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COASTAL AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF SEA  
BASIN STRATEGIES**

Environmental report  
submitted for consultation  
Addendum on additional targets  
February 2021  
Mediterranean coastline



Évaluer les Politiques et Innover  
pour les Citoyens et les Espaces



## Contents

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Introduction  | 2 |
| Targets for the definition of SPZs  | 3 |
| Targets for the consideration of new challenges and ambitions for the Sea Basin Strategy Document | 5 |
| The targets set in the construction of River Basin Management Plans                               | 8 |
| Conclusion  | 9 |

# Introduction

The first two parts of the Sea Basin Strategy Documents (Sea Basin Strategy Document), forming the Sea basin Strategy, were adopted by an Inter-Prefectoral Order in October 2019. This strategy defines the planning for maritime spaces, 30 vocation zones for the Mediterranean coastline, and objectives to be achieved in each of these zones or for the entire coastline. The order of 11 July 2018 regarding the criteria and methods to be implemented for the preparation of the first two parts of the Sea Basin Strategy Document notes that the environmental targets (mentioned in Article R. 219-7 of the Environment Code) are defined so that the pressures exerted by human activities on the marine environment are compatible with the achievement or maintenance of good environmental status of marine waters by the end of the current cycle of the "Marine Environment Strategy" framework directive. This decree also states that the indicators associated with the environmental targets include targets against which the achievement of the objectives is assessed.

At the time of the adoption of the sea basin strategy, not all of these targets could be defined, due to a lack of data or the maturity of the consultations: 26 targets were still to be defined for the Mediterranean coast. Work was carried out to evaluate and consolidate existing monitoring networks in order to define them at the time of the adoption of the action plan: coherence between these networks and those used for monitoring the objectives of the Water Framework Directive was sometimes strengthened at the same time. At the end of the consultation, it will therefore be necessary to complete the Sea basin strategy with the additional targets defined during this work and to adopt the modifications to Annex 4 of the Mediterranean Sea basin strategy, in particular Chapter 1 relating to the objectives, indicators and targets, and Chapter 3 relating to the methodology for defining the objectives, indicators and targets.

The "Addendum to the Mediterranean Sea Basin Strategy on complementary targets and associated methodologies, defined in conjunction with the work to draw up the Sea Basin Strategy Document Mediterranean Action Plan" produced in the context of the EA's referral for the Sea Basin Strategy Document's operational strand provides a summary explanation of the methods used to define each of the complementary targets set and the nature of the work carried out.

As the Sea basin strategy has been the subject of an environmental assessment, dealing in particular with the potential environmental impacts in relation to the ambition of the targets set, it is necessary to complete it today with regard to the setting of additional targets. This is the purpose of this Addendum, which has two objectives:

- (1) analyse the ambition of the 26 additional targets defined after the adoption of the Sea basin strategy. This analysis will be carried out in this addendum in relation to the three sets of targets presented in the above-mentioned note, namely (i) the targets relating to the definition of strong protection zones, (ii) the targets relating to the taking into account of the new issues and new ambitions of the Sea Basin Strategy Document in relation to the Action Plan for the Marine Environment of the first cycle, and (iii) the targets established within the framework of the construction of the Rhone-Mediterranean and Corsica water development and management master plans and their consistency with the Sea Basin Strategy Document;
- (2) draw conclusions from this analysis on the possible modification of the conclusions of the SEA for the strategic aspects that could result from the setting of these 26 additional targets.

## Targets for the definition of Strong Protection Zones

Eight targets are covered by this first set. They concern the following environmental targets: D01-HB-OE3, D01-HB-OE6, D01-HB-OE10, D01-OM-OE06, D06-OE01, D06-OE02 and D07-OE03. Most of them are formulated in a qualitative way, along the lines of "Increase of habitat area X in strong protection". The setting of these targets refers directly to the implementation of measure M003- NAT1B adopted as part of the first cycle of the APME, which provided for the "completion of the network of marine protected areas by the establishment of strong protections in sectors of remarkable marine biodiversity". The aim of this measure is to create a coherent, connected network of strong protection zones (SPZ) that is representative of the diversity of marine ecosystems on each coastline in mainland France. These strong protections will be instituted as a priority within existing protected marine areas.

