

Round Table

“The maritime dimension of the Birds and Habitats Directives”

June 1, 2016 – 15.00 – 17.00

European Parliament – Room ASP1E1

Mr **Ricardo SERRÃO SANTOS**, MEP, Vice-Chair of the Intergroup welcomed the participants. He saw a European answer to preserving the environment in Europe in Natura 2000. In a second approach, he realised that ocean species and habitats were missing in the Habitats Directive. In the Azores, 30 sites have been designated. For more than 20 years, knowledge has increased, and there has been a giant leap in conservation in the Azores.

We have matured enough in terms of an integrated approach, and we are able to take a step forward and integrate the 2 Directives. However, he stressed the need to evaluate the impact of such an integration.

Round Table: *The maritime dimension in the implementation of the Natura 2000 Network.*

The Round Table was moderated by Mrs **Gesine MEISSNER**, MEP, Chair of the Intergroup. She stressed that the issues discussed are of high importance as only healthy oceans can serve human beings.

Dr **Peter BRECKLING**, [Europêche](#) (see [ppt](#)), stated that the implementation of the 2 Directives was not reaching its objectives. He described the Natura 2000 Network as an incoherent, poorly implemented patchwork of national areas with no, little or disproportionate, misanthropic measures. Therefore, he asked for the revision of the Directives in the fitness check and the merge of the Directives.

Mrs **MEISSNER** stressed the importance of strong and efficient cooperation between the Member States on that matter.

Mrs **Purificacio CANALS**, President of [MedPAN](#), explained that in the recent years there has been interesting progress in the designation of sites. However, she regretted that MedPAN couldn't identify the manager of the site for 75% of them and less than 50% have appropriate management measures.

She stressed that even small sites can have a major impact on the marine environment and also the local economy. In order to unlock this potential, improvement in governance is key. The existing areas don't demonstrate their interest and value as they are not properly managed. Simple measures could contribute to a better governance. She called for more discussions between management bodies, aimed at learning from the experience of sites already managed, sharing this knowledge with the other sites and capitalising on it.

Mr **Pierre TARDIEU**, Deputy Director of [Wind Europe](#), said that offshore wind in Europe represents 52% of global installations. This industry contributes to energy security in Europe. There are sites that are well planned, with minimal impact. They all have good work on the impact assessment in common.

Regarding the legislation, he noted difficulties in the interpretation of the Directives when it comes to offshore wind. He stressed the importance of a coherent and harmonised interpretation in Member States.

Regarding the impact of his industry, he:

- listed positive impacts (regeneration areas, reduce trawling activities, etc.);

- echoed concerns about bird collision, and stressed that a lot of work has been done to mitigate this issue. He referred to a recent study showing 0.02% collision in Denmark. The industry is developing mitigation measures such as turning off the wind farm during migration periods, moving towards slower and bigger turbines further away from the shore;
- also explained that mitigation techniques have been developed to tackle the issue of underwater noise. He stressed that lots of efforts are being made. The industry takes responsibility in mitigating its impacts.

Mrs Ewa TOMCZUK, [European Boating Industry](#), explained how developing marine protected areas has a positive impact on the boating industry (from manufacturing boats to services). She referred to the example of the park of Port-Cros in south east France (Hyères Islands). 2012 talks between the park managers and the [Fédération des Industries Nautiques](#) resulted in a list good practices being established for sustainable sailing in the park. She stressed the importance of involving industry stakeholders in decision-making as the good management of a marine protected area is also in their interest.

Mr Frederico CARDIGOS delivered Dr Douglas EVANS' [presentation](#) explaining that 4% of the marine space in Europe is included in the Natura 2000 network, which covers around 2/3 of the MPAs in Europe. There are a lot of unknowns on the status of habitats and species.

Mr James GREEN, Senior Planner, Orkney Islands Council, presented the impact of the implementation of the 2 Directives on the social and economic development of his island (see [ppt](#) and [speech](#)).

Mrs Ann DOM, Deputy Director, [Seas at Risk](#), regretted that countries often fail to put in place management measures. She called for more political will to take a step forward.

She stressed how the 2 Directives are linked with other EU maritime policies:

- They are key to MSFD implementation;
- They are linked with the CFP as they contribute to improving fish stocks and organising fisheries in MPAs;
- Maritime Spatial Planning is only possible with MPAs in place and functioning. As Member States have to deliver their Maritime Spatial Plans by 2021, MPAs have to be fully implemented by then.

To reach blue growth ambitions, more sectors have developed. The EU's Blue Growth Strategy includes a push towards offshore activities. She associated this push with a potential risk for the marine environment that has to be taken into consideration.

