



Bremen + 3 = ...

Scorecard exercise assessing the progress, since 2003, towards an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs in the North-East Atlantic

Background

In 2003, Environment Ministers of Contracting Parties to OSPAR and HELCOM reaffirmed their commitments to establish a network of well-managed marine protected areas: *"we shall have identified the first set of such areas by 2006, and shall then establish what gaps remain and complete by 2010 a joint network of well-managed marine protected areas that, together with the NATURA 2000 network, is ecologically coherent"* (SR JMM 2003, Annex 8).

The CBD (2004) set the target to effectively conserve at least 10 % of each of the world's ecological regions. IUCN (2003) recommends 20-30 % of each habitat to be protected to ensure with some probability that the network will achieve its conservation aims. The OSPAR Guidance on developing an ecologically coherent network of OSPAR marine protected areas (BDC 06/3/7) takes a more flexible approach leaving it to the responsibility of each Contracting Party to deliver an appropriate proportion of its habitats for inclusion in the OSPAR network of MPAs. WWF's global target is to achieve a global and regional coverage by effectively managed MPAs, of at least 10 % by 2020.

Hence WWF was interested in reviewing the progress achieved in the OSPAR Maritime Area by 2006, in comparison to the first baseline evaluation carried out and published in a scorecard report in 2003.

Towards an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs

2003 - the starting point

No agreed OSPAR MPAs existed in June 2003. However, in all Contracting Parties' waters, some marine areas, usually just extending to the low water line, had been protected under national and/or international law.

In 2000 (BDC 00/8/2), beyond 3 nm from shore only three sites were established, but none of them was managed with the aim to protect the marine

environment. Only 10 sites dedicated to marine conservation were reported to be larger than 1000 km² and only 11 sites larger than 100 km² were implemented in national law by the year 2000. Most of these sites were implemented in the respective national laws only in 2005, and management action is still pending. These figures illustrate the extremely poor state of marine conservation in the OSPAR Maritime Area in 2000.

Not much had improved in 2003 though the legal provisions of the EC Habitats and Birds Directives acted as the main driver for some initial progress in MPA selection and designation. Despite an improved legal basis for designation of MPAs outside territorial waters most EU Member States focused on designating protected areas in territorial waters, and none of the countries was considered to adequately manage the impacts from human activities inside or outside existing protected areas. Some countries however started to make an inventory and map the habitats and species in their Economic Exclusive Zones. In particular Germany and the UK took such a systematic approach. The first deep sea MPAs, two hydrothermal vent fields, were announced to be established by the Azores in 2002. In Norway, the national MPA project led to 36 candidate MPAs for stakeholder consultation in 2003, and fisheries closures were established in several cold water coral areas since 1999. Apart from this, cold water coral reefs, like all other sublittoral and deep water habitats all over the North-East Atlantic were not yet subject to any measures regulating human activities which directly or indirectly impacted the marine environment.

2006 - progress since 2003?

In the course of the last three years, the respective OSPAR bodies very successfully developed the understanding and conceptual framework of a future network of protected areas. However, even in 2006, it seems highly unlikely that the 2010 target date will be met on the ground. Neither the quantity nor the quality of current OSPAR MPA nominations is satisfactory: 81 sites in territorial waters (76) and/or EEZs (5) of six Contracting Parties totalling 25,000 km² or less than 0.01 % of the surface of the Atlantic OSPAR Maritime area (acc. OSPAR 06/5/5). All of these were or could have been selected for Natura 2000 (except Norway). No other selection criteria were used and no habitats nor species from the "Initial OSPAR list of species and habitats under threat and decline" beyond the ones listed by the EC Habitats Directive's Annexes benefit from these nominations. Apart from the sites nominated by Germany, mostly small coastal areas were nominated, management not yet being secured in half of the cases.

For information, contact:

Stephan Lutter

WWF North-East Atlantic Marine Ecoregion Programme

Magdeburger Str. 17 · D-20547 Hamburg · Germany

Phone: +49 40 530200-122 · Fax: +49 40 530200-112

E-mail: lutter@wwfneap.org

In 2005 and 2006, a number of new protected areas (other than those on the OSPAR list), including in offshore waters, have either been implemented in national law or publicly announced as being selected for Natura 2000. Nevertheless, concern arises about the long time scales required for the selection and designation processes in all countries. Even without implementation of measures, 5-10 years pass from the start of the selection process to implementation in national law. In total, all newly designated sites (2003-2006) correspond to an area of more than 17,000 km², of which 13,500 km² are not yet nominated to OSPAR. Another 15,000 km² of MPAs in offshore waters are still on the waiting list, as for example the first proposed offshore Natura 2000 sites in UK waters.

There is potential for a further extension of the area covered by MPAs in the future. However, efforts by Contracting Parties in relation to scientific assessment, selection and designation of protected areas in offshore waters vary substantially, including a striking north-south gradient in the understanding of the practical implications of the ecosystem-based approach to e.g. fisheries management.

On the other hand, fisheries measures implemented by Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the EC Fisheries Council and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) saved vulnerable habitats in a sea area of 590,000 km² from the most damaging fishing impacts. Yet, the bottom trawl closure of 540,000 km² around the Azores re-established a management regime which was previously implemented regionally - but allowing for an increase of longlining activities in this sensitive seamount area.

