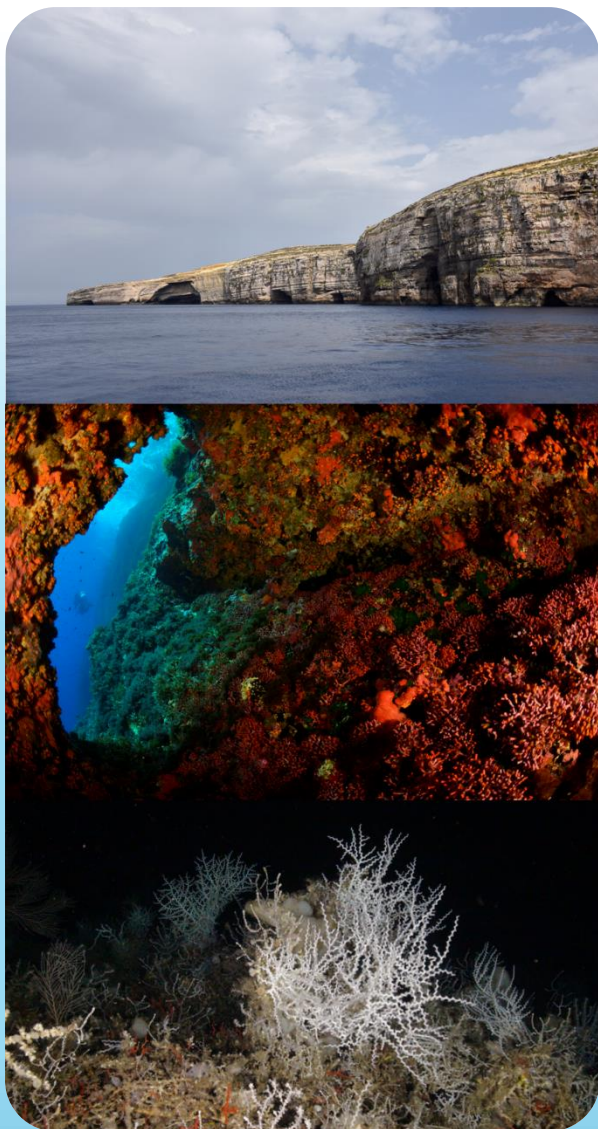


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life  
bahar

for Natura 2000



## LIFE12 NAT/MT00845 AFTER-LIFE CONSERVATION PLAN

**For the protection of caves and  
reefs from shallow to deep**



The LIFE BaHAR for N2K (LIFE12 NAT/MT/000845) Project is 50% co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Funding Programme

Il-proġett LIFE BaHAR for N2K (LIFE12 NAT/MT/000845) huwa kofinanzjat (50%) mill-fond LIFE+ tal-Unjoni Ewropea.

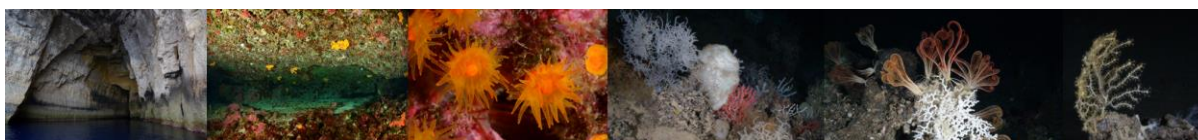


## Abbreviations

ALDFG	Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear
BD	Birds Directive - Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds
DFA	Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
EC	European Commission
ERA	Environment and Resources Authority
EU	European Union
FMZ	Fisheries Management Zone
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GFCM	General Fisheries Council of the Mediterranean
HD	Habitats Directive - Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
MBES	Multibeam Echosounder
MM	Management Measure
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
N2K	Natura 2000
PoMs	Program of Measures
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDF	Standard Data Form
SCI	Site of Community Importance
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSS	Side Scan Sonar
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (Analysis)
UoM	University of Malta
UoM (DoB)	University of Malta (Department of Biology)

### **What is an After LIFE Conservation Plan?**

The After-LIFE Conservation Plan presents a conservation strategy following the end of a LIFE+ project, which shall ensure that the efforts of the project are effective and continue, as applicable, even after project completion. The After-LIFE Conservation Plan will include activities that are planned in order to protect the identified sites for the protection of habitats/species and how the longer-term management of project sites will be assured. It will also detail what steps will be taken by the competent authority and by relevant stakeholders.



## INTRODUCTION

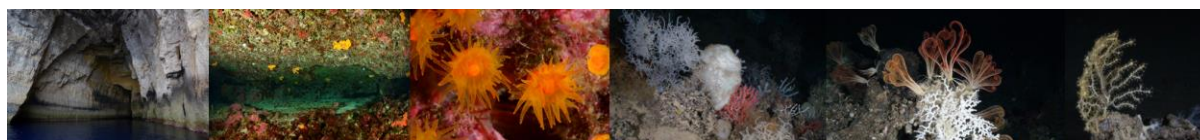
The 'Life+ Benthic Habitat Research for marine Natura 2000 site designation' (LIFE BaHAR for N2K) project, is an EU LIFE+ research programme that explored benthic habitats in Maltese waters. The goal of the project was to support the designation of marine Natura 2000 (N2K) sites in Malta's Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ). It targeted the seabed habitats reefs, sea caves and sandbanks.

Focusing on scientifically identified target areas, LIFE BaHAR for N2K surveyed waters around Malta at depths ranging from 0 m to 1192 m. Due to the logistical challenges of surveying in the marine environment, there had been limited data available for these areas prior to the work of the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project. To address these knowledge gaps, the project conducted two at-sea expeditions in 2015 and 2016, covering both shallow and deep-water benthic habitats. Through these expeditions, spanning more than 100 days at sea, the research team conducted 206 Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) transects, 42 scientific SCUBA dive surveys, took 50 sediment samples and surveyed approximately 130,000 ha of seabed using Multibeam Echosounder (MBES). This state-of-the-art research approach provided a wealth of information on the presence and location of important reef and cave habitats at previously unexplored locations. In total, 89 caves were surveyed and multiple deep-water reef areas were identified, including coral frameworks and a fossilised sponge reef. These new datasets were combined with relevant existing datasets, to facilitate the holistic and scientific identification of novel sites for N2K designation for reef and cave habitats. Annex I reef, sea cave, and sandbank habitats, at any depth that they might occur, provide vital ecosystem services for the Maltese islands. Most tangibly, reefs and caves are essential habitats for supporting commercial fish stocks and high levels of biodiversity which, in turn, are essential for Malta's socioeconomic fishing sectors. Beyond fisheries, this rich biodiversity is an important part of Malta's natural heritage. Biodiversity offers us sources of inspiration, cultural identity and possibly as of yet undiscovered biological resources for opportunities and use in blue growth initiatives. However, LIFE BaHAR for N2K also collected data on the threats and pressures facing these benthic habitats. Through high-resolution ROV footage, LIFE BaHAR for N2K was able to provide unique and novel insights into the conditions of Malta's deep-water offshore environments, helping us better understand the anthropogenic stressors that they face. This information is very instructive, and highlights the need for Malta to protect its natural heritage.