In order to judge the ambition of the targets proposed by the Mediterranean coastline, it is therefore necessary to return to the implementation of measure M003-NAT1B. The latter was the subject of a national framework note in June 2018 proposing the following steps for its implementation:

- Step 1: Inventory of existing strong protections in the MPA network;
- Step 2: Analysis of the coherence of the current network of strong protections in MPAs;
- Step 3: Identification of sectors and issues requiring a higher level of protection to strengthen the network
- Stage 4: Association and then consultation of the CMFs on the additions to be made to the network of strong protections by 2030 and establishment of the corresponding target as a proportion of the EEZ in strong protections in mainland France and intermediate targets for 2021 and 2026
- Stage 5: Installation of strong protection for the coastlines

As these different stages are planned to take place until the end of 2019, they should have made it possible to set quantitative targets for the proportions of habitats at stake located in the SPZs (for example : 10% of the area of habitat X located in the SPZ). However, the process has been delayed, particularly in the early stages, and has not allowed the definition of the new SPZs to be achieved within the timetable for setting the complementary targets of the Sea basin strategy. In a national working group, it was therefore decided on 13 March 2020 to change the wording of the targets initially envisaged, as described in this extract from the national working group's decision statement:

*"In order to reflect the different levels of progress and ambition of the façades, the following general wording is proposed:*

*"Increase [the proportion] of the area of [name of habitat] under strong protection [in each of the following areas [, with at least one area per high or major stake sector]: list of potential SPZs\* relevant to this habitat]*

*\* Naming of an area intended to host a SPZ, the precise perimeter of which will be defined after local consultations. "*

*This wording may be adapted for each indicator, with or without the bracketed words. This wording thus provides for an increase in the coverage of strong protection, with, if possible, a list of potential SPZs in which this habitat will be protected, and, if possible, a criterion of representativeness of strong or major issues.*

*Note that in some cases, more specific targets are proposed, in the following form: "X% of the known area of habitat X is located in a strong protection zone*

With regard to the Mediterranean coastline in particular, we can underline the following with regard to this implementation process common to all the façades:

- that 35 existing and 9 potential SPZs could be defined on the Mediterranean coast, and contrary to the other coasts, with fairly precisely defined contours since they represent 246 km<sup>2</sup> (existing) and 395 km<sup>2</sup> (potential) respectively;
- that these SPZs take into account the principle of "multi-stakeholder" SPZs, i.e. that all ecological issues and challenges identified as strong or major have been considered in the analysis;
- that these SPZs fully cover the issues of the existing network of protected areas (Posidonia meadows, rocky habitats) but cover other issues less well (deep non-rocky habitats, lagoons and estuaries). It should be noted that the list of potential SPZs will continue to be developed in conjunction with protected area managers;
- that no targets are defined in quantitative terms;
- as no SPZ has been defined for lagoons, a target could not be defined for this habitat and the associated indicator is said to be a candidate, i.e. it will not be monitored or filled in during this second cycle of the MSFD.

In conclusion on the ambition of this first set of targets, it is regrettable that in all cases a quantitative target has been abandoned in favour of an "upward trend" associated with a list of "potential" SPZs. The designation of a list of new protected areas to be created is nevertheless a step forward, even if it is as much a matter for the national protected areas strategy as that of the Sea basin strategy.

It should be remembered that one of the "framework" objectives of the National Protected Areas Strategy 2020-2030 is to achieve 10% of the area of SPZs by 2022. With reference to the latter, the Mediterranean coast considers that the surface area targeted by existing and potential SPZs should represent 2% of the EEZ in 2026, and 3% in 2030.

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This objective is global for all French waters and therefore does not apply to each coastline. Nevertheless, the OFB sets a benchmark of 5% in mainland France, with a minimum of 3% on each coastline.

# Targets for addressing the new challenges and ambitions of the Sea Basin Strategy Document

Twelve targets are covered by this second set. They concern the following environmental targets: D01-HB-OE9, D01-HB-OE10, D01-OM-OE01, D01-OM-OE04, D01-OM-OE05, D06-OE01, D08-OE04 and D11-OE01 and refer to four different topics which we will deal with in turn: (1) special habitats (for the first two objectives), (2) sea birds (for the next three), (3) the integrity of the sea-floor and in particular artificialization (for D06-OE01) and (4) two other anthropogenic pressures (dry docks and noise).

