

Press release

Protected areas are not enough: towards an ecoregional approach to biodiversity protection

Representatives of European and Mediterranean institutions, public authorities, scientific and research organizations, protected area managers and conservationists gathered on 4 and 5 December 2018 in Brussels to discuss and support a holistic Mediterranean approach as crucial for sustaining the wellbeing of people and nature.

[“Ecosystems in Danger: Enhancing EU Policy response”](#) was the title of the Public Hearing held at the European Parliament co-organized by the SEARICA Intergroup and the Interreg Med Biodiversity Protection Community on 5 December. Urgent action ensuring ecosystem connectivity, regulating socio-economic activities and using science-based management in key ecologically significant areas suffering from uncontrolled human activities inside and outside protected areas was prominent in the discussion.

Gesine MEISSNER, Member of the European Parliament and chair of the SEARICA Intergroup underlined *“we need more resources of the sea, blue biotechnology, aquaculture, blue energy, shipping; on the other side, we need marine protected areas and we are having a delay in reaching the right percentage”*. She expressed her support to the joint [“Declaration on Ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity protection and management”](#) together with other present Members of the European Parliament who moderated the session; Marco AFFRONTE, Davor ŠKRLEC and Francesc GAMBUS addressing the need of a co-management and transboundary approach to maintain the ecosystem services and ecological functioning of our environment.

“Governance and cooperation are essential components in effectively addressing the challenges facing Mediterranean biodiversity” stated **Sergi TUDELA**, Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food Government of Catalonia, when presenting the [maritime strategy of Catalunya](#) which incorporates co-management as an essential tool.

The public hearing presented the key messages of the 12 projects and other collaborators in the Med Biodiversity Protection Community, whose partners met on 4 December for a collaborative workshop to coordinate efforts and contribute to an active open dialogue with policy institutions in the Mediterranean. The conclusions of the lively debate among EU DG Environment, DG Research, DG MARE, UNEP MAP and its Regional Activity Centres, and key project institutions active in environmental research, assessment and governance mechanisms towards biodiversity protection was summarised by PANACeA project coordinator, **Dania Abdul Malak**, ETC-UMA, calling for the adoption of the Declaration as common roadmap for two types of processes envisaged in the Mediterranean: the enforcement of proper management of Protected areas through network design and best practice management, and the use of an ecosystem approach addressing ecological sensitivity and transboundary impacts outside protected areas.

Mediterranean ecosystems are collapsing and new innovative approaches to managing these indispensable systems are urgently needed to halt the collapse, reduce decline in condition and allow for recovery and resilience. As stated by **Ameer Abdulla**, IUCN WCPA *“Biodiversity and natural*

resources must now be better managed within and beyond protected area boundaries and across national borders. Maritime Spatial Planning, along with Integrated Wetland Management and Integrated Coastal Zone Management are essential tools to better manage biodiversity and human use in an ecosystem-based approach.”

The [Declaration](#) underlines the necessity of a long-term vision for the development of monitoring tools, harmonized methodologies, protocols and knowledge base for the successful implementation of EU directives and Mediterranean processes on the environment such as the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EcAp process, still lacking the development of monitoring tools for their final implementation stages.

Acknowledging a shared vision in this joint Declaration, the meetings in Brussels fostered a stronger visibility and commitment by European and Mediterranean policy makers, scientists, protected area managers and environmental actors to enter into a deeper and longer-term collaboration. An ecosystem-based dialogue between science, policy and management involving socio-economic and co-responsibility schemes were recognised by participants as a prerequisite to better decision-making processes that ensure the long-term viability of our ecosystems and natural resources and our Mediterranean societies that depend on them.

[For more information and photos:](#)

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[Public Hearing EU Parliament- access to presentations](#) – 5 December 2018

[Enhancing EU policies with ecosystem-based approaches – access to presentations](#) – 4 December 2018

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Notes to editor:

The objective of [PANACeA](#) is to streamline networking and management efforts in Mediterranean Protected Areas (PAs) as a mechanism to enhance nature conservation and protection in the region.

The project aims at ensuring synergies between relevant Mediterranean stakeholders –including managers, policymakers, socio-economic actors, civil society and the scientific community –, and to increase the visibility and impacts of their projects’ results towards common identified strategical targets.

PANACeA builds a community of nature conservation stakeholders in the Mediterranean and acts as the Communication and Capitalisation instrument of the projects dealing with protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Through its tool, the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection Knowledge Platform, PANACeA ensures the transfer of synthesised projects’ outcomes and their dissemination across and beyond the region.

The main thematic focus areas include coastal and marine management, biodiversity monitoring,



sustainable use of natural resources, management of protected areas, global changes, governance and cooperation and scientific and innovative methodologies., under the umbrella of a series of projects: ACT4LITTER (marine litter in marine protected areas) and additional projects to be included in the coming period, AMARe (marine spatial planning and PAs), CONFISH (network of fish stock recovery areas), ECOSUSTAIN (water quality monitoring solutions in protected wetlands), FishMPABlue2 (governance of artisanal fisheries in PAs), MEDSEALITTER (marine waste management), MPA-ADAPT (adaptation of MPAs to climate change), POSBEMED (strategy for joint management of Posidonia beaches and dunes), WETNET (wetland governance), PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs (Marine Litter in MPAs) and PHAROS4MPAs (Blue Economy and Marine Conservation).