



What are Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)?

And how do they link to international strategies in the Baltic?

Webinar Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Baltic Sea – 23 Nov 2021



Origin



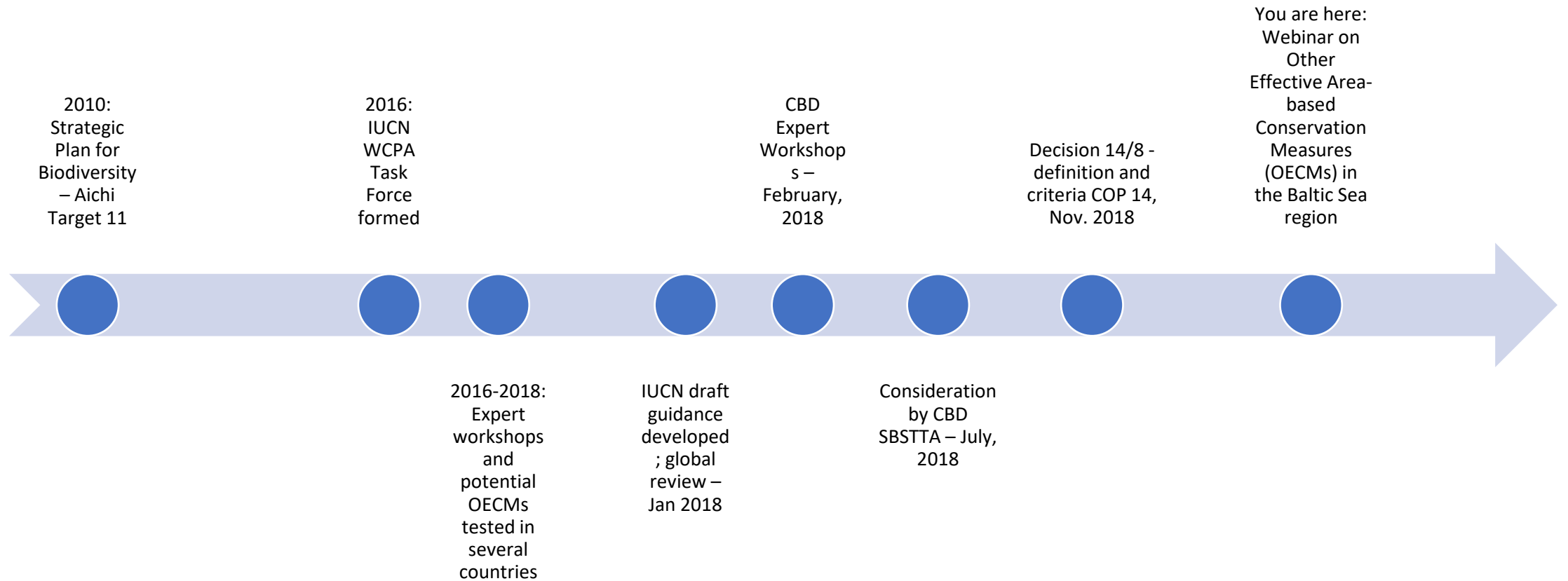
Strategic Plan for
Biodiversity 2011–2020
and the Aichi Targets
“Living in Harmony with Nature”



Target 11

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and **other effective area-based conservation measures**, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

How did we get here?



What are OECMs? CBD Decision 14/8

- A **geographically defined area** other than a Protected Area, which is **governed and managed** in ways that **achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes** for the **in situ conservation of biodiversity** with associated **ecosystem functions and services** and where applicable, **cultural, spiritual, socio-economic**, and other **locally relevant values**.
(CBD Decision 14/8)

What are OECMs not?

- OECMs is a conservation designation for areas that are achieving the effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity **outside of protected areas.**

➔ MPAs cannot be OECMS.

Core difference:

Protected areas should have a *primary* conservation objective. Their core function is to promote the *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity.

➔ Intention based

OECMs should *deliver* the effective *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity, regardless of their primary management objectives.

➔ Outcome based

What are OECMs?

