ATLAS Science-Policy meeting

European Parliament, Brussels

15.00 - 18.00, 23 March 2017

MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

Background

The first science-policy meeting for the ATLAS project took place in Brussels on Tuesday 23 March 2017. The aim of this meeting, and those that follow later in the project, is to link research and policy, establish an on-going dialogue with stakeholders and potential users of ATLAS results, and to provide policymakers and stakeholders with timely and relevant scientific knowledge in support of policy developments. Invitees to these meetings comprise senior policymakers, stakeholders from industry and NGOs, representatives of international organisations, and leading scientists. The objective is to ensure that ATLAS results are brought promptly to the attention of policy makers and other stakeholders in a forum where then can be discussed with all interested parties, and to keep ATLAS partners up to date with the latest policy issues and questions.

Hosted by Prof. Ricardo Serrao Santos, Member of the European Parliament (MEP), this first science-policy meeting mainly served to bring the project to the attention of various stakeholders and to gather their feedback on where ATLAS results will be of benefit to their organisations or sectors in the future development of management of ecosystems in the Atlantic.

Meeting report

Meeting participants were welcomed by Prof. Ricardo Serrao Santos, MEP for the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (Portugal).

The meeting was then opened by the Chair, Dr Sybille van den Hove, who explained the context of the ATLAS Science-Policy platform and noted that this was the first of a series of meetings to be held annually during the course of the project. She invited the meeting participants to introduce themselves and give an insight into their personal interest in the Atlantic.

The meeting commenced with a series of presentations by project participants and collaborators, each focusing on a specific aspect of the ATLAS work.

Prof. Murray Roberts, ATLAS Coordinator, provided an overview of the project and its high-level objectives, particularly placing it in the context of the economic crisis and the importance of the Atlantic and its resources for Blue Growth. He also highlighted the

connections between the Atlantic and other sea basins, and the potential impacts that global-scale issues such as climate change and ocean acidification could have on Atlantic ecosystems, particularly if the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) is affected[1]. Ocean physics is very much the glue that binds together the characteristics of the Atlantic system, and it also binds together the different facets of the project.

ATLAS is a research project but interlinks closely with social and policy dimensions, and application of results to maritime spatial planning (MSP). The project will involve 25 offshore cruises investigating 12 case studies in the Atlantic, each with a focus on deep-sea ecosystems and how these might be impacted by changes in the AMOC.

The meeting Chair then called for a brief pause to ask participants to consider what Blue Growth means on each side of the Atlantic. Referencing the EU 7th Environment Action Programme '*Living well, within the limits of our planet*[2]*, she* noted that access to science was critical but asked the meeting participants to consider how might we develop good strategies not only to produce the science and data, but also how to share it to support sustainability and employ it to best effect in MSP.

Comments received from the meeting participants touched on the following issues:

- Blue Growth must be sustainable and the EC's view is that Blue Growth is a long-term project. There is a need to shape a common concept of what sustainable Blue Growth can be. The EC's 2016 communication on international ocean governance[3] has huge relevance for ATLAS.
- The Atlantic borders the Arctic and Sargasso Sea/central Atlantic: there are interesting and relevant aspects in these areas that have relevance for the EU and for Blue Growth and MSP. ATLAS will have strong relevance for the work of the Artic Council, the Sargasso Sