



Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) for Biodiversity Conservation in Italy: A Land-Sea Perspective

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Italy represents a particularly complex setting for conservation: it hosts exceptionally high biodiversity that provides essential ecosystem services and supports intense, locally rooted socio-economic activities, both on land and at sea. Despite the relatively high number of protected areas, current coverage still falls short of national and European 30x30 targets, especially in the marine realm. In this context, expanding formally protected areas is not always straightforward, as management restrictions can be difficult to reconcile with existing uses. Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), as defined by CBD Decision 14/8, may therefore provide a complementary and more flexible approach, recognizing areas that, although not formally protected, are effectively governed and managed for long-term in situ conservation while maintaining ecosystem services and local values.

We are coordinating a group of marine experts to carry out the first national-scale, science-based screening of potential OECMs in Italian seas, while also exploring their integration into existing conservation and planning frameworks. Regional teams are assessing sites through a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis tool developed within the European project MarinePlan, which translates official OECM criteria and guidelines (CBD, IUCN) into a structured scoring workflow. The objective is to identify areas potentially relevant for biodiversity conservation, while also highlighting key knowledge gaps, which remain a major barrier to effective management and evidence-based decision-making.

Although developed for the marine environment, the flexibility of this approach makes it transferable to terrestrial contexts as well. In this perspective, we aim for the marine experience to serve as a starting point for framing OECMs within a more coherent land-sea conservation strategy in Italy. This contribution builds on discussions developed within the NBFC and is also proposed as an opportunity to foster dialogue and future collaboration between terrestrial and marine scientists.