She referred to a Report by the European Environment Agency commissioned by DG ENV acknowledging the [socio-economic benefits of MPAs](#) (food provision, climate change mitigation, beneficial to other sectors).

She concluded by stressing the need to speed up the designation of MPAs by:

- Ensuring that management measures are being put in place;
- Improving the coherence of the network;
- Improving the information and financing of these measures.

Mr Angelo CASERTA, Regional Director, Birdlife, agreed that the problem is in management, in implementation. Therefore, merging the Directives won't lead to any improvement. He stressed the lack of data and the importance of engaging in dialogue with local communities.

The Directives are designed to protect nature. When properly implemented they proved to be efficient. Species and habitats are recovering. A functioning MPA doesn't mean that economic activities are banned. To the contrary, they have to be planned and managed in an open and sustainable manner.

Mr Fotios PAPOULIAS, Policy Coordinator, Nature Conservation, Directorate General for the Environment, presented the state of play in the implementation of the 2 Directives (see [ppt 1](#) and [ppt2](#)). He stressed the complexity of the on-going fitness check.

Open Q&A session with the participants

Mr **Andrew BROWN**, SCAR¹-Fish Working Group, stressed that there is no question that we need marine protection or that things can be made better. He regretted the lack of money to get more data. The development of maritime activities and the CFP implementation are putting pressure on the budget for marine science. He stated that the EMFF does not bring enough money to the table to cover the expenses needed. Therefore, he called for efforts on simplification and the sharing of best practice to try to ensure that the Directives can be implemented with the existing budget.

A representative from the Dutch fishing industry explained that 2 Member States often share the same ecosystem and treat it differently. He referred to several examples in the North Sea where the same ecosystem is included in the Natura 2000 Network in one Member State and not in another. He regretted that this situation causes problems for the fishermen. He also stressed the lack of monitoring and the absence of budget.

Dr **Peter BRECKLING** stressed that the issues in the implementation of the 2 Directives are caused not only by a lack of money but often political disinterest. The process is a matter of decision-making not only of knowledge and budget.

Dr. **Ester SERRÃO**, CCMAR, Portugal, raised the issue of scientific information used in the implementation and conception of the 2 Directives and the MSFD. She recognised that the integration of the most recent scientific evidence would take a long time (exceptional growth of data production due to technical improvements). However, she regretted that many elements of marine biodiversity are not even mentioned. A large share of the marine biodiversity is not even considered. She explained that new organisms are being discovered with new technologies and have to be considered. As a conclusion she evaluated the Annex II of the MSFD as a very poor description.

Mr **Bernard VANHEULE**, International Association of Oil and Gas Producers ([IOGP](#)), highlighted that a lot of data is available, as impact assessments led by the industry produced lots of data. He stressed that legal certainty is crucial for both economic activities and nature protection. He regretted that although the 3 Directives are at the same level of hierarchy, “significant impact” receives different interpretation depending on the framework, the Directive and often the level of implementation.

A representative from the Flanders Ministry of Economy stressed that a lot of money was invested in research infrastructures, there are social benefits from the scientific information and data for social benefit. The data should be made available open data. Some thematic policies foster open science and data (environment for instance) some other are neutral (Energy Policy) some are more restrictive (Fisheries Policy). Therefore, he highlighted the central role thematic policies have to play.

Mr **Jan Stefan FRITZ**, [KDM](#), is involved in a Horizon 2020 project aiming to develop a strategy for an ocean observatory in the Atlantic. He underlined that EU funded projects are limited in time and are certainly not designed for data dissemination and communication. Therefore, only specific data is collected. We have to be much more effective and efficient. As a first step we need to look at what data exists, what is needed and where to start. If we are looking at Integrated Maritime Policy, it might be the key issue where the EU is the relevant level.

Mr **Nicolas FOURNIER**, [Oceana](#), stated that our oceans are in bad health. He pointed out the need for a strong political will and the need to look at a longer term perspective in all the sectors of the maritime economy.

Mr **Franco BIAGI**, Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, explained that [EMODnet](#) is there to facilitate data sharing between stakeholders. He recognised that there is more to do but this is an interesting basis. This data is available to everyone.

¹ Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) <http://ec.europa.eu/research/scar/index.cfm?pg=home>

Mr **James GREEN** called for greater focus on survey methodology being used in Orkney. He regretted the lack of consistency in the use of data and demanded that the data used has to be recent and relevant for the MPA.

Closure

Mr **Ricardo SERRÃO SANTOS** noted that the NGOs made it clear that there is a major issue in the implementation of the 2 Directives. He regretted that Member States don't run the sites properly.