



TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP AMONG MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

**MARINE
PROTECTED
AREAS**

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TOWARDS A TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAS)

The European Commission has set up a new project to promote cooperation between managers of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in countries and territories around the Atlantic Ocean. It is designed to stimulate exchange and the sharing of best practice to improve the effective management of MPAs in coastal and offshore areas of the Atlantic.

The project is inspired by a new concept of Atlanticism that includes Africa and South America as well as Europe and North America. The European Union is committed to furthering this broader approach to transatlantic dialogue, and has selected MPAs as a focus to pilot this new policy initiative. The project will also contribute to EU commitments to tackle global biodiversity loss, support climate change adaptation, and respond to EU internal policies on the environment, regional cooperation and the maritime dimension.



WHY MPAS?

The EU and its fellow parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity have committed to protect 10% of their marine and coastal areas through the effective management of Marine Protected Areas by 2020 (Aichi Target 11 within the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020), an objective endorsed by the Regional Seas Convention.

MPAs are an important tool to manage and enhance marine ecosystems while overseeing sustainable human activities compatible with conservation objectives. However, while their number has increased rapidly around the world in recent years, many designated MPAs lack clear conservation objectives and effective management measures. The project will seek to address this situation through a variety of activities to improve the management of MPAs in the Atlantic area.

STUDIES, TWINNING PROJECTS AND COMMUNICATION

Starting work in early 2016, the project team have begun reviewing existing data and scientific literature concerning the several thousand existing protected areas in 64 countries and territories along the Atlantic coast and offshore (including terrestrial protected areas located on the coast).

Once this overview of the ecological and governance characteristics of Atlantic MPAs is completed, they will conduct an online survey of MPA managers. Intended to identify MPA managers' needs and priorities, it will focus on issues including political commitment to the MPA from local and national authorities, management plans, business plans and sustainable financing strategies, enforcement, governance frameworks and communication tools and strategies. It will also consider efforts to set up regional strategies.

The results will feed into a scoping study that will offer a global picture of marine conservation practices in the Atlantic, and enable a shared representation of the Atlantic MPA network to stakeholders and partners. A kick-off workshop will be organised in Brussels in autumn 2016 to present the project and progress during its first phase to stakeholders.

In a second stage, the project will select MPAs (or networks of MPAs) to participate in three transatlantic twinning projects, representing each of the four Atlantic rim continents, to share best practice and lessons from innovative management approaches. A technical workshop will be organised for each of the twinning projects, which will envisage realistic actions and results, and lay the foundations for a partnership that, it is hoped, may endure beyond the life of this initiative.

A new online platform will be set up to provide an entry-point to Atlantic MPA cooperation, and support the project's learning and cooperation goals. A closing conference and communication materials including video will report on the project's results and outputs.

WHO, WHERE AND WHEN?

The project is being carried out by a team of consultants managed by B&S Europe and including marine conservation experts, working in close collaboration with the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General and Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

An Advisory Board has been composed to provide strategic guidance and supervision to the project, in order to link the project with EU political objectives on biodiversity, climate change and environment protection; and to contribute to improving MPA management in the Atlantic.

The project began in early 2016 and its activities will take place over two years, to conclude at the end of 2017.



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