

MarCons Final Conference

virtual, 15 October 2020

Objectives of the final conference

The objective of MARCON's final event is to bring together scientists, policy makers, environmental agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to promote common understanding and to bridge the gap between science, management and policy in marine conservation.

To that aim, four panels will be assembled including representatives of the MarCons consortium, policy makers and relevant stakeholders to actively discuss and interact with a wide audience on the following four topics:

Assessing multiple threats to marine biodiversity: Developing a flexible framework that guides the operationalization of cumulative effects assessments, by implementing a risk management approach; accounting for biological invasions in conservation planning and prioritizing management actions for controlling invasive species; accounting for the effects of global climate change, and identifying climate change risk hotspots and refugia.

Improving EU conservation policies and management practices: Developing and implementing adaptive management plans in all Natura 2000 sites; designing networks of MPAs based on systematic conservation planning principles, in the framework of broader Marine Spatial Planning; considering connections between the terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems, and connectivity across jurisdictional boundaries; transparency in the design and management of MPAs.

Improving data availability and accessibility: Promoting investments on mapping the distribution of habitats and species within and outside marine protected areas, improving our knowledge on ecosystem functioning, and setting observation platforms and continuous monitoring of both biodiversity and threats; regionally coordinated data collection, to ensure that effectively accessible and comparable information is shared also with the public and will support the production of consistent evidence-based messages valuable for managers and policy makers.

Marine conservation and blue economy [sustainability] - challenges and opportunities: Vision for promoting marine conservation within the blue economy (conservation, restoration, management); extra income generated by blue growth activities can offer opportunities for marine conservation.

Conference program (central European time)

9:25 Login

9:30 Opening by the Director of the COST Association, Dr Ronald de Bruin

9:40 Conference organization and expected outcomes

9:45 MarCons Overview (Stelios Katsanevakis, MarCons Chair)

10:00 **Topic: Assessing multiple threats to marine biodiversity**

Panelists

Marta Coll (Institute of Marine Science, ICM-CSIC)

Vanessa Stelzenmüller (Thünen-Institute of Sea Fisheries)

Gil Rilov (Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research)

Sheila Heymans (European Marine Board)

Philippe Cury (IRD – Brussels - Euromarine)

Debate/Discussion

11:00 Coffee break

11:15 **Topic: Improving EU conservation policies and management practices**

Panelists

Sylvaine Giakoumi (Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions, University of Queensland)

David Goldsborough (Van Hall Larenstein, University of Applied Sciences)

Peter Mackelworth (Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation)

Vedran Nikolic (European Commission, DG ENV.D.3)

Virgilio Hermoso (Environmental Decision Making Lab, CTFC)

Debate/Discussion

12:15 Lunch break

13:15 **Topic: Improving data availability and accessibility**

Panelists

Simonetta Fraschetti (University of Naples Federico II)

Giovanni Coppini (Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change, Director)

Ana Cristina Cardoso (European Commission, Joint Research Center)

Federica Foglini (ISMAR, CNR)

Leen Vandepitte (Flanders Marine Institute (VLIZ), WoRMS & EurOBIS)

Debate/Discussion

14:15 Topic: Marine conservation and blue economy [sustainability]: challenges and opportunities

Panelists

Stelios Katsanevakis (University of the Aegean, MarCons Chair)

Juan José Ronco Zapatero (European Commission, DG MARE.A.2)

