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Pan-European Ecological Network
Fact sheet VII – Coastal and Marine networks

Highlights from ECMEN

Under the PEBLDS and PEEN, the development and implementation of the European Coastal and Marine Ecological Network (ECMEN) commenced. The Executive Bureau of PEBLDS designated the EUCC-The Coastal Union together with the Council of Europe and UNEP as the responsible body for the elaboration of this action. Two reports on ECMEN and a map of the coastal systems of Europe have since been prepared and published.

The Council of Europe has organised in Llandudno (Wales) in June 2002, a Colloquy on marine and coastal ecological corridors, as a first meeting in a series of European encounters. The Colloquy was a contribution to the setting-up of the European Coastal and Marine Ecological Network and aimed at the development of specific programmes for the protection of the marine and coastal biodiversity.

The European Coastal and Marine Ecological Network, within the framework of the PEEN has five main aims:

- to raise awareness of the importance of a network approach to the conservation of habitats and species at a Pan-European level, and thereby encourage their development;
- to provide a platform facilitating co-ordination and cooperation between existing and proposed networks at local, national, and regional scales;
- to identify gaps in the current approaches to site and species conservation;
- to provide the necessary scientific information to inform the process of network development, adding value by setting the Pan-European context for individual initiatives;
- to provide support for local and national initiatives in network building.

The reports produced in the framework of ECMEN highlighted the importance of migration for many species and the vital functions of core areas, stepping stones and ecological corridors. Coastal and marine ecological corridors are an essential element in the Pan-European Ecological Network. Coastal corridors are important for migrating birds and include sea straits *e.g.* Sont (Denmark-Sweden), Gibraltar (Spain) and the Bosphorus (Turkey).

Shorebirds often move along the coast, itself one long corridor interrupted only by infrastructure and other developments. Many marine corridors form part of the migration route of a considerable number of mobile marine species and are often narrow stretches of water (*e.g.* sea straits and river mouths).

The identification and definition of the main coastal landscape and types was the first priority under ECMEN. A number of species were chosen which could be used to illustrate coastal networks at supranational, national and local scales, and form the main geographical zones – i.e. the Baltic Sea, North Sea, and Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Seas.

In October 2003, a Conference will be organised in Dubrovnik (Croatia) on marine biodiversity with the aim of stimulating an international and integrated co-operation in this field, at the Pan-European level.

Literature:

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3. Proceedings of the Colloquy on marine and coastal ecological corridors, Wales, Llandudno, 20-21 June 2002 – Environmental encounters No. 55, Council of Europe