## 1. SPECIAL HABITATS

The two targets concerned are the avoidance or reduction of physical disturbance to Mediterranean phanerogam meadows and coralligenous areas, on the one hand, and deep-sea habitats on the other, both of which are important issues.

On the Mediterranean coast, these two targets are defined in a qualitative way, for example: "A downward trend in the proportion of seagrass beds subject to physical pressure from anchoring.

This first group of targets can be considered relatively unambitious in view of the areas occupied by these habitats on the coast and their high sensitivity to anthropogenic pressures (anchoring, trolling). The actors of the coastline thus justify the choice of a qualitative target: "At present, the information on future projects (regulations, technical operations, etc.) is not precise enough to be able to define a target with "numbers". It is extremely complex to set an objective in terms of surface area and in relation to local actions that will be implemented on various scales and in respect of very different themes (fishing, diving, pleasure boating").

## 2. SEABIRDS

The four targets in question are the reduction of incidental catches of sea birds, the reduction of the pressure exerted by certain species that have been introduced and domesticated on sea bird breeding sites and the maintenance/restoration of functional sea bird habitats in coastal wetlands.

On the Mediterranean coast, two of these four targets are quantitative and the other two are qualitative, in particular because certain elements of knowledge have yet to be established (map of functional sites or reference value/state 0).

In addition to their partially quantitative nature, the setting of these targets was worked out in consultation with the Groupement d'Intérêt Scientifique Oiseaux Marins (GISOM), which also undertook to monitor the indicators associated with these targets. This second group of targets can therefore also be considered to be rather ambitiously defined.

## 3. ARTIFICIALISATION

The four targets concerned relate to the average rate of artificial shoreline (structures and developments at sea) and coastal bottom (structures and developments at sea and under water between 0 and 20 metres).

For the Mediterranean coastline, two of these four targets are quantitative (those concerning MPAs) and the other two targets are "semi-quantitative", i.e. they are worded as follows: "Trend towards a decrease in the average rate of artificialization in relation to the average reference rate evaluated at x% for the Mediterranean coastline over 6 years".

Firstly, with regard to the two targets for MPAs, it should be remembered that the Mediterranean coastline was the only one to have chosen to display a quantitative target for the rate of artificialization in MPAs within the Sea basin strategy adopted in October 2019. In view of the information provided by the studies carried out since then on a reference value for the rate of artificialization in MPAs in recent years (see below), the target set at "Less than 0.1% cumulative increase following the application of the ERC sequence" seems quite ambitious.

As far as the targets for the entire coastline are concerned, the characterisation of a reference rate of artificialization was therefore essential for establishing these targets. This rate has been established by CEREMA for linear areas (and will soon be established for the coastal zone) and for the period 2002-2014, in the context of a report entitled "Artificialization of coastal and littoral marine environments, Methods for determining indicators 1 and 2" (CEREMA, 2021), which is appended to the Addendum to the Sea basin strategy mentioned in the introduction.

With regard to this CEREMA report, it should be remembered that in the Mediterranean, the MEDAM monitoring network (ECOSEAS-CNRS-University of Nice), has been deployed within the framework of the WFD and in the first cycle of the APME, and which was initially proposed as a way of defining the reference values and targets to be achieved. The modelled data, which was made available in MEDAM, has made it possible to raise awareness among stakeholders, and in particular local authorities, of the problem posed by the artificialization of the coastline and coastal seabed during the preparation of the Sea basin strategy. This made it possible to obtain an agreement over a first target that calls for a limit on artificial development in all the Marine Protected Areas of the coastline and over the six years of the 1st Sea Basin Strategy Document cycle to less than 0.1% increase (see below). However, these models needed to be consolidated and deepened by sector: a database also had to be built for all maritime coastlines, including a shared model and definition. This is why it was decided that CEREMA would be responsible for the construction of this database and would propose a reference value and a target for each coastline.