- Areas identified as ‘potential OECMs’ should demonstrate **relevant ecological standards** and not just an improvement in the ecological condition. OECM’s definition requires the ‘in-situ conservation of biodiversity’.

What does in-situ conservation mean for OECMs?

- CBD Art.2: ‘the conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties’.
- IUCN (2019) :‘...should deliver biodiversity outcomes of comparable importance to, and complementary with, those of protected areas’.
- COP Decision 14/8 (CBD, 2018) :‘...is expected to include the identification of the range of biodiversity attributes for which the site is considered important (e.g. communities of rare, threatened or endangered species, representative natural ecosystems, range restricted species, key biodiversity areas, areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services, areas for ecological connectivity) ’.

What are OECMs?

- While protected areas must have a primary conservation objective, this is not necessary for OECMs. OECMs may be managed for many different objectives but they must deliver effective conservation. They may be managed with conservation as a primary or secondary objective or long-term conservation may simply be the ancillary result of management activities.
- This definition covers three main cases:
 1. **‘Ancillary conservation’**: areas delivering in-situ conservation as a by-product of management, even though biodiversity conservation is not an objective (e.g. some military training grounds, protected marine war graves).
 2. **‘Secondary conservation’**: active conservation of an area where biodiversity outcomes are only a secondary management objective (e.g. some conservation corridors).
 3. **‘Primary conservation’**: areas meeting the IUCN definition of a protected area, but where the governance authority (e.g. community, Indigenous peoples’ group, religious group, private landowner) does not wish the area reported as a protected area.

What are OECMs?

Achieves in-situ conservation of biodiversity

Lower intention

Higher intention

Ancillary

E.g.

- Marine war graves
- Shipwrecks
- Military areas
- APMs based on ship safety

Secondary

E.g.

- Areas which are protected through very low-impact use
- Conservation corridors

Primary

E.g.

Privately governed areas with a primary conservation objective (areas meeting the IUCN definition of a protected area)...

... but the governance authority is unable to secure PA designation or prefers not to be recognised as a PA

- The above categories are not precise and OECMs need to be judged on a case-by-case basis. OECMs should only be recognised in areas where there is significant biodiversity, and which meet the CBD criteria

Link to strategies: 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan

Spatial protection

Direct

By 2030 at the latest, establish a resilient, regionally coherent, effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected system of HELCOM marine protected areas (MPAs), supported by those other spatial conservation measures, under alternative regimes for marine protection, which can contribute to the coherence of the network. Where scientifically justified, special attention should be given to offshore areas beyond territorial waters. The network of marine protected areas will:

- cover at least 30% of the marine area of the Baltic Sea, of which at least 1/3 will be strictly protected. Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) could be counted towards the 30% targets only if they, as a minimum, comply with the OECM criteria agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- where scientifically justified, consider including no-use zones within marine protected areas, which can also serve as scientific reference areas.
- expand conservation efforts to actively include areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, including important ecosystem elements such as species or areas recognized to be ecologically significant based on function for the ecosystem/provisioning of ecosystem services and broad habitat types, but which may not necessarily be rare or threatened.

B1

By 2022 come to a common understanding of the Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) criteria and their use in HELCOM, based on definitions agreed in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the EU, and define how OECMs can support the coherence of the Baltic Sea marine protected area (MPA) network. By 2025 identification of OECMs in the Baltic Sea region.

B2

Indirect

The coherence of the marine protected area (MPA) network will be periodically assessed at least every ten years, with the next such assessment to be carried out by 2025. By 2027 the results from the coherence assessment are to be used to take appropriate actions to ensure conservation and resilience of biodiversity, and to identify possible spatial conservation expansion needs to improve coherence.

