

WWF: Mapping EU's Marine Protected Areas and analyzing their ecological coherence

Terms of Reference for Consultancy

WWF aims to assess the progress made by the EU Member States (MSs) in achieving the 30% of effectively implemented and managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2030, including the 10% strict protection under the EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy framework. This assessment will be an update of an earlier similar assessment published in 2019 ([See here](#)). WWF plans to achieve this via 1) examining the current surface area of EU MPAs, their categories and conservation goals; 2) analyzing the presence/absence of MPA management plans as a proxy for MPA implementation effectiveness; and 3) assessing level of ecological coherence of the EU MPAs through i) representativeness, ii) replication and iii) connectivity. The results of this report will inform the EU and national policymakers, following the European election, on the current status of implementation of the 30x30 target, including the 10% strict protection, by the EU MSs. The study shall cover coastal and marine waters of all 22 marine MSs of the EU, forming the following marine regions: the Baltic, the Atlantic and Macaronesian , and the Mediterranean (including the Black Sea).

Project Objectives & Methodology

1. Mapping the existing MPA network

To calculate the surface area of designated MPAs per Member State, per conservation category, both in the territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone, similar to the earlier report from 2019, the consultant will retrieve data available on the Natura 2000 map viewer and Standard Data Form, the CDDA database and the spatial databases of regional conventions of HELCOM, OSPAR and the Barcelona Convention. The consultant will also explore relevant data availability from the Black Sea Basin for inclusion of the Black Sea waters in this analysis. In this framework, MPA designations will include areas: 1) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) available at EU Natura 2000 database; 2) Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) available at EU Natura 2000 database; 3) Special Protection Areas (SPAs) available at Natura 2000 database; 4) Ramsar sites available at World UN Database on Protected Areas; 5) Biosphere Reserves available at Regional Sea Convention Websites under the 'UNESCO Sites'; 6) Special Protection Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs) available at MAPAMED database of Barcelona Convention; 7) Nationally designated MPAs or PAs with some marine area, including the strictly protected areas, defined as IUCN's Categories 1a, 1b & II, to measure progress towards 10% strict protection target available at CDDA database; 8) OSPAR sites; and 9) HELCOM sites. Additionally, in cooperation with WWF network the consultant will acquire spatial data on the MPA pledges that MSs submitted and incorporate these data in the analysis to assess how the pledges contribute closing the gaps to meet at least 30% of MPA surface area by 2030 including the 10% strict protection target per MS.

2. Analyzing the effectiveness of existing MPA network implementation

To measure the effectiveness of MPA network implementation, the consultant will retrieve and use data on presence/absence of the MPA management plans per MPA as a proxy for effective management, similar to how the earlier study from 2019 did it. Presence of a management plan indicates that an area designated as an MPA has taken the first step towards protection of the environment in practice. When data is available, the consultant will also assess the presence/absence of conservation goals of identified MPAs.

3. Assessing coherence of existing MPA network

For assessing the ecological coherence and the soundness of designated MPAs the consultant will use the data generated by the EU H2020 MPA Europe project that WWF has received and if necessary will retrieve the EMODnet Seabed Habitat layer data additionally. The Ecological coherence of the MPA network, including the pledges submitted by MSs, will be assessed in each regional sea and calculated based on three criteria that were employed in the 2019 report: 1) representativeness (ensuring the inclusion of the full range of habitats and species of interest), 2) replication (ensuring protection of the same feature at multiple sites within the MPA network) and 3) connectivity (ensuring that individual MPAs are well connected in order to facilitate species exchange and ensure adequate dispersal). To calculate the value for representativity and replication, the consultant will overlay the surface layers of MPAs with the habitat and species distribution layers. Proximity of habitat types in different MPAs will be used as a proxy for connectivity.

Deliverables & Proposed Timeline

- By end of April 2024: Appointment of consultant/signature of contract
- By end of June 2024: the consultant completes data analysis as described above under the sections 1-3 and delivers to the WWF the GIS maps, R or Python code and analysis, and first draft of the report (a summary of methods and results).
- By July 12 2024: the consultant receives the first round of comments/feedback from WWF
- By mid-August 2024 : the consultant goes through WWF comments and delivers the final results
- Between June and August: the consultant remains available for any questions coming from WWF on the results.

This is a remote position with at least 2 in-person meetings in Brussels and at least 3 virtual meetings.

The various proposals will be evaluated by the end of April 2024 and the consultancy will run over the Summer. The exact start and end dates will be confirmed at the signature of the contract.

Instructions for Applicants

We are looking for a consultant with expertise in spatial data mapping and analysis. Experience in working, and knowledge of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and programming language, such as R, Python or similar, especially in the context of Marine Protected areas and habitats and species distribution mapping is a requirement. The ability to synthesize technical information is essential for delivering a short summary of methods and results. Proposals should include the relevant background of the consultant(s) involved, CVs of consultants who will participate in the project, and a cost estimate for the project. Interested experts, institutions and or consortia should send their letter of intent with the relevant documents to the contact below by email no later than close of business Friday 5 April, 2024. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Project Manager:

Aleksandre Gogaladze

Ocean Policy Officer

WWF European Policy Office

Rue du Commerce 123, Brussels, Belgium

Email: agogaladze@wwf.eu

www.wwf.eu