Through the successful actions of the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project, three existing offshore N2K Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), designated for turtles and cetaceans through LIFE Migrate Project (LIFE11 NAT/MT/1070), and three inshore N2K SCI MPAs (designated for Annex I habitats) were extended, adding 39,276 ha to Malta's N2K MPA network. Additionally, two novel N2K SCI MPAs were designated, adding a further 30,848 ha to Malta's N2K MPA network. The LIFE BaHAR for N2K project has therefore designated an additional 70,124 ha of MPAs in Malta's FMZ.

With the features identified and the SCIs designated (through the extension of existing, or creation of new sites), the next step for safeguarding these marine habitats for sustainable use is the creation of the N2K site Conservation Measures. For the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project sites, this process has been fast-tracked via integration alongside the development of Conservation Measures for the previously existing N2K MPAs (both SCIs and SPAs). The resulting target is for all of Malta's N2K MPAs to have Conservation Measures in place by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. This means that sites identified through LIFE BaHAR for N2K will be covered by Conservation Measures well ahead of the 6-year timeframe as laid out in the EU's Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC).

## HISTORY OF THE PROJECT



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At the start of the project in 2013 there were five marine protected areas (MPAs) in Malta, covering ca. 190 km<sup>2</sup>. These MPAs, which are part of the Natura 2000 network, were mainly based on the presence of *Posidonia* beds (*Posidonia oceanica*) and the endemic Maltese top-shell, *Gibbula nivos*a.

There are of course other marine habitats and species present in Maltese waters that merit protection. However, scientific information on which areas are important for these other habitats and species was very limited, and insufficient for identifying and designating appropriate Natura 2000 (N2K) sites.

The LIFE BaHAR for N2K project was developed to address this knowledge gap for three important marine seabed habitats: reefs, sea caves and sandbanks.

Information on the location and state of these habitats in Maltese waters was patchy for areas close to the coast, and generally scarce for areas far from shore. This was mainly due to the high costs and specialised skills that are needed to explore marine habitats, especially in deep waters.

The main purpose of the project was therefore to fill existing data gaps and identify areas within Maltese waters supporting the three marine habitats mentioned above. The area of study was the Maltese FMZ, which extends up to 25 nautical miles from the Maltese Islands coastline.

The project also aimed to increase public awareness and inform, as well as involve, stakeholders in the process leading to the identification of the new MPAs.

**Overall, the project had the following aims:**

1. Identify and fill knowledge gaps on the presence of reefs, sea caves and sandbanks in Maltese waters
2. Establish new areas for protection of these habitats and establish site conservation objectives
3. Involve and inform stakeholders throughout the project
4. Increase awareness on marine habitats and the N2K network

Several actions were developed to address these aims and lead to the desired outcomes of the project. A-Actions focused on the scientific part of the project and were based around the gathering and use of data and ultimately identification and designation of new MPAs. The focus of E-Actions was to involve stakeholders and increase awareness among the public on marine habitats and related environmental topics. Meanwhile, F-Actions were established to monitor progress and guarantee the timely and correct implementation of all project actions.



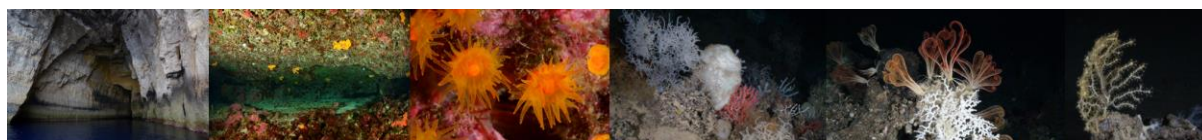


## PROJECT ACTIONS: ACHIEVEMENTS – CHALLENGES – IMPACT

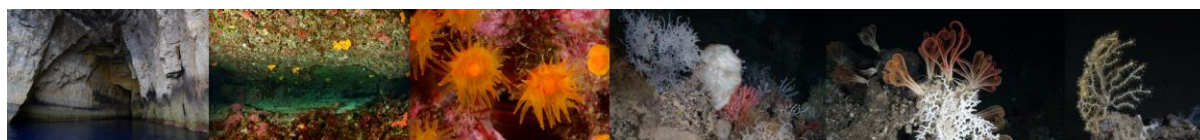
An overview of the core achievements, challenges and impact of each of the project actions is provided in the table below.

**Table 1) Actions of the projects and their main achievements, challenges and impacts and/or future prospects**

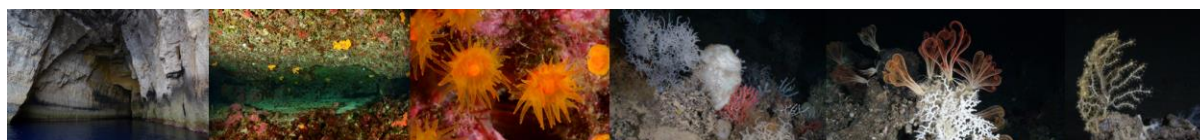
Action	Main Achievements	Challenges	Impact / Prospect
<b>A1 – Desktop Data Collection</b>	Identification of existing knowledge gaps on habitats pre-project to guide project surveys	To make various data sets from different sources INSPIRE compliant took longer than originally foreseen and required external expertise	Provided essential information of <i>status quo</i> of knowledge pre-project
	Compilation of existing data	Existing habitats data was mapped in different projections, and utilised different descriptions, which had to be coded as per EUNIS classification for comparative purposes	Made existing information INSPIRE compliant for future use
	Mapping of fishing pressures using available data	Data from secondary sources (such as publications) often did not contain coordinates to enable mapping	
<b>A2 – Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b>	Detailed analysis of all data collected through the project	There were various data gaps on pressures; since data for several pressures have never been collected in a systematic manner.	The results of the first and second analysis guided various surveys.
	Sharing knowledge in the form of scientific publications and conference contributions	Preliminary data analysis required for subsequent interpretation took longer than foreseen/expected due to the extensive amount of data collected through the surveys	Overall results, through action A3, identified priority areas for conservation and overall conservation status.
<b>A3 – Marine Habitat Surveys</b>	Two successfully completed marine habitat surveys through SCUBA diving and ROV deployment	Depth limitations of the ROV restricted surveys to max depth of 1000m; deep-sea caves were inaccessible to ensure the safe retrieval of the ROV.  Preliminary data analysis took longer than expected due to the large amount of data collected.	The data collected increased the knowledge on the Maltese marine environment extensively.  Valuable data was collected on marine flora and fauna, bathymetry and seabed composition, which was used to identify priority areas.



