

MedPAN: the Network of Managers of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean

Catherine PIANTE

WWF France - MedPAN Project Coordinator, Marseille (France)

www.medpan.org - cpiante@wwf.fr

Milena TEMPESTA

WWF Italy - Miramare Natural Marine Reserve, Trieste (Italy)

www.riservamarinamiramare.it - info@riservamarinamiramare.it

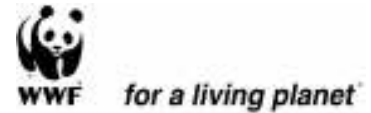
MedPAN (Mediterranean Protected Areas Network) is a network whose aim is to facilitate exchange between managers of Mediterranean marine protected areas (MPA) in order to improve the efficiency of the management of these areas. So far it has developed its action in conjunction with more than twenty partners spread over almost half the countries around the Mediterranean, covering about a quarter of the region's MPAs.

Set up in Monaco in 1990, with the support of the World Bank and the contribution of IUCN and the French government, MedPAN (Mediterranean Protected Areas Network) was, in principle, and according to the wishes of its founders, a network open to all Mediterranean marine and coastal protected areas.⁷ At the outset, the network's secretariat was entrusted to the Port-Cros National Park (France). MedPAN subsequently developed as a forum designed to encourage exchange between the managers of Mediterranean MPAs and, generally, with all the people and organisations interested in the technical aspects related to the management of these areas. In its form, its mode of operation and above all in spirit, MedPAN has remained this platform of meetings on topics closely connected to the reality of the areas where those directly involved in the management of Mediterranean MPAs work.

Six key years marked MedPAN's history and development:

- 1990: establishment of the network;
- 1996: hibernation of the network because of a lack of funds and suspension of its activities
- 1999: revival of the network at the unanimous request of its members, with the support of the Mediterranean Action Plan; MedPAN is set up as a non profit association under French law;
- 2001: at the request of the Port Cros National Park, founder member and executive secretary of the MedPAN association, the technical support of WWF France is provided to take over operational responsibility of the network by delegation from the National Park;
- 2004: the network effectively resumed its activities after the completion of a feasibility study carried out in 2003;





- 2005: start of the INTERREG IIIC project with WWF-France as the lead partner.

Over the fifteen years of activity since its creation, MedPAN has contributed to the training of MPA managers in the region, facilitated the dissemination of know-how and accompanied the achievement of experimental projects aimed at improving management modes and techniques for MPAs.

At present MedPAN brings together 23 partners – 14 European members and 9 non-EU members–divided between 14 Mediterranean countries (France, Italy, Greece, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Croatia, Turkey, Lybia, Egypt, Lebanon) representing about forty MPAs established and/or projected.

The aim of the network is to facilitate exchanges between Mediterranean MPAs in order to improve the efficiency of the management of these areas. Specifically the network can:

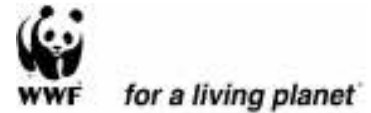
- Promote the sharing of experiences and good practices amongst managers;
- Suggest solutions to management problems;
- Improve capacity building;
- Make the role of marine protected areas known and encourage their recognition;
- Disseminate messages common to all marine protected areas

The network organized 7 thematic workshops during the 3-year project period on management issues common to all MPAs, financed the carrying out of field studies, management and communication tools with the purpose to produce methodological tools designed to help managers in their daily work.

The network works closely with other international organisations whose support has been different. The IUCN Med Office for example covered the participation costs of MPAs managers from three North African Countries, WWF Mediterranean Programme Office and the Tunis Regional Activities Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA) played an important coordination role for the presence of MPAs managers of non-EU Countries, the WWF National Offices facilitated the guidelines for a common future strategy and than other Mediterranean projects related to networks has been useful to exchange data and experiences (ex. EMPAFISH, SUBMED, BIOMEX, MPA Global).

The MedPAN project, sustained with the INTERREG funds, is now ended and the members are seeking to determine how to organise the network that they would like to provide with a stable and permanent status with a long-term sustainable financing. For this reason a feasibility study for the continuation of the network and its activities has been granted to an external expert to answer to the expectation of all the members that consider desirable, even essential, to ensure to the network a





permanent existence and the necessary resources to operate on a permanent basis, by consolidating its status yet safeguarding the flexibility and autonomy with which it worked since now.

The future of the network will be to renew its status of independent non-profit association under the French law with a new statute and a permanent Secretariat. A working group made by different members will decide, during 2008 transition phase, the organisation and functioning of this new MedPAN association, finalising the statute of the association, evaluating the offers of hosting the Secretariat, defining strategies and programmes, raising funds and hiring staff.

Two financial means are now in their first development steps to establish the Secretariat and ensure the network activities:

1) Project Southern Med MPA: submitted to the Global Environmental Funding; eligible only for the non-EU Countries with pilot projects in South and East Med Countries.

2) MED PROGRAMME: one of the programmes following Interreg III; eligible only for the EU Countries.

At the end the MedPA project has largely satisfied its members according to the evaluation questionnaires submitted to the partners and to the effort requested to maintain the network in the future on permanent basis. The activities of the network globally met the needs of managers, the meeting has been useful to know each other and to start collaborations among partners, the level of presentations/discussions during the meeting has been of high quality.

On the contrary the network's means of action based on project funds do not enable its members to build a long term common vision. The request of the partners for the next MedPAN Association activities is to reduce the number of workshops per year (three meetings per year has been considered some time too many) and to raise fund to permit more on-the-field activities based on the need of small regional subnetworks of MPAs.

