainable management of marine and coastal biodiversity features. A special working group on the sustainable use of biodiversity and the evaluation of direct and indirect threats due to climate change was established in 2008.

## 4. ENCA network and marine biodiversity

ENCA network is established to strengthen nature conservation in Europe through cooperation between its members. Some ENCA members expressed their willingness to devote more efforts into the conservation of marine biodiversity. Hence, the marine biodiversity was the main topic of the 7th ENCa meeting, hosted by the Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection in National Park Mljet, Croatia from 4th – 7th September 2010. So far, an informal list of marine experts[6] from different institutions, members of ENCA was put in motion. The idea of such a list is to exchange information, news, experiences and possibly ideas for some joint projects. For inclusion in the list, please contact Ana Štrbenac from the Croatian State Institute for Nature Protection (Ana.Strbenac@dzzp.hr).

[6]List can be found here: http://encanetwork.eu/home/index.php?id=21