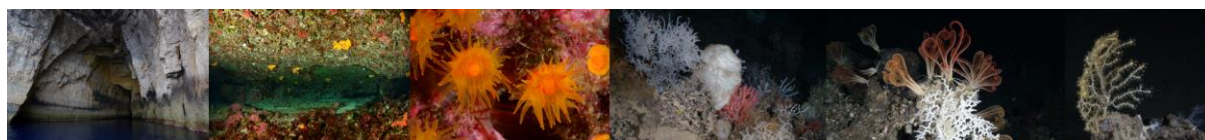
	One seabed survey (multibeam echosounder & sediment sampling) conducted for previously unexplored areas	Procurement and logistical issues resulted in delay of the MBES survey, which could not be carried out as foreseen to guide the second marine survey	Examples of key survey findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New depth record for red coral</li><li>• Record of new species for the Mediterranean - starfish <i>Coronaster briareus</i></li><li>• Deep water caves at depths of down to 795 m</li></ul> The raw data collected can be further analysed in detail for future studies and projects, while the analysed data can be used for future projects/studies as well as to inform various national management and assessment processes
	New and extensive data collected on litter and protected/vulnerable species distribution	No major challenge	
	Publication of an online data viewer displaying the impressive project findings and results		
A4 - GIS Development and Implementation	Creation of maps showing priority areas identified, including habitat and species distribution	Selection/harmonisation of data from different sources to create user-friendly maps	The maps (GIS layers) produced and the database created will support ERA in its future work on the management of MPAs as well as other work by ERA and DFA relating to the management of the marine environment
	Compilation of pre and post project data into one geodatabase and GIS map package(s)	Making final data INSPIRE compliant required specific external expertise/training	The data can serve as a foundation for future studies
A5 - Identification of proposed Sites of Community Importance	Various coastal and offshore sites were identified for protection of priority habitats under the Natura 2000 framework	Administrative work for compilation of maps and filling of SDFs took slightly longer than expected	Extensive sites identified that require protection and are subject to various pressures and threats
A6 - Designation process for proposed Sites of Community Importance	<p>Three inshore and five offshore sites were designated for the protection of cave and reef habitats and proposed for inclusion in the N2K network</p> <p>The three inshore areas are extensions of existing coastal MPAs. Two of the offshore areas are new sites, while the other three are extensions of SCI MPAs previously declared in 2016</p>	The challenge of designation will come into effect with the future management of these sites	<p>The new sites increased the protected marine areas from 3,487 km<sup>2</sup> in 2016 to 4,138 km<sup>2</sup> in 2018</p> <p>Legal designation for new sites protecting sea cave and reef habitats is the first step to ensure that future management can be implemented</p>
A7 - Identification of conservation objectives for	Seven conservation objectives have been identified and published in	The challenge was to have an approach that was consistent	These will be aligned with the process on existing marine sites, for which Conservation



each of the designated site	<a href="#">a dedicated document</a> on the project website	and coherent with objectives for the existing sites	Measures shall be in place by end of 2019
<b>A8 - Identification of diversification of tasks for stakeholders being impacted by the designated sites</b>	Collected views and perspectives of stakeholders, and identified potential impacts/conflicts for future management of the sites	Ensuring stakeholders understand the process of designation and developing/implementing management measures, and the time required for such	The information collected will guide future consultations and will be considered for management measures for the LIFE BaHAR sites as well as previously designated MPAs
	Identified best practices and potential alternative livelihoods for key economic stakeholders	Finding a way to cooperate in terms of providing valuable input on new sites, rather than discussing existing sites	
<b>E1 - Project Launch</b>	Project launched on 28 <sup>th</sup> of April, 2014		
<b>E2 - Awareness-Raising Campaign</b>	Reached over 3000 people through Facebook with project updates and relevant information on marine environmental issues and discoveries	It was challenging to regularly update the Facebook site with new interesting facts and information and to attract new followers. This involved more work than expected; it is also a challenge to keep people interested over the longer term when activities are not taking place	The information material produced will be used to inform the public during future events and utilised in stakeholder consultations on the MPAs (info-clips of 2018) as well as for other initiatives (e.g. the MSFD PoMs (pressure info-clips))
	Produced several well-received stationery items and awareness materials (promo clip, info-slots)	Timely implementation and production required technical input to ensure scientific accuracy as well as overview, checking and supportive work by project management team	The information clips will be used to further public education and support future awareness events  Selected footage and photos from the surveys can be made available for publications and public awareness initiatives
	Reached out to local stakeholders through email shots	The new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), reduced email list as people had to actively consent to be kept on record	Created interest in the project and outreach to several people  The ERA mailing list will remain in place to inform people on future initiatives
	Several press releases issued, which received international attention and TV interviews given	No major challenge	The press releases draw attention to the project, especially the project results
	<b>E3 - Information activities for general public</b>	Hosted two well-attended exhibitions in 2015 and 2016 showcasing photos submitted by the public through a public contest/voluntarily	Ensuring timely implementation required guidance, supervision, double-checking and input from project management, as well as various reviews following partner feedback to ensure scientific accuracy
Created, printed and disseminated 4 information leaflets about the project, marine			

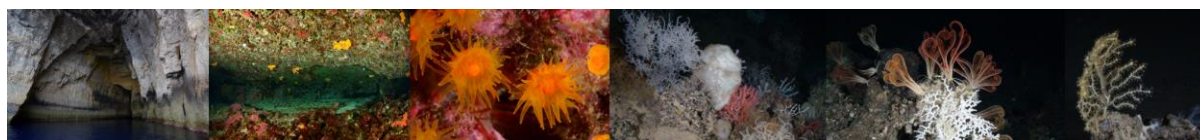


	habitats, project results and the newly designated sites		
	Produced another set of exhibition prints showcasing the project findings, which were shown at the Esplora Science Centre in June 2018 and viewed by several hundred people		
	Produced notebook calendar showcasing the marine environment and disseminated about 5000 copies to the public	No major challenge	<p>Notebooks and calendars were effective and popular dissemination tools and were used to raise awareness at multiple events and meetings</p> <p>The photos used were selected through a photography competition, which helped further engaged stakeholders and raised awareness</p>
<b>E4 - Information and knowledge transfer activities for specific stakeholders</b>	Informed and consulted stakeholders on the project, outcomes and future processes on several occasions	<p>The challenge of stakeholder involvement is to create an environment in which they feel integrated, open to discussions and keen to listen</p> <p>The conference did establish that and smaller stakeholder meetings, including the breakout sessions at the conference, provided the chance for more detailed discussions</p>	<p>The input from stakeholders on the existing marine protected areas, the discoveries of the project and future management needs will be taking into consideration in the drafting of Conservation Measures for the new and previously designated MPAs</p> <p>The relationship formed and contacts made with stakeholders over the course of the meetings and conference can be built on for current and future consultations</p>
	Planned, organised and hosted a successful 3-day conference on marine protected areas in the Mediterranean, attended by approximately 100 people, including 10 foreign, international experts		
<b>E5 - Project Website</b>	Set-up and regular updates of the project website, which over the lifetime of the project attracted views from over 200,000 people from all over the world	<p>Keeping the site attractive and updated at all times</p> <p>Bringing the project results, in particular the online viewer, to a wider audience</p>	The project website will serve as an information platform for the next 5 years, and will allow people to have an insight in project outputs and download relevant information material
<b>E6 - Notice Boards</b>	Three sets of notice boards were created and installed	Putting all relevant information into a compact and attractive display format, also in view of the MPAs that were designated in the recent years through other projects	The six noticeboards which were updated in 2018 will remain <i>in-situ</i> to inform locals and foreigners about Malta's MPA network