From both a methodological and regulatory point of view, the production of this reference value for all coastlines represents a considerable step forward. Indeed:

- methodologically, this calculation raises many challenges such as (1) taking into account only the physical losses (linear or surface of the structures) or also the physical disturbances generated by the structures, or (2) the need to adapt to the evolutions of the reference land/sea boundary, currently being redefined. These challenges raise in particular strong issues of coherence between the calculation carried out by CEREMA and other existing calculations (within the framework of the coastline management strategy for example);
- from a regulatory point of view, the ET indicators of the MSFD and their targets are subject to a compatibility obligation for authorisations at sea, which increases the requirement in terms of the reliability of the results, and requires that they can be converted into absolute values in an accurate manner to facilitate the processing of authorisations.

The setting of semi-quantitative targets can therefore be considered to be a real step forward, which has moreover been the subject of much debate and required many explanations of the study carried out by CEREMA and its method. However, the fact that no quantified target for reducing the rate of artificialization has been set for this cycle poses a certain risk to achieving the national objective of "zero net artificialization by 2030" at the end of the next cycle. Furthermore, the implementation and monitoring of these targets remains a challenge in terms of support for the instructing services.

#### 4. OTHER ANTHROPOGENIC PRESSURES

The two targets concerned by this fourth set are, on the one hand, the number of ports equipped with dry docks that have an effluent treatment system and, on the other hand, the spatial extent of events with a high level of noise related to impulsive emissions.

The first target is of a qualitative nature "upward trend" and the second is not yet fixed as work is still in progress. It is therefore difficult to comment on how ambitious these two targets are, although the former appears modest.



## Targets established in the framework of the River Basin Management Plan

Four targets are covered by this third set. They concern the following environmental targets: D07-WE03, D08-WE07 and D09-WE01, in particular non-removable barriers in rivers (D7), the quality of sediments and coastal water bodies (D8) and the microbiological quality of coastal waters (D9).

Before commenting on the value of these targets, let us first recall the strong link between the River Basin Management Plan and Sea Basin Strategy Document. , In accordance with IX of Article 212- 1 of the Environment Code, the River Basin Management Plan must be compatible or made compatible with the environmental targets as defined in the APME, when it is periodically updated in accordance with Section IV of Article L. 212-2. Conversely, the APME includes environmental targets and associated indicators for achieving good environmental status of marine waters, which are compatible or have been made compatible with the River Basin Management Plan (Article 219-9 of the Environment Code). By virtue of the provisions mentioned in IX of Article 212- 1 and insofar as many of the pressures on marine ecosystems are generated on land, the environmental targets of the Sea Basin Strategy Documents relating to these pressures on land or in relation to water policy define new results to be achieved within the framework of the River Basin Management Plans that are currently being drawn up for the third management cycle 2022-2027. As a result, the River Basin Management Plans and WFD programme of measures must define the measures contributing to the achievement of these results, within the limits of their legal scope, unless exceptions to the achievement of these objectives are integrated into the Sea Basin Strategy Documents.

Within the framework of this necessary coordination, the setting of targets for this third set was the task of several national working groups involving the departments responsible for drawing up the Sea Basin Strategy Document (DIRMs), River Basin Management Plans (Water Agencies) or indeed both (DREAL, basin ).

With regard to the Mediterranean coastline in particular:

- the target for D7 is set qualitatively as "Upward trend". The justification given for this choice concerns the need to carry out a specific study on the possible issues to be dealt with in terms of hydrological continuity and land-sea connectivity, in addition to the studies carried out under the River Basin Management Plan and PLAGEPOMI;
- the two targets relating to D8 are, for one of them, not defined (the associated indicator therefore having candidate status and will not be reported to the EC for this cycle), and for the other, set at 100% of coastal water bodies in good chemical status;
- finally, the target relating to D9 is quantitative in nature and presents a good level of prevention since it sets the number of monitoring points showing a deterioration in microbiological quality at 0.

In total, with two quantitative targets compatible with GES compliance, one qualitative target and one undefined target, the level of ambition for this third set is medium high.

## Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, it can be considered that about ten complementary targets have been defined in a rather ambitious way (i.e. a little less than 40%), the others having a medium to low level of ambition.

As the environmental assessment of the Sea basin strategy concluded that a significant proportion of environmental targets had targets that were modestly ambitious, the setting of additional targets discussed in this addendum does not appear likely to significantly alter the conclusions of that assessment.