B6

Species protection

- Habitat building species
- Haploops
- Fish
- Birds
- Marine mammals

Link to strategies: EU Biodiversity Strategy

- The EU and its 27 Member States are each party to the CBD.
- Environmental matters in the EU, including biodiversity policy, are a shared competence between the EU and Member States. Each can legislate and adopt legally binding acts and EU Member States exercise their own competence where the EU does not.
- Since 2019, environment has risen significantly up the EU political agenda:
 - European Green Deal its top strategic priority with biodiversity one of its eight key initiatives.
 - EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (May 2020) which makes explicit reference to the role of OECMs in contributing to the Strategy's 2030 nature protection targets. Specifically, the Strategy announces that: ... the Commission, working with Member States and the European Environment Agency, will put forward in 2020 criteria and guidance for identifying and designating additional [protected] areas, including a definition of strict protection, as well as for appropriate management planning. In doing so, it will indicate how **other effective area-based conservation measures** and greening of cities could contribute to the targets.
- OECMs can support, amongst other objectives, EU targets for 30 % of land and water to be protected by 2030, the EU restoration plan and aspects of the Green New Deal.

Link to strategies: EU Biodiversity Strategy

- The OECM definition is recent and it is possible that potential OECMs have been reported as protected areas. Additionally, in some cases national-level legislation thought to be listing protected areas may, in fact, be more accurately listing OECMs.
- The two designations should give equivalent protection to biodiversity, BUT this is not yet proven in practice.
- Most legally designated protected areas have specific legislative conservation requirements that could be weakened by a 'conversion' to an OECM.
- General advice at the moment is to not convert protected areas to OECMs.

Link to strategies: EU Biodiversity Strategy

- Existing EU directives (e.g. Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Floods Directive (FD)) have the potential to result in management that fulfils the criteria of OECMs e.g.
 - primary conservation of high-biodiversity sites outside protected areas;
 - secondary conservation by maintaining good status,
 - ancillary conservation in areas managed for other reasons e.g. drinking or bathing water.
 - Actions that may create conditions for OECM recognition include nitrate controls, supplementary measures of pollution control, and restoration.
- The actual assessment of sites against the criteria of an OECM needs to be carried out on a case-by-case basis and it is very unlikely that all sites falling under any one directive will be found to meet the criteria. Key determinants include state of knowledge about and condition of biodiversity in potential OECMs may be determined from existing monitoring systems tracking implementation of directives.
- EU Member States also differ in the degree to which biodiversity conservation considerations are embedded within the implementation of given directives, which will probably influence the likelihood of particular areas being recognised as OECMs.
- The EU is now investigating options for encouraging EU Member States to recognise OECMs (the role for recognising these sites lies in the countries and the different actors operating at subnational levels). One obvious way forward is to determine whether land and water designated under various directives might sometimes be the equivalent of 'potential OECMs', which would expedite the process for identifying such areas.
- Potential next steps in the process of identifying potential OECMs under certain directives:
 - a comprehensive analysis of other directives,
 - publication of a related resource on opportunities and limitations of recognising land and water managed under various EU directives as OECMs,
 - adapt and translate into national languages the methodologies and guidelines identifying, recognising and reporting OECMs, and engage with any systemic issues.
- National-level activities will be important, and should ideally focus on identifying, providing legal recognition for, monitoring, supporting, and reporting OECMs.

Want to know more?

- IUCN has prepared technical guidelines that explain the definition of OECMs and help to explain how these may be applied in practical conservation strategies (IUCN-WCPA, 2019).
- The concept has been explored in more detail, for instance:
 - in the context of marine conservation (Laffoley et al., 2017),
 - in the context of privately protected areas (Mitchell et al., 2018)
 - in the context of community conservation (Jonas et al., 2017).
- The European Environment Agency commissioned a scoping report to "Assess the potential of other effective area-based conservation measures as a driver for landscape-level conservation and connectivity in the EU". The report was created by UNEP-WCMC, IEEP, and Trinomics under a specific contract.
- IUCN WCPA OECM Specialist Group is currently developing and field-testing a site-level methodology for identifying OECMs (Marnewick et al., forthcoming).

Conclusion

OECMs are included in the updated 'zero draft' of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, in the EU Biodiversity Strategy and in the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

There are expectations that they will play a large role in the conservation agenda for the next decade.

Thank you for your attention!