<b>E7 - Layman's Report</b>	A well-received, informative and attractive Layman's report was created	Compiling all information in a visually attractive, simple and compact format	<p>The Layman's report is downloadable from the website and hard copies have been disseminated at past events and will be disseminated at future events to inform people about the project and Malta's marine environment</p> <p>The Layman's report was commended for its high quality in terms of content and production</p>
<b>E8 - Closing off event</b>	Successful project completion celebrated at the Closing event on 5 June 2018, which was attended by several stakeholders, the project team and the Minister for the environment		
<b>F1 - Project Management</b>	Facilitated, monitored and ensured successful implementation and completion of the project	<p>Ensuring timely and correct project implementation, in view of the complexity and number of actions/deliverables</p> <p>Maintaining continuity through various personnel and administrative changes over the course of the project</p>	The project management guaranteed the success of the project
<b>F2 - Project Monitoring</b>	<p>Five monitoring visits were held</p> <p>Monthly updates sent to EU monitor</p> <p>Project finances were checked and kept updated</p>	No major challenge	Project documentation will be kept for 5 years following project completion
<b>F3 - Networking with other projects</b>	Several meetings with ongoing LIFE+ projects were held and events attended, which facilitated the exchange of information among projects	Allocating time for travel abroad during critical phases of the project	<p>The exchange of information with other ongoing projects (LIFE Migrate and LIFE+ Malta Seabird) and other entities and experts, which contributed to the overall success and will guide future management</p> <p>This will also include future data exchange to ensure maximum use of the data</p>
<b>F4 - Independent Financial Audit</b>	Audit on the project completed	Ensuring accuracy noting complexity of project funds and proposed shifts and budget changes	The project audit will show correct implementation of the project and proper use of received funding
<b>F5 - After Life Conservation Plan</b>	Completed comprehensive and well-thought-through After-LIFE Conservation Plan	To streamline the After-LIFE conservation plan with the process for developing Conservation Measures for previously designated MPAs	The After-LIFE Conservation Plan will guide actions until Conservation Measures are in place



## SITUATION ANALYSIS



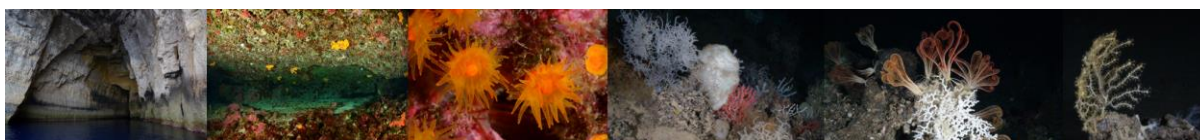
The designation of N2K sites is the first step in the protection and management process for the reef and sea cave habitats identified through the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project. The Conservation Objectives and After-LIFE Conservation Plan will define targets and a strategy to be followed by ERA and relevant stakeholders following project completion. This After-LIFE Conservation Plan identifies measures to be taken in the interim to preserve

the habitats until site-specific Conservation Measures are established.

Additional to the previously mentioned areas for the conservation of *Posidonia* beds and *Gibbula nivos*a (now *Steromphala nivos*a), the LIFE+ MIGRATE and LIFE+ Malta Seabird projects resulted in the designation of nine additional N2K sites in 2016, which are important for the loggerhead turtle, the bottlenose dolphin and three seabirds that breed in the Maltese Islands. The information collected through the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project led to a further three inshore and five offshore areas being proposed for the protection of sea cave and reef habitats and their inclusion in the N2K network. The three inshore areas are extensions to existing coastal MPAs. Two of the offshore areas are new sites, while the other three are extensions to MPAs declared in 2016.

As of June 2018, Malta is protecting over 4100 km<sup>2</sup> of its waters, equivalent to more than 35% of its Fisheries Management Zone, for the conservation of important marine habitats and species.

Conservation Measures will be established for protected marine sites, with measures drafted utilising the information gathered through the project and in consultation with stakeholders.



### SWOT Analysis

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

A SWOT analysis is a tool used to identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, which can aid or hinder attaining the objectives of the project.

The aim is to identify:

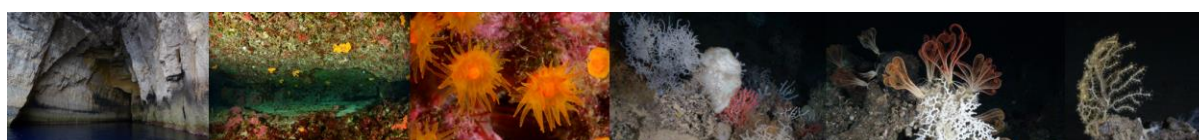
- Strengths - those attributes of the project, the project team, and the site(s) that have aided or can aid in achieving the project's objectives.
- Weaknesses - those attributes of the project, the project team and the site(s) that have harmed or can harm the projects potential to achieve its objectives.
- Opportunities - external conditions that might be helpful in achieving the project's objectives.
- Threats - external conditions that might be harmful to achieving the project's objectives.

**Table 2) SWOT Analysis for the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project.**

SWOT MATRIX					
INTERNAL FACTORS					
STRENGTHS (+)		Importance	WEAKNESSES (-)		Importance
1	Timely overlap with implementation of Conservation Measures for previously designated sites will speed up their implementation for new sites, as this will be undertaken as one coherent process.	MEDIUM	1	Capacity is limited in regard to regulating marine sites, also noting the extent and location of the offshore sites.	MEDIUM
2	Actions A8 and E4 outcomes provided valuable stakeholder feedback, which will be considered when developing the Conservation Measures.	HIGH			
3	Participation by various stakeholders in knowledge transfer actions, as well as the various deliverables, has opened a dialogue among the various stakeholders and raised awareness, which can be built upon for conservation actions.	HIGH	2	The establishment and implementation of Conservation Measures within MPAs would typically involve a number of sectors. Consequently, this necessitates an effective and collaborative working relationship between relevant authorities for the timely and efficient implementation of Conservation Measures.	MEDIUM



6	Skilled and knowledgeable Team, who are familiar with the project data following participation in the various actions, in particular action involving data analysis and mapping for site designation.	HIGH		Administrative procedures (such as those linked to procurement processes) can be lengthy. For example, unforeseen circumstances may arise and delay a tendering process, as was the case for the MBES survey and the action A8 tender. Such factors must be taken into consideration in order to provide effective protection through interim-measures, until Conservation Measures are in place.	
7	The project data gave insights on existing threats to marine habitats and species. This data will help to guide Conservation Measures.	HIGH	3		MEDIUM
EXTERNAL FACTORS					
OPPORTUNITIES (+)		Importance	THREATS (–)		Importance
1	Interest of several stakeholder groups in conservation support is high as shown through actions E4 and A8.	MEDIUM	1	Regulation of activities within the 12 nm mile zone falls within the remit of several authorities, thus requiring good communication and knowledge transfer to ensure effective responses to infringements.	MEDIUM
2	General public and tourism industry benefit from well-managed marine protected areas and healthy ecosystems, which can foster support for management.	MEDIUM	2	Marine litter (which was the main threat observed during the surveys) resulting from diffuse sources (currents, tourism, fishing, etc.) are difficult to control.	MEDIUM
3	Collaboration with other institutions for the evaluation of all data will foster exchange of information and produce valuable outputs.	MEDIUM	3	Action A8 identified conflicts between different stakeholders, as users of the sites, might hinder cooperation for effective management.	MEDIUM
4	Data collected will continue to provide valuable insights through continued analysis.	MEDIUM	4	Action A8 revealed that stakeholders perceive spearfishing operations to be inadequately enforced and that recreational fisheries are a threat noting these remain unregulated.	MEDIUM
5	Ongoing research initiatives, in which ERA is involved, targeting Mediterranean MPAs, habitats and species, will continue to provide valuable data input.	HIGH	5	To establish regular monitoring especially for deep-sea areas may be a major challenge and very expensive.	HIGH





