ATLAS WP7

Policy Stakeholder Engagement report

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1 Introduction and approach

The ATLAS project is a trans-Atlantic assessment and deep-water ecosystem-based spatial management plan for Europe, which aims to provide essential new knowledge of North Atlantic ecosystems through data gathering and synthesis to inform and facilitate stakeholder agreement on marine policy and regulation and spur Blue Growth. The expected impacts of the project are to: (i) improve resource management (ecosystem approach) and governance, (ii) improve cooperation amongst states within the EU and across the North Atlantic, (iii) contribute to the EU Integrated Maritime Policy, and (iv) strengthen international agreements to conserve vulnerable marine ecosystems and ecologically significant marine areas.

ATLAS will strive to improve our understanding of the complexity of deep-sea ecosystems and to predict future shifts and vulnerabilities of these ecosystems and their associated species, including those that are new to science. As well as carrying out pioneering research and discovery, a major goal of ATLAS is to develop a scientific knowledge base that can inform the development of appropriate international policies to ensure deep-sea Atlantic resources are managed effectively and contribute to marine spatial planning (MSP). Any guidelines emerging from the project will have to consider and achieve multiple objectives and reflect different expectations, opportunities or conflicts.

Stakeholder engagement and participation is an important step in the development of any spatial management consideration, as identified in Step 4 of UNESCO's step-by-step approach to MSP (Ehler and Douvere, 2009). Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organisations that are (or will be) affected, involved or interested (positively or negatively) by MSP measures or actions in various ways. The reasons to involve stakeholders in MSP are manifold, including:

- To encourage ownership of the spatial plan, engender trust among stakeholders and decision-makers, and encourage voluntary compliance with rules and regulations
- To gain a better understanding of the complexity (spatial, temporal, and other) of the marine management area
- To gain a better understanding of the human influences on the management area
- To deepen mutual and shared understanding about the problems and challenges in the management area
- To gain a better understanding of underlying (often sector-oriented) desires, perceptions and interests that stimulate and/or prohibit integration of policies in the management area

- To examine existing and potential compatibility and/or conflicts of multiple use objectives of the management area
- To generate new options and solutions that may not have been considered individually
- To expand and diversify the capacity of the planning team, in particular through the inclusion of secondary and tertiary information (e.g., local knowledge and traditions)

For this initial ATLAS stakeholder engagement exercise, we sought internal views from ATLAS associate partners and advisors and external opinion from experts attending regional and global marine governance meetings that have taken place during the first six months of the ATLAS project. For the former, a questionnaire survey was completed during July and August 2016. For the latter, informal contact with marine governance experts was made during the following meetings:

- EU Conference on MSP (Azores, 23-24 June 2016)
- International Marine Conservation Congress 4 (Newfoundland (28 July - 3 August 2016)
- UN Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction PrepCom2 (New York, 26 August - 9 September 2016)
- NorthSEE Project partner meeting (Edinburgh, 8-9 September 2016)
- Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue between Regional Sea Conventions and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (Seoul, 26-28 September 2016)
- MIDAS FP7 Project Final Meeting (Ghent, 3-7 October 2016)
- OSPAR Commission Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Protected Areas (Mallorca, 11-14 October 2016)
- Celtic Seas Partnership Project Final Meeting (Dublin, 18-19 October 2016)

The ATLAS WP7 Policy Stakeholder Engagement Survey asked questions about Blue Growth, levels of engagement with current policy instruments and area-based management tools, direct involvement with the 12 ATLAS Case Studies, understanding of major forthcoming policy challenges for the Atlantic, involvement in complementary project initiatives, and expectation of ATLAS.

Ten questionnaire responses were received from associate partners and advisors to the ATLAS consortium (OSPAR, Woodside, BP, Dalhousie, NOAA, DFO, Memorial, WWF). These responses were not representative, but express a spread of views from government, inter-governmental, industry, academic, and non-governmental organisations.

2 Understanding/definition of Blue Growth

The general understanding of Blue Growth from the questionnaire responses was as a means of promoting sustainable development (but not always with an environmental focus), with benefits now and in the future. Respondents listed several points which they thought Blue Growth encompassed, including economic expansion, economy vs growth, the growth agenda measured as an increase in either monetised wealth or livelihoods, and activities such as fishing, oil and gas extraction, renewable energy projects, mining, biotechnology, aquaculture, science and ecosystem integrity. All respondents considered Blue Growth to be relevant to their work, as they are involved in a range of activities, including the development of sustainable solutions for industry, devising minimisation and mitigation impact strategies, identifying and promoting benefits to the national economy and agreeing precautionary approaches to underpin marine policy efforts. Respondents' interest in Blue Growth ranged widely within the maritime sphere, encompassing the principles relating to the ecosystem approach to MSP, maintaining ecosystem services, assessing cumulative impacts, defining critical natural capital, maintaining the ecological integrity of deep-water ecosystems within areas of development, promoting integrated baseline data collection and assessment, designing collective MSP and policy frameworks, investigating the role of marine technology industries in advancing ocean science and products, the role of third-party market providers using government and other derived data to deliver products of value and facilitating stakeholders to consider co-management of resources.