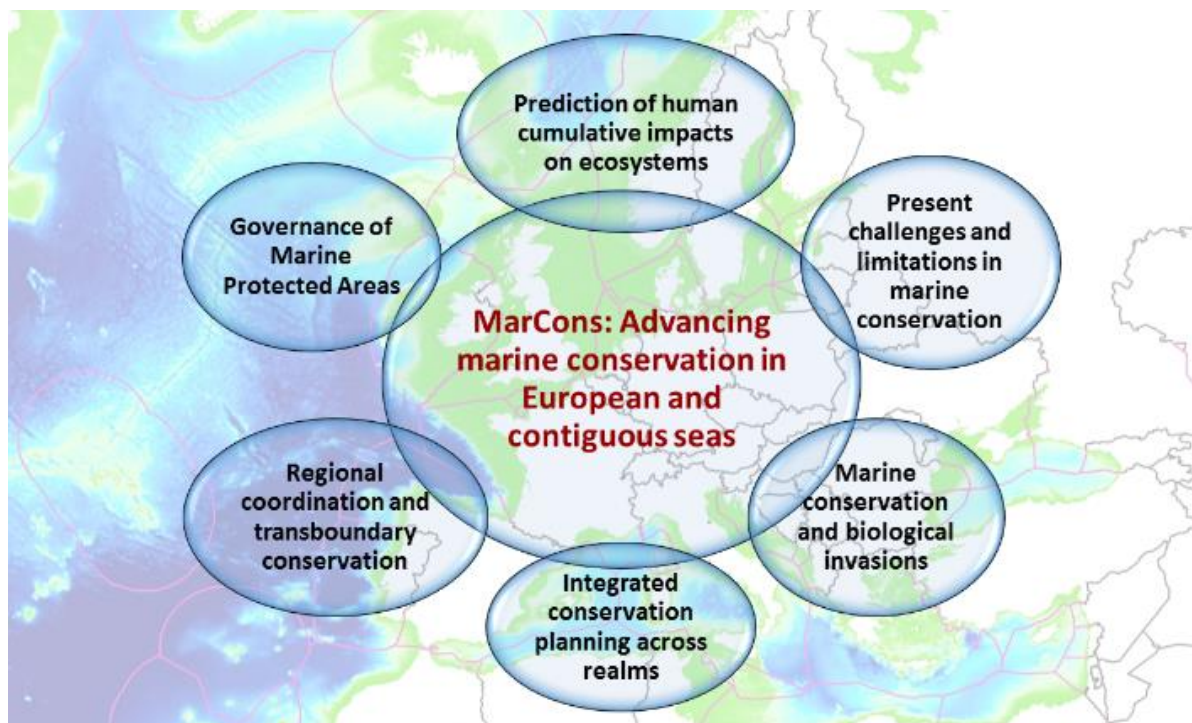
Ann Dom (Seas at Risk, Deputy Director)

Pim Visser (European Association of Fish Producers Organisations, EAPO)

Rémi Gruet (Ocean Energy Europe)

Debate/Discussion

15:15 Wrap up – End of conference



MarCons website: <http://www.marcons-cost.eu/>

MarCons' scientific publications: <http://www.marcons-cost.eu/research-outputs/scientific-publications>

About MarCons

Key points

- Marine conservation efforts have been insufficient to halt biodiversity loss due to increasing human use, cumulative threats, and the lack of shared vision and systematic conservation planning.
- The Natura 2000 network is not fulfilling its objectives. There is an urgent need that EU and member states revise legal and policy frameworks, and implement effective management plans.
- Operationalization of Cumulative Effects Assessments by implementing a risk management approach will benefit European environmental policies.
- Investing on improving data availability, our knowledge on ecosystem functioning, and data accessibility will substantially improve the efficiency of conservation efforts.
- Blue Growth brings up challenges but also opportunities for marine conservation.

***MarCons** aims to facilitate the integration of marine conservation policy into macro-regional maritime spatial planning agendas for the European and contiguous seas, thereby offsetting the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.*

Challenges for marine conservation in Europe

Cumulative effects of human induced pressures and rapid environmental change have led to ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss worldwide. Marine conservation efforts in the European and contiguous seas have not been effective in counteracting this trend. The Natura 2000 network is the backbone of EU's conservation policy, but it has failed to fulfill its objectives for marine conservation, due to a lack of systematic conservation planning, missing or insufficient management, and poor monitoring. Climate change, biological invasions, and cross-realm threats further complicate conservation efforts by modifying the marine environment at alarming rates. The lack of macro-regional coordination, gaps in knowledge, limited data access, and insufficient public participation in decision making further limit the efficiency of conservation efforts. The promotion of the Blue Growth initiative is likely to challenge marine conservation due to possible conflicts between economic interests prevailing over conservation needs. Yet, Blue Growth may also provide important opportunities for marine conservation.

The MarCons approach

The MarCons COST action aimed to deliver the knowledge to equip decision makers to act on biodiversity loss in European and contiguous seas. MarCons led collaborative research to support integrated marine management, conservation planning and policy development. MarCons advanced the science base to develop macro-regional and national policies through six key actions:

- to develop tools to analyze cumulative effects on marine ecosystems;
- to identify critical scientific and technical gaps in conservation efforts;
- to find solutions to improve the resilience of the marine environment to global change and biological invasions;
- to develop frameworks for integrated conservation planning across terrestrial, freshwater, and marine environments;
- to coordinate marine conservation policy across national boundaries;
- to identify effective governance approaches for marine protected area management.