6	The legal designation enables Malta to set Conservation Measures for habitat and species protection.	HIGH	6	Capacity of relevant authorities will need to be enhanced to cover expansions in their remit with regards to regulating marine sites. Stakeholder perception from action A8 is that more enforcement is required.	HIGH
			7	The areas designated as protected sites cover a large area of more than 35% of the 25nm FMZ, which will make regulation and enforcement a challenge.	HIGH
7	Establishing strong collaboration with other authorities and relevant stakeholders on the future management of these sites can aid conservation.	HIGH	8	Selected practices linked with fisheries and tourism activities may threaten habitat conservation statuses.	HIGH



## AFTER- LIFE OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

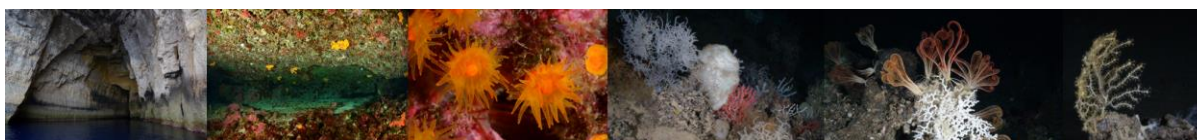
The SWOT analysis shows that intermediate actions concerning habitat conservation are required until Conservation Measures are in place and implemented. The Conservation Objectives (as listed in Table 4) are taking into account the pressures and threats identified through the Life BaHAR for N2K project and the current challenges, capacity needs and priorities as indicated below:

**Table 3) Situational Analysis of the Maltese Context.**

<b>Conservation Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressing the impact and threat of pollution from land-based and marine sources.</li> <li>• Reduce habitat degradation through human activities.</li> <li>• Understanding cave biodiversity and identifying especially sensitive and diverse caves for better conservation.</li> <li>• Educating the public and stakeholders on their potential impacts, and how they can contribute to conservation.</li> </ul>	<b>Institutional Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to collaboration between authorities would be beneficial. This is especially the case for recreational fishing regulation and the issue of ALDFG. Further discussions would enhance cooperation, and would facilitate litter/waste management, noting observations of litter through the project and the fragmented governance of regulations for activities causing pollution.</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity Needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional capacity required to identify conservation needs, implement measures and monitor their effectiveness and the status of the habitats.</li> <li>• Monitoring will be a challenge considering the size and, in some cases the location, of the areas designated.</li> </ul>	<b>Political Challenges</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General support for tackling marine pollution is present at higher political levels.</li> <li>• Tourism is an important component of the Maltese economy, but is also linked to generating high anthropogenic impacts on coastal areas.</li> </ul>

### The development of said objectives focused on four different aspects, which are to:

- maximise the use of collected data in view of N2K MPA site management requirements and information on pressures and threats observed;
- streamline intermediate measures with existing and/or ongoing initiatives and support the use of relevant information from other projects for the management of marine sites;
- reduce and where possible eliminate identified pressures and threats, and to
- continue to increase awareness about marine habitats and species.



## **Conservation Objectives**

Seven Conservation Objectives have been identified for the LIFE BaHAR sites, in line with the Conservation Objectives for all marine sites, and published online<sup>1</sup> as part of the project deliverables:

1. To provide the conditions that would allow the area of Posidonia beds / reefs / caves / sandbanks to increase and its structure and function to be improved or maintained (as appropriate to the features present within each site).
2. To maintain healthy populations of the Red Data Book species present in the site.
3. To ensure a synergistic management with other relevant MPAs.
4. To raise public awareness and appreciation of the habitats and species among specific target groups and the general public.
5. To ensure that anthropogenic activities occurring in the area are carried out in a manner that do not jeopardise the site's conservation objectives.
6. To address any illegal activities occurring in the site in the long term.
7. To ensure that there is the right setup where different stakeholders can exchange and share their views.

These Conservation Objectives guided the development of the After-LIFE Management Measures (MMs). It should be noted that Conservation Objectives 6 and 7 are not specifically listed in Table 4 below, as they were incorporated into CO3 for the After-LIFE MMs, as interim measures, and will be integrated into the Conservation Measures as part of the future management set-up for the sites. These Conservation Measures are currently being developed for all marine sites.

## **Degree of Importance:**

*Critical* – First Priority - Implementation of these Management Measures (MMs) is vitally important to fulfilling objectives/obligations as defined by national/EU policy/legislation, and/or ensuring appropriate environmental management

*Necessary* – Second Priority – Implementation of these MMs is mandated through national/EU policy/legislation

*Advantageous* – Third Priority – These MMs will help improve conditions and factors relating to Malta's marine environment, but are not mandatory through national/EU policy/legislation and are not essential to long-term conservation goals

## **Estimated Costs:**

*High* – € 50,000.00 and above

*Medium* – € 20,000.00 to € 50,000.00

*Low* – Up to € 20,000.00

<sup>1</sup> [https://lifebahar.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Conservation-Objectives\\_Habitats-MPAs.pdf](https://lifebahar.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Conservation-Objectives_Habitats-MPAs.pdf)

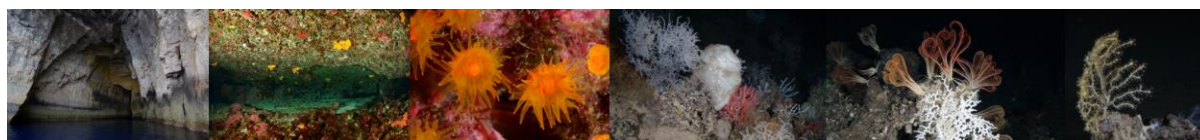
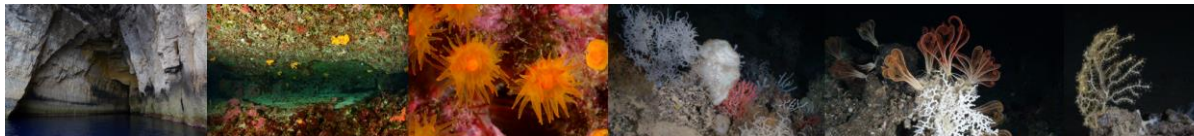


Table 4) Life BaHAR for N2K Project After-LIFE Conservation Plan Management Measures

