

Natura 2000

Knowledge market on Natura 2000

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To help meet the target of significantly improving the conservation status of species and habitats protected under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives by 2020, the European Commission in 2012 launched the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process. This process is a multi-stakeholder co-operation process at the biogeographical level and includes seminars, workshops, and cooperation activities to enhance effective implementation, management, monitoring, financing, and reporting of the Natura 2000 network (source: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/seminars_en.htm).

As part of the Biogeographical Process, a marine Natura 2000 network meeting was held on 11 September 2019 during the ICES Annual Science Conference in Gothenburg (venue: Gothia Towers, Room H2). The meeting was attended by about 30 people; they ranged from scientists to marine managers, and were based mostly in Europe. After a general presentation on the Natura 2000 network, the relation between ICES and Natura 2000, and the biogeographical process, everyone was asked to take part in multiple rounds of 3-minute 'speed dating' sessions to get to know each other, to briefly discuss their Natura 2000 issues, and to exchange knowledge.

The participants then formed three groups that were asked to define project proposals related to Natura 2000 issues, given that they had an imaginary budget of 2 million euros. After a brainstorming session the groups presented their ideas:

1. Improving fishing net selectivity: avoidance of protected species. Group 1 proposed to commercialize existing technical solutions for reducing bycatch. This should be done by fishers who know how to scale up innovations, in order to get existing ideas accepted.
2. Impact of less-studied fishing gears (e.g. flyshoot) on N2000 areas: The second group wanted to organise a competition across Europe in which participants will have to prove that their fishing gear does not harm protected species and habitats in Natura 2000 sites. If so, they would be co-financed to develop their fishing gear further.
3. Future monitoring techniques (eDNA, acoustics, video camera, photoID, machine learning): The third idea was to develop an integrated monitoring technique using (e)DNA, video, and acoustics in a project 'DEVIATE' (DNA+Video+Acoustic Techniques). The combined technique would be tested in contrasting habitat types (mud, reefs) to come up with an all-round and cheap monitoring method that can be applied to any habitat type in Europe.

The judge, provided by ICES, decided that the second idea had the most potential and congratulated the group. The participants indicated that they had learned about Natura

2000, the importance of communication, enjoyed the set-up of the meeting, and made new contacts.

More information can be found in the Natura 2000 newsletters:

https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/news/newsletter/196_n2000_biogeographical_process_newsletter_en.htm