Outcome from discussions at marine governance meetings highlighted work by the European Commission (EC) and associated studies. The EC have set out Blue Growth as a long-term strategy (Europe 2020 Strategy) recognising that the blue economy represents roughly 5.4 million jobs and a gross added value of almost €500bn a year. The Strategy includes high-potential sectors, essential components to provide knowledge, legal certainty and security in the blue economy and sea-basin strategies (EC COM(2014) 254/2). Of these, sea-basin strategies, the Atlantic Action Plan is the most relevant to ATLAS. The Plan promotes cooperation and identifies priorities and related actions. This plan follows from the Atlantic Strategy the EC adopted in 2011. Several projects supported by EC addressing Blue Growth are worthy of mention.

The consultancy ECORYS led a Blue Growth study on traditional and emerging activities in the blue economy, culminating in the report 'Scenarios and drivers for sustainable growth from the oceans, seas and coasts' (ECORYS, 2012). The study built on earlier policy initiatives to recognise the potential of marine resources working towards the Europe 2020 Strategy. Blue Growth was defined as 'smart, sustainable and inclusive economic and employment growth for the oceans, seas and

coasts'. The ECORYS project examined sectoral and cross-sectoral activities in detail, analysing Blue Growth potential, functions or value chains and scenarios. In terms of stakeholder engagement, the project held a two-day expert hearing (9-10 November 2011) and a one-day stakeholder participation meeting (26 January 2012).

Work carried out by the European Marine Board (EMB) deep-sea working group on identifying priorities for advancing ocean observation and seabed mapping is also worthy of mention. The EMB's objectives are enhancing cross-sector collaboration, reviewing achievements to date in deep-sea research, defining societal opportunities, identifying mechanisms for how deep-sea research can contribute to sustainable management, and governance of the ocean. In the EMB survey scientists' priorities were increasing basic knowledge, understanding human impacts, environmental impact assessment (EIA), valuing goods and services, and seafloor mapping. However, for industry, as well as giving a high priority to increasing basic knowledge, policy and legal issues together with long-term monitoring priorities were highlighted. For deep-sea ecosystems, research challenges have been summarised in EMB position paper 22 (Rogers et al., 2015).

A first summit of the Blue Economy Business and Science Forum has taken place (Hamburg, 12-13 September 2016) that addressed issues such as benefiting from already-existing research, innovation and technology achievements to speed up commercialisation of marine technologies, how to bring science and business communities closer, and other initiatives to boost investments in the blue economy.

The ATLAS consortium was represented at the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global (SOI) Dialogue with Regional Seas Organisations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Seoul, 26-28 September 2016) and at the 3rd Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference (Dublin, 27 September 2016).

The FP7 MIDAS Project (www.eu-midas.net) has sought to engage closely with industry to identify the most likely scenarios for the industrial activities involved in extraction of deep-sea minerals, as well as potential mitigation and management practices to control the environmental impact of these activities. This work has informed the development of guidelines and protocols. Main challenges relate to uncertainties associated with technology to be used for mining and the response of the environment and biological receptors to the physical changes likely to result from mining. Within the ATLAS project area, deep-sea mining has most potential in the short-term in waters adjacent to the Azores on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

3 Level of engagement

ATLAS Partners are working closely with several relevant policy initiatives at both EU (Atlantic Strategy, MSFD, CFP) and global scales (UN BBNJ Implementing Agreement discussions, EBSAs and VMEs). The questionnaire returns confirmed that these initiatives are not a high priority for some scientific Associate Partners. Intergovernmental organisations and NGOs, however, are strongly engaged with these processes. There is currently little engagement of North American colleagues in EU policy initiatives and a future role of ATLAS will be to raise awareness and engagement.

Informal consultation with experts confirmed that ATLAS can input to on-going policy discussions on:

- Atlantic Strategy: at the 3rd Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference the ATLAS presentation was well received, with one attendant offering to collaborate in the formulation of marine plans. One of the main topics addressed was the different means to generate investment in marine activities
- MSFD: Good Environmental Status considerations for deep-seas and Area Beyond National Jurisdiction. ATLAS has an opportunity to engage with the OSPAR ICG-MSFD
- EU Deep-Sea Fishery Regulation: e.g., bottom trawling ban below 800 m in international waters; definition of significant adverse impacts to VMEs has implications for ATLAS case studies
- EBSAs and VMEs: e.g., exchange of regional experiences in relation to EIA, RFMOs and MSP, as well as exploring opportunities for strengthening collaboration to accelerate progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Targets 6, 10 and 11) and relevant sustainable development goals (SD Goal 14) at the SOI meeting welcomed future input from ATLAS. The OSPAR ICG-MPA meeting also considered the future of EBSAs as well as the future management of OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ
- UN BBNJ Implementing Agreement Preparatory Committee: ATLAS Partners to co-chair side event at next Preparatory Committee meeting with the aim to identify opportunities (neutral case studies) for engagement with IUCN ambitions so that any ATLAS management recommendations are more realistic and likely to be acted upon by States and competent international organisations

4 ATLAS case studies

The stakeholder engagement exercise confirmed the following table.