Conservation Objective (CO)	Management Measure (MM)	Measure Descriptors	Descriptor(s)	Measure Logistics
<p><b>CO1:</b> To provide the conditions that would allow the area of <i>Posidonia</i> meadows / reefs / caves / sandbanks to increase and its structure and function to be improved or maintained (as appropriate to the features present within each site).</p> <p>&amp;</p> <p><b>CO2:</b> To maintain healthy populations of the Red Data Book species present in the sites.</p>	<p><b>MM1:</b> Investigate and explore options for a system to enable and facilitate the data collection of bycatch of biogenic reef forming species (such as the red coral, <i>Corallium rubrum</i>). This MM emanates in response to the project findings regarding the presence of biogenic reef forming species in Malta's FMZ. Eventual recommendations should be respective of (and if possible, synergise with) existing and/or upcoming relevant obligations from international legal instruments.</p>	<b>Type of Measure</b>	<p>Participating entities will draw upon internal and external expertise to review the existing situation with regards to incoming data streams linked to non-target biogenic reef forming species being caught/brought up during fishing activities. Based on the results of this review, gaps in the current situation will be considered alongside existing and likely future obligations in order to devise optimal solutions. Recommended solutions should meet requirements and be practically feasible. In addition, stakeholders will be consulted for their input regarding the current state-of-play and for their recommendations/assessment of suggested possible solutions.</p> <p>This MM/exercise will be purely desk based, creating a report for consideration by relevant authorities. Use of the report will be at the discretion of these authorities. For example, the report may be useful in light of on-going discussions and potential future obligations stemming from the General Fisheries Commission of the Mediterranean (GFCM). While no surveys or field research will be involved, the support of UoM may be sought for provision of guidance.</p> <p>The primary focus will be on fishing gears/practices that contact the seabed or otherwise might physically interact with and disturb the biogenic reef forming species which were identified through the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project. An assessment of feasibility and practicality/ease of implementation will form an integral part of the final report/recommendation that will be produced.</p>	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Study/ Assessment		ERA/ DFA; MESDC
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, EMFF
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Publication of a report on the feasibilities, operational details and possible implementation of systems for collecting data of biogenic reef forming species as bycatch.		Low
	<b>MM2: Use of project data post completion</b>	<b>Measurable Attributes</b>	<p>A) UoM-DoB will be continuing currently ongoing analysis of project data on population, community and ecosystem</p>	<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of sources cited. Variety of appropriate literature sources (type) used. Number of viable solutions proposed.		To commence by end of April 2019 and conclude by end of April 2020.





	<p>A) Continued analysis by UoM-DoB of the project data on species assemblages and marine litter to facilitate scientific dissemination and support management measures and reporting obligations.</p> <p>B) ERA will make use of project data to fulfil national reporting obligations and identify relevant information for site management.</p> <p>C) DFA will utilise project data relevant for fisheries management, especially concerning Council Regulation (EC) No 1967/2006 – the ‘MEDREG’.</p>	Dissemination/ Awareness	<p>ecology and on pressures/impacts influencing marine species and habitats. The outcomes of this analysis will be disseminated in the form of scientific presentations, posters, reports and articles in scientific journals, while material of public interest will also be disseminated through outreach measures. Results from these analysis will also be made available to ERA to support management measures and reporting obligations</p> <p>B) ERA will be using the results of the project for national reports and will identify further needs in regard to data analysis for reporting purposes and site management. Such analysis may be contracted to relevant experts, if not catered for under A).</p> <p>C) DFA will further analyse the data collected through the project, specifically that on coralligenous habitats and rhodolith accumulations, so as to take any necessary actions as per EC1967/2006.</p>	ERA; DFA; UoM/ OCEANA
		Degree of Importance		Possible Funding Sources
		Advantageous		National, ERDF
		Indicators		Estimated Cost
		Results and data proactively shared.		Low
		Measurable Attributes		Timeline
	MM3: Investigate and explore options to enhance and facilitate reporting scheme(s) for lost fishing gear from the professional	Geospatial information in form of data layers.	<p>A) Analysis is already ongoing, particularly by UoM-DoB, and will be concluded by the end of the LIFE BaHAR After-LIFE Conservation Plan (2023).</p> <p>B) To commence by end of 2018 and conclude by the end of the LIFE BaHAR After-LIFE Conservation Plan (2023).</p> <p>C) To commence by end of 2018 and conclude by the end of the Q1 2020</p>	Participating Beneficiaries
		Type of Measure		
		Study/ Assessment		
		Participating entities will draw upon internal and external expertise to review the existing situation with regards to the reporting of fishing gear lost during operation. Based		
				DFA; ERA; MESDC

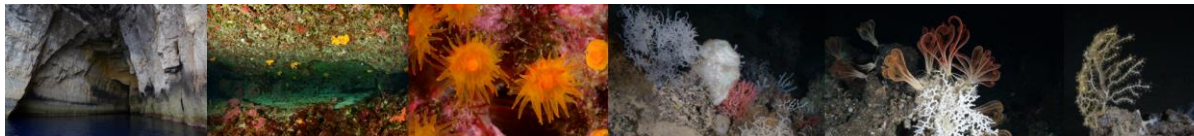


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	(full and part-time) and recreational sectors for all types of gear used, and assess and outline potential, appropriate automated system-process(es) for logging and disseminating the incoming data. This should consider how best to undertake the collation of such data from the various sources, as applicable and/or available, and how best to ensure its onward dissemination to government entities as appropriate.	<b>Degree of Importance</b>	on the results of this review, gaps in the current situation can be considered alongside existing and likely future obligations in order to devise optimal solutions. Recommended solutions should meet requirements while also being practically feasible. In conjunction with these activities, stakeholders will be consulted for their input regarding the current state-of-play, and for their recommendations/ assessment of suggested possible solutions.  MM3 is focusing on further facilitating the reporting by fishermen of lost fishing gear and centralising the information, thus building on existing obligations to facilitate use of data. The MM will synergise with existing obligations, such as the MSFD PoMs measure addressing accumulated litter from other stakeholders (in relation to Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009) and will involve consultation with the relevant authorities as necessary.	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, EMFF, ERDF
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost (€)</b>
		Publication of a report on feasibilities, operational details and possible implementation of voluntary reporting schemes for lost-fishing gear.		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
	<b>MM4:</b> Design and explore cost-effective options for future exploration and revisiting of deep-sea habitats to form part of eventual long-term monitoring/ management programs for the offshore Life BaHAR SCIs. This program should seek synergy with, and capitalise on, other initiatives and reporting obligations undertaken through the MSFD and the HD	Number of sources cited. Variety of appropriate literature sources (type) used. Number of viable solutions proposed.	Revisiting the deep-sea habitats for which offshore SCIs have been designated will be an essential part of monitoring their conservation status. Noting the myriad of logistical and financial challenges faced, a research program will be undertaken to elucidate possible solutions.  This MM links to the MSFD updating of the monitoring programme, as Member States are required to update these for monitoring purposes by 2020. For Malta, this will include monitoring processes that will be used to assess the environmental status in terms of MSFD Descriptors 1 & 6 for habitats identified through the project.	To commence by end of April 2019 and conclude by end of April 2020.
		<b>Type of Measure</b>		<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Study/ Assessment		ERA/ UoM; MESDC
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Critical		National, ERDF, EMFF,
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost (€)</b>
		Publication of a report on possible methods to revisit and monitor deep-water habitats in the offshore Life BaHAR SCI MPAs.		Medium
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>



