

Chapter 7

Conclusions

At a national level, the responsibility for the design, implementation and monitoring of the protection of M.P.As lies primarily with the Ministry of Environment and Energy.

A main conclusion of the audit is that there are no approved management plans, albeit the Greek coastline is the largest in Europe and the protection of M.P.As is covered by the general institutional framework. At the same time, more particularly, at local level, it is the Managing Bodies that mainly bear the burden of managing and protecting the areas.

Additionally, there appears to be a multiple protection status for many M.P.A.s (e.g. Natura, Ramsar, the Barcelona Convention, individual Presidential Decrees or Joint Ministerial Decisions for each protected area). Therefore, while there is an institutional framework that could contribute to the protection of the M.P.As, its effective implementation requires additional efforts at many levels, mainly through the effective cooperation of the stakeholders (Ministries, Scientific Agencies, NGOs, Local Bodies). This is also demonstrated by the fact that, according to scientific studies¹³ prospects for the conservation habitats are considered to be inadequate or worsening.

Regarding the bodies' response to the audit questionnaire, it is noted that the replies, provided by services of the Ministry of Environment and Energy, ranged from being extremely incomplete to non-existent. That made the course of the audit particularly difficult while it clearly demonstrated the shortcomings and weaknesses of the M.P.A.s' protection-system as well as the urgent need to take more effective action in the future. In addition, it should be noted that, with the exception of only one, NGOs, from the ones active in the protected areas falling within the audit scope, sent no responses. Furthermore, in the field of fisheries, the responsible Ministry of Rural Development and Fisheries responded solely to the questions that

¹³ H.M.R.C.

fell within its competence. Finally, the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research gave specific details of its research, studies and proposals regarding the issue of M.P.As.

From the specific replies of the Marine Parks of Zakynthos and Alonissos, it is clear that the particular bodies have developed a vertically integrated management organization for the protection of their area, starting from planning and continuing with its implementation and monitoring, under adverse conditions, both financial and institutional (eg conflict of roles, etc.).

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