And the winner is

The Autonomous Region of the Azores (Portugal) got the highest of all scores for its promotion of marine conservation and sustainable management and achieving substantial progress with regard to establishing protected areas in the open ocean and deep waters, in contrast to mainland Portugal. Progress was neither considered satisfactory in France, Ireland and the Netherlands, though for different reasons. Most of the other countries achieved about half of the possible scores, due to a positive development of protected area establishment and some progress in developing management measures. However, the overall progress towards establishing an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs is still falling short of the Ministerial ambitions of Bremen 2003: some countries like France and mainland Portugal have not even started with the scientific assessment for potential offshore MPAs in their waters. Only very few Contracting Parties have initiated a process towards determining a coherent network of national sites beyond the Natura 2000 network. There are major shortcomings in terms of the management of human activities affecting the environment of MPAs, the integration of sectoral management, as well as resources and strategies for awareness building and successful stakeholder contact.

References:

WWF (2003): Do Governments Protect the Treasures of Our Seas? Measuring Progress on Marine Protected Areas. Bremen
 WWF (2003): Baltic marine life still left out in the cold / Effective protection of North-East Atlantic treasures still on ice - Scorecard. Bremen
 WWF (2006): Scorecard Assessing the Performance of OSPAR Contracting Parties on Marine Protected Areas. Electronic questionnaire. OSPAR Biodiversity Committee, Trondheim, BDC 06/3/13-E(L)

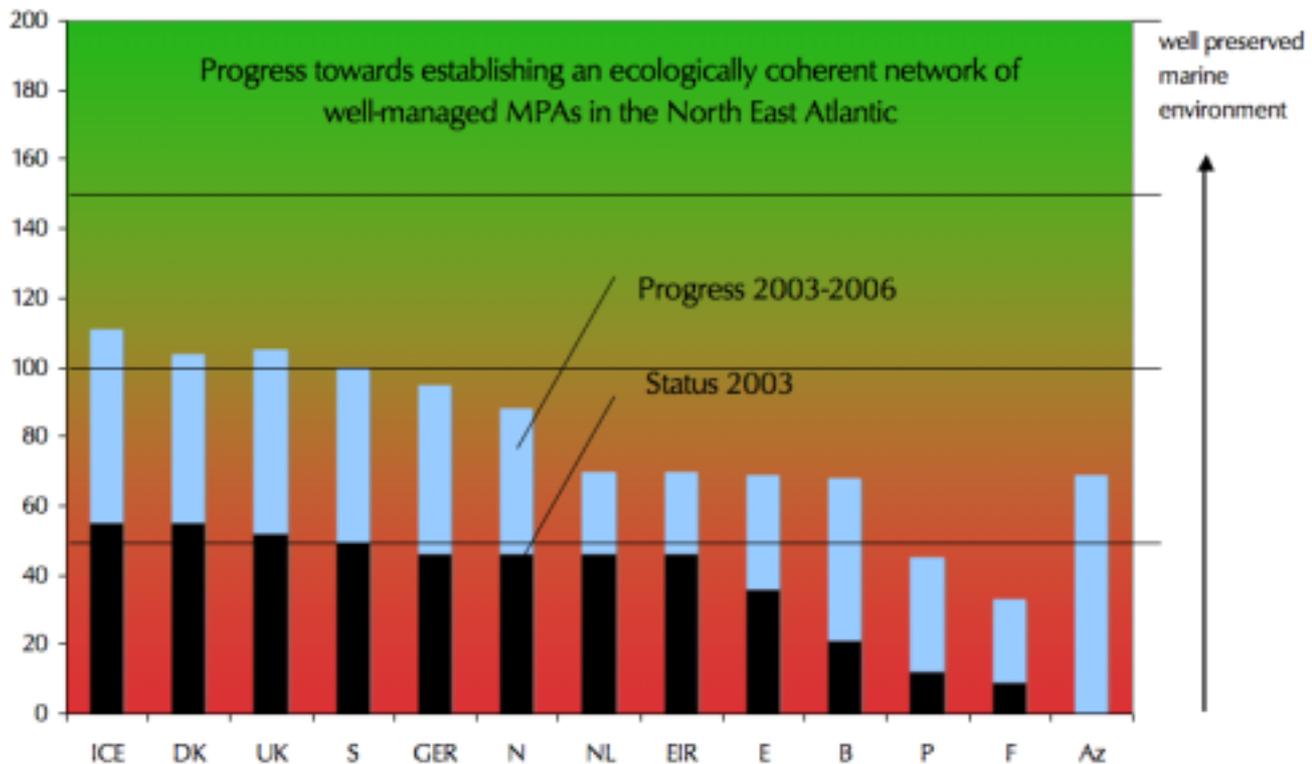


Fig. 1: Cumulative result of the WWF scorecard exercises 2003 and 2006. Numbers indicate the sum of the proportion of max. possible scores (100%) reached by Contracting Parties. Full scorecard report with justifications and completed questionnaires to be launched in autumn 2006.