		Number of viable options proposed. Number of literature and expert sources referred to. Variety of appropriate sources (type) referenced.	<p>Consultation will be sought with appropriate experts, from both the private and public sectors, to assess the current state-of-play vis-à-vis technologies used for exploring depths between 300-1000m bathymetry. Realistic future paradigms will also be explored. The results of these literature and expert consultation reviews will be considered in the light of site management/monitoring requirements</p> <p>Participating entities will then draw up a report offering a suite of recommendations on possible technical monitoring solutions, ranging from relatively “low” to “high” budget scenarios.</p> <p>External expertise would be required at a later stage to assess the costs for implementation any recommendation(s) put forward, after the MSFD monitoring programme has been updated by ERA.</p>	To commence by end June 2019 and conclude in 2020.
	<b>MM5:</b> Characterise specific, large and/or interesting coastal caves, including their physical dimensions, ecological community structures and threats/pressures present via ‘broad-brush’ surveys. The primary focus being to identify/prioritise coastal caves for baselining and establishment of appropriate management measures in later N2K site management. Data from the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project will be used to target the sea caves which appeared to host the most biodiversity and support the baselining process.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	<p>Priority will be given to caves identified through the LIFE BaHAR project as being highly diverse or otherwise of interest. The scope of this activity is focused on caves within 40m bathymetry.</p> <p>Initially, a scoping exercise will be undertaken to determine appropriate methodologies and techniques that can be developed/used in order to map and characterise caves. The primary approach however, will focus on ‘broad-brush’ surveys which can be expanded upon as necessary/possible.</p> <p>External assistance will be sought when expertise is not held in-house by any of the participating beneficiaries. This might include data processing and image generation during the later stages, or conducting/supporting dives in deeper or more technically demanding cave environments.</p>	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Study/ Assessment		ERA/ UoM
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, EU, Sponsorship
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Characterisation details produced for selected coastal sea caves.		Medium
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of caves characterised/prioritised		To commence by end June 2019 and conclude by end December 2022.



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			The key output of this measure will be the determination of a representative set of caves for future N2K site monitoring, which will address national monitoring programme needs and begins to address gaps identified (through the MSFD Initial Assessment) in marine monitoring programmes around the Maltese Islands.	
	<b>MM6:</b> Seek to provide a process/system to assist seabed cleaning events, projects and/or initiatives tackling marine litter and ALDFG predominantly within the in-shore SCIs (within 50m bathymetry).	<b>Type of Measure</b>	The purpose of the resulting system/process from this measure will be to optimise sea clean-up initiatives around Malta. It will: provide information on “problem” areas that require attention; log the various clean-up activities taking place (to reduce overlaps and help maximise coverage); provide assistance with acquiring permits; provide a funnel through which significant data on marine litter can be gathered (for MSFD and site management) and, offer guidance and support in the form of best practice recommendations.	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Administrative/ Awareness		ERA/ MESDC; TM
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Advantageous		National, EU, Sponsorship
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Formation and operation of the outputs/functions of the MM.		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of clean-ups making use of services provided through the outputs of this MM. Waste statistics removed under the auspices of the alliance.		To commence by end June 2019 and run indefinitely.
<b>CO3:</b> To ensure synergistic management with other relevant MPAs.	<b>MM7:</b> Conservation Measures for the LIFE BaHAR sites (including both novel designations and extensions to existing marine N2K SCIs) will be developed in conjunction with the development of Conservation Measures for Malta’s existing network of N2K MPA SCIs and SPAs.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	The creation of Conservation Measures for LIFE BaHAR N2K SCIs will be seamlessly integrated into ERA’s existing work-packages targeting the creation of effective, comprehensive Conservation Measures for Malta’s previously existing network of N2K MPA SCIs and SPAs. This will dramatically expedite the process of Conservation Measure creation and implementation for the LIFE BaHAR SCIs, and enable their Conservation	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Legislative/ Administrative		ERA/ MESDC; DFA
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Critical		National
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>





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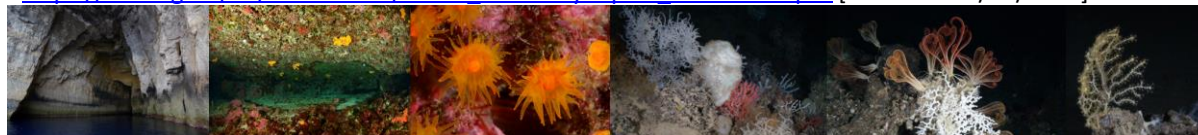
		Conservation Measures developed, published and implemented for all LIFE BaHAR N2K SCI sites.	Measures to draw upon insights gained from the first round of stakeholder consultations, which were held in 2017 for the previously designated N2K MPA sites. The added benefit of this action is the harmonisation of Malta's N2K MPA network in relation to stakeholders and the nationwide implementation of their respective Conservation Measures.  Project results, particularly those linked to stakeholder-conflicts, will be incorporated into the process. This will assist the stakeholder consultation phase in the creation of the Conservation Measures and also lead to development of measures and actions within these plans to address such issues.	Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b> Number of Conservation Measures produced. The date(s) of Conservation Measure implementation (in relation to their scheduled implementation as planned).		<b>Timeline</b> In progress, intended date of conclusion by end December 2019.
<b>CO4:</b> To raise public awareness and appreciation of the habitats and species, among specific target groups and the general public.	<b>MM8:</b> Contribute to on-going initiatives and seek opportunities to raise public awareness of project results, using material produced by the project, including maintenance and updating of the project website.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	Materials produced through the project will be used to continue promotion of the results and findings emanating from LIFE BaHAR. This may include attending events, delivering presentations and other modes of communication to reach both target audiences and the general public.  Topics should include both the habitats and species identified through the project, as well as raising awareness on the threats and pressures which threaten them.  This action will also ensure that the project website is maintained and kept updated for the 5-year period (as required) following the close of the project.	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Dissemination/ Awareness		ERA/ UoM; DFA; MESDC
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, Sponsorship
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Number of events attended. Number of projects/events using material produced through the LIFE BaHAR for NK project.		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of persons and entities attending events. Number of published		To continue at close of project and continue until



