

Towards the coherent planning and management of nature-based solutions for the effective protection and restoration of Baltic Sea ecosystems

Date: Friday, 26 April 2024

Theme: Marine Protection & Ocean Policies

Workshop Summary

The workshop highlighted the importance of integrating policy and research efforts across marine and terrestrial ecosystems for their effective conservation and restoration. The concept of nature-based solutions (NbS) and related operational frameworks were used to structure the workshop and trigger discussions between speakers and participants.

The Keynote speaker, **Charles Karangwa**, Global Head of Nature-based Solutions for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), presented the concept and existing good practices and tools for NbS to tackle societal and environmental issues worldwide. Currently, 85% of the oceans are exploited to their limits, and 32% are considered overexploited. A holistic approach using NbS was discussed. Considering that it is often difficult to assess impacts due to insufficient data availability, the question is how to increase the uptake of NbS to address different sustainability challenges, including climate change disasters, as an integrative approach to both marine and terrestrial issues. Planning of the solutions should go beyond the realms and “borders”. Acknowledging that NbS cannot completely replace other solutions, synergies should be ensured as different integrative planning tools are available. Some examples of existing initiatives for NbS were presented, providing feedback on how to combine these solutions with big infrastructure projects and community actions.

Miguel Inácio, Researcher from the Environmental Management Center, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania, presented the origins of ecosystem management and modification by humans to address social and environmental issues. In this context, Miguel referred to the role that “grey” solutions had in the last century and how the use of NbS is gaining momentum to reach environmentally friendly solutions to social issues. The value of marine protected areas (MPAs) as NbS was highlighted. MPAs are capable of preserving the spatial complexity of marine ecosystems and acting as “umbrella” measures to guarantee the success of more local actions. Discussions were held on interactions between MPAs and coastal developments, restoration actions on land and the links to restoration projects at sea, and the effective involvement of “land” stakeholders in MPA processes. It was argued that NbS should be properly considered in MSP processes, highlighting the importance of considering ecosystem services (ES) to guide these processes.

An inspiring example was presented by **Agnė Lukoševičienė** from Ignitis - Offshore Renewable Wind energy company - on their contribution to biodiversity and ecosystems through OWF sustainable planning, impact assessments and monitoring, ensuring the least possible impact on MPAs, which are in some cases in close proximity to OWF areas. This initiative is also a good example of collaboration with all stakeholders, including industries, which can support data sharing, innovation, and balancing marine conservation with economic sectors.