EU Life+ Nature funding

Proposal for a MAIA project on maerl habitats conservation

Background

MAIA is currently a 3-years European cooperation project supported by the Interreg programme (ERDF funding).

At the MAIA Coordination meeting held on Sept. 2011, all partners agreed in principle to keep developing at mid-term the MAIA network and goals as the development of common methods and the emergence of an MPA managers' network. The European programmes in 2014 – 2020 should support this kind of initiatives (current reflexions in DG MARE and DG ENVI).

In the meanwhile, it seems interesting to work the EU Life+ Nature call for projects. Due to the objectives of this fund (see below), the proposal is to have **a more technical exchange project relative to maërl habitats conservation within the MAIA network and partnership** extended to the 5 Atlantic countries.

This proposal could be discussed at the next Coordination meeting (June 15th, 2012).
The writing of the application form must be ready for early July 2012 (we will have a technical support from the Ministry to finalize the writing during summer).
The application form and signatures must be submitted for Sept. 2012.

About the EU Life+ Nature programme

Funding programme for the EU's Environment policy. The programme's "Nature" strand supports projects that contribute to the implementation of the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives, the Natura 2000 network and that contribute to the EU's goal of halting the loss of biodiversity. The project must contain at least 25% of concrete conservation activities.

National (French) priorities for 2012 within the Life+ Nature programme:
Develop the marine N2K network / Implement the national (French) Strategy for MPA the creation and the management of MPAs / Contribute to the action plan for the improvement of the knowledge, the creation and the management of an MPAs network / Encourage the synergy between the objectives of the directives MSFD and N2000.

Proposal for a MAIA project - Framework

Project period: from 3 to 5 years (from July 2013)

Global objectives (European policy and international conventions inscriptions)

1. Contribute to the implementation of the EU's Natura 2000 Habitats Directive that aims for the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.
2. Contribute to the implementation of the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) that requires achieving or maintaining good ecological status of the marine environment by 2020.
3. Contribute to the implementation of the OSPAR Convention which is the current legal instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the North-East Atlantic marine environment.
4. Contribute to the implementation of the EU's Water framework directive that sets objectives for shallow and underground waters status conservation and restoration.
5. Contribute to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and more particularly the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity.

MAIA project's specific objective

Contribute to restore and /or maintain the maërl habitat conservation status in the Atlantic arc.

Summary of the anticipated results and implemented actions

- R1. The knowledge on maërl beds is improved.
- R2. The human activities with direct impacts are adapted to the maërl banks sensibility.

- R3. The external pressures (invasives species, eutrophication, coastal and off-shore plan or projects) are mastered.
- R4. The habitat maërl management and conservation plan is established to a biogeographical scale.

Targeted habitats
« Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all - 1110 »
Declined in France as « Sables grossiers et graviers, bancs de maërl – 1110-3 »)

« Large shallow inlets and bays – 1160 »: only in France?
Declined in « Sables hétérogènes envasés infralittoraux, bancs de maërl – 1160-2 »

Two constituent maërl banks species (*Lithothamnium coralloides* et *Phymatholithon calcareum*) take part of the community importance species listed in the Directive « Habitats » annex V.

Maerl banks justified the designation of the majority of the Natura 2000 extended marine sites in Brittany. Ho is it in the other partners' country?

Anticipated results and implemented actions

ACTIONS	OUTPUTS
R1. The knowledge on maerl beds is improved	
A1.1. Establish a sites typology Maërl banks biology, history and management features. - Is the maerl bank exploited industrially? - Is the maerl bank exploited by fishing? By fish farming or shellfish farming? - Is the maerl bank localized in a Natura 2000 site? - Does the maerl bank settled in an opened sea or in a mid closed bay? - Does the maerl bank settled near coastal or off shore plan or project (winmill, sea or harbor wall, anchoring area, etc.)? *- what is the alive maerl covering rate ? dead maerl ones ? What is the dead maërl fishing functionality? What is the species composition?* **A1.2. Define the conservation status according to the different maërl banks features in the aim to monitor the health status : methodology framework and definition at the studied site scale.** *- MSFD descriptors* *-evaluation methodology of the MNHN(French national museum)* *-common scientific workshop with a national scientist for each partnership country (ENG, FR, ESP, PT)* Use of Cartham (French collection data project), rebent[1] data, Water Framework Directive data, etc. **A1.3. Acquire maërl habitat knowledge on the newly discovered maerl banks**	A1.1 : Typology / Sensibility model. A1.2. Définition of the conservation status by studied site and definition of a « guide for evaluation of the maerl conservation status » and monitoring protocol.
R2 The human activities with direct impacts are adapted to the maërl banks sensibility	
A2.1. Definite the interaction between the professional dredge fishing and maërl banks *Utilisation of some French results on this interactions (French museum methodology / referential ont the interactions between maerl and fishing in the N2000 sites)* *Typology of the fishing gears used (scallops ones, clams ones, manual dredge)* *European scientific project data (Biomaërl)*	A2.1 Precise qualification of the interaction between maerl banks and fishing gears (functionality / disappearance of some benthic species / bank vitality / fishing effort threshold (number of fishing

[1] www.rebent.org

	boats, number of fishing days) / non reversible effect qualification)
A2.2. Implement pilot management • Expérimentation of diving scallop fishing • Fisheries organisation - *Fallow system / fishing rotation* - *Exploitation d'une partie du banc* **A2.3. Implement integral protection areas and monitor its effect.** • Study on the maerl habitat resilience • Study on other fishing or industrial exploitation activity transfer • Attendant activity of professional fishing • Implementation of a electronic « signpost » **A2.4. Study on aquaculture / shellfishfarming**	A2.1./2./3. Establishment of an adapted management for each « kind » of maerl banks and each fisheries. A2.4. Establishment of an adapted management for each « kind » of maerl banks and other uses (aquaculture / shellfish farming). A2. Earnings socio economic value.
R3. The external pressures (invasives species, eutrophication, coastal and off-shore plan or projects) are mastered.	
A3.1. Master the *crepidula fornicata* (invasive species) impact on the maerl habitat **A3.2. Master the impact of the eutrophication on the maerl banks** • Monitoring of the water quality • « Water cleaner » system *Plantation of species in wetlands* *Diversion of rivers through the wetlands* *Mower of reeds* • Collection of macro-algae in the sub-tidal stage **A3.3. Identify and master the coastal and off shore management impact on maerl habitat (winmill, sea or harbor wall, anchoring area, etc)**	A3.1. To master impact of invasives species. A3.2. To master impact of eutrophication. A3.3. To assess and to master the impact of the coastal and offshore plan or project.
R4. The habitat maërl management and conservation plan is established to a biogeographical scale	
A4.1. Strategic reflection on the management plan at the biogeographical scale Responsability level by region / management priority for the maerl habitat	Strategic maerl conservation action plan at the biogeographical scale.