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		materials disseminated per event and in total.		end December 2023.
	<b>MM9:</b> Promote and incentivise courses/lectures on deep-sea and cave biology, ecology, conservation and management at UoM-DoB.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	UoM, with support from ERA and other relevant organisations/entities, will seek to incorporate targeted academic lectures on deep-sea and cave biology, ecology, conservation and management into their existing academic programs. The material delivered will focus on the conservation targets and themes elucidated from the LIFE BaHAR project. In addition, dedicated short courses or other activities intended to bring these themes to a wider audience may be organised. The UoM will also train research students to work in these fields by continuing to offer undergraduate and/or postgraduate research projects in deep-sea biology, ecology or conservation and management. This will lead to increased number of deep-sea specialists being trained locally, who can progress into environmental management careers. This will help generate long-term sustainability in terms of appropriate expertise for site management.	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Dissemination/ Awareness		UoM/ ERA
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Delivery of relevant lectures/courses at UoM-DoB.		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of lectures delivered. Number of students following the lectures/course, and number of students receiving certification/passing assessment.		To commence by end January 2020 and conclude (i.e. finalise and implement) ready for the 2021 academic year.
<b>CO5:</b> To ensure that anthropogenic activities occurring in the area are carried out in a manner that do not jeopardise the sites' conservation objectives.	<b>MM10:</b> Contribute to the development of guidelines (e.g. code of conducts) for activities within the MPAs in order to reduce potential impacts.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	The data obtained and observations made through the Life BaHAR project will contribute to the MSFD PoMs (measures MICMT-M074_NEW and MICMT-M077_NEW <sup>2</sup> ) for the development of guidelines and best practices for seafarer and divers and shall extend these by including guidance on sensitive habitats, such as caves in regard to navigation and diving.  The appropriate entities and stakeholders will be consulted and relevant expertise drawn upon in the	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Dissemination/ Awareness		ERA/ MESDC; DFA

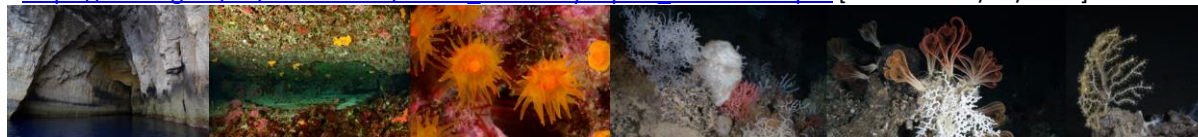
<sup>2</sup> [https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/POMs\\_SummaryReport\\_Malta2017.pdf](https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/POMs_SummaryReport_Malta2017.pdf) [Accessed 01/10/2018]



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		<b>Degree of Importance</b>	<p>process of drafting the codes of conduct. The codes of conduct will form best practice recommendations only and no legislative/ administrative aspects are foreseen under the After-LIFE program. However, the possibility of such occurring at later stages (within Conservation Measures and/or activities linked legislation) should be considered during the drafting process to maximise effectiveness and likelihood of uptake into more formal site management measures.</p> <p>Once finalised, the codes of conduct should be published and promoted to gain maximum traction with the general public and appropriate stakeholders.</p>	<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, ERDF, Sponsorship
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Publication of sector/activity specific guidelines ('Codes of Conduct').		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of units produced for physical dissemination. Number of persons reached via online (email/ social media) communications.		To conclude by end December 2019.
	<b>MM11:</b> Reducing the impact from ALDFG through investigating, encouraging and facilitating the use of proven/viable alternative designs/materials, where appropriate, across as many fishing gear types as possible and/or applicable.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	<p>Life BaHAR project data will continue to inform the implementation of the MSFD measure (MICMT-M083_NEW<sup>3</sup>), which aims to identify options for redesigning fishing gear or practices to reduce discarded or lost fishing gear. This measure seeks to respond to information published as part of the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project, which indicated that ALDFG is a significant negative impact. Noting several ongoing projects targeting similar objectives, this measures (as part of the After-LIFE Conservation Plan) will operate in synergy and capitalise upon the momentum and data outputs of the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project.</p>	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Administration		ERA/ DFA; MESDC
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Advantageous		National, EMFF
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Implementation progress under MSFD		Medium
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
				To commence by end April 2020 and conclude by end April 2022.

<sup>3</sup> [https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/POMs\\_SummaryReport\\_Malta2017.pdf](https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/POMs_SummaryReport_Malta2017.pdf) [Accessed 01/10/2018]



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	<b>MM12:</b> Initiating an initiative/campaign to reduce litter inputs into the sea from fishing and aquaculture activities, including conducting a scoping exercise to delineate sources and respective significances.	<b>Type of Measure</b>	<p>ERA will lead an awareness and information campaign to draw attention to the issue and promote best practices/ possible solutions that can be easily implemented to help reduce waste quantities without negatively impacting typical operations.</p> <p>In conjunction with this, ERA and the DFA will progress toward producing a compatible set of guidelines to mandate certain actions for fishing/ aquaculture operations occurring within the LIFE BaHAR SCIs to reduce litter inputs.</p> <p>This measure will synergise with similar efforts under the MSFD and the development of N2K MPA Conservation Measures in general. Additionally, it should involve an appropriate level of stakeholder consultation, and be preceded by a suitable scoping exercise to target the measure on key issues that can be addressed within the timeframes and capacities available.</p>	<b>Lead/ Participating Beneficiaries</b>
		Administrative/ Dissemination/ Awareness		ERA/ MESDC; DFA
		<b>Degree of Importance</b>		<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>
		Necessary		National, ERDF, Sponsorship
		<b>Indicators</b>		<b>Estimated Cost</b>
		Information/ outreach campaign is initiated. Creation/ publication of official Government Notice/ appropriate legal mechanism to better regulate/ manage waste streams from fishing/ aquaculture operations.		Low
		<b>Measurable Attributes</b>		<b>Timeline</b>
		Number of fishers and businesses (aquaculture operators) reached by communications. Litter monitoring data streams from EMFF MSFD monitoring project.		To commence by end December 2019 and conclude by end December 2023 (the end of the After-LIFE program).





## FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

It is estimated that a maximum budget of € 300,000.00 will be required to implement the After LIFE plan, with the main areas of expenditure being:

- Staff costs for data analysis, measures development and related procurement, monitoring and management of measures
- External assistance for specific expertise and targeted monitoring
- Consumables for meetings with stakeholders (venue, refreshments, etc.)

The actual cost of After-LIFE plan implementation is anticipated to be much lower, noting the maximum estimate is calculated based on addition of all MM expenditure range upper limits.

It is planned that funding will be sourced through national funds (costs integrated in ERA and other relevant budgets), while EU funding sources will be explored where possible.

Certain measures, such as data analysis by UoM and MESDC-DFA, will be catered for through the entities' budgets as part of their ongoing work and priorities.

Lessons learnt through the project which have been considered, include:

- The need to allocate sufficient resources and time for technical development and management of measures, including those relating to public awareness;
- Public awareness deliverables will require technical input in order to be scientifically correct and to ensure that the target audience is effectively reached, for which resources (in-house and external) need to be catered for;
- Integration of flexibility in relation to timing of actions and deliverables, in view that procurement processes may take longer than planned or may not be immediately successful.

## SUMMARY

The LIFE BaHAR for N2K project led to the successful designation of three new MPAs and extended five previously designated MPAs. These newly designated areas expand Malta's MPA network for the conservation of marine habitats.

Data collected through the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project, addressed knowledge gaps on sea cave and reef habitats in Malta's FMZ and will help to inform future management of the marine environment.

The After-LIFE Conservation Plan will continue to fulfil the aims of the project in terms of raising awareness, maximising data use and drawing upon information gathered on threats and pressures identified through the project to improve management actions.

Beyond these tangible results, the LIFE BaHAR for N2K project has been a shining example of positive collaboration between local Maltese entities (DFA, ERA, MESDC and UoM) and the non-governmental organisation, Fundación OCEANA.