Case Study	Focal Ecosystems	Current and BG Sectors	Lead and Collaborators	Policy Stakeholders (not including EU)
1. LoVe Observatory (Norway)	CWC reefs, sponge grounds	F, OG, T	Statoil, NIOZ, HWU	Norway, OSPAR
2. West of Shetland and W Scotland slope (UK)	Sponge grounds, coral gardens	B, F, OG	HWU, BP, OGUK, MSS	UK, OSPAR
3. Rockall Bank (UK & Ireland)	CWC reefs, coral gardens, carbonate mounds, sponge grounds, cold seeps	B, F, OG	MSS, IEO, OXU	UK, Ireland, NEAFC, OSPAR, ICES
4. Mingulay Reef Complex (UK)	CWC reefs	F, T	HWU, MSS	UK, OSPAR
5. Porcupine Seabight (Ireland)	CWC reefs, coral gardens, carbonate mounds, sponge grounds	B, F, OG	NUIG, Woodside	Ireland, OSPAR
6. Bay of Biscay (France)	CWC reefs	B, F	IFREMER	France, OSPAR
7. Gulf of Cádiz/Strait of Gibraltar/Alborán Sea (Spain & Portugal)	CWC reefs, coral gardens, sponge grounds	B, F, OG	IEO, IFREMER, IMAR-UAz	Spain, Portugal, UK, OSPAR, UNEP-MAP
8. Azores (Portugal)	Hydrothermal vents, seamounts, coral gardens, sponge grounds	B, F, M	IMAR-UA, IEO	Portugal, OSPAR, NEAFC
9. Reykjanes Ridge (Iceland)	Hydrothermal vents, CWC reefs, coral gardens, sponge grounds	B, F, M	UCD	Iceland, OSPAR, NEAFC, ICES
10. S Davis Strait/Western Greenland/Labrador Sea (Canada)	CWC reefs, coral gardens, sponge grounds	B, F	DFO	Canada, Denmark/Greenland
11. Flemish Cap (Canada)	Coral gardens, sponge grounds	B, F, OG	IEO, DFO, OXU, NAFO	Canada, NAFO, CBD
12. SE USA (Bermuda Transect)	CWC reefs, coral gardens	B, F, M, OG	UNCW, AP-TU, NOAA	Bermuda, USA, NAFO, CBD, Sargasso Sea Commission

Questionnaire respondents identified the following major forthcoming policy challenges for the Atlantic:

- BBNJ, equality of benefit sharing, international cross-jurisdictional governance
- Post-Brexit issues and EU vs national policy
- New technologies
- Clarification of specific actions to protect the environment
- Serious considerations for ocean-based climate mitigation
- Appropriate scientific knowledge. Baseline data collection to support impact assessments (scale issues – coordination at a sea-basin scale)
- Integrating policy and legal frameworks
- Balancing the needs of different uses. Understanding impacts on High Seas MPAs
- Spatial planning of seafloor habitats in ABNJ and biodiversity linkages

- Managing Blue Growth within environmental limits

Respondents reported their involvement with the following complementary project initiatives:

- IPBES global and regional assessments
- UN-DESA initiatives to implement SDGs
- Deepwater exploration in Africa (Woodside)
- NERC and O&G innovation programme (BP)
- Canadian Healthy Oceans Strategic Network
- Canadian Safe and Sustainable Ocean Frontier Project
- ResponSEAble (ocean literacy)
- INDEEP/DOSI
- Capacity development initiatives
- Other H2020 projects: SponGES
- Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance

Respondents had the following expectation of ATLAS:

- Spatial information to assist holistic practical decision-making at an ocean basin scale
- Optimising interactions and creating opportunities for synergies
- Quality science outcomes - biodiversity status, trends and drivers of change
- Science messages to inform O&G policy and pressing societal challenges
- Collaboration across international entities
- Data sharing where possible
- Clear and concise communication
- Align with partner projects to give common messages

5 Conclusion

The timing of ATLAS provides an opportunity to inform and engage key stakeholders with respect to the Blue Growth agenda. EU stakeholders consulted in this exercise currently benefit from more clearly articulated strategic policies and there is an onus to collaborate closely with North American colleagues throughout the project. ATLAS case studies provide opportunities to engage stakeholders with specific issues and lessons learned. ATLAS should continue to contribute to and track the multiple initiatives and complementary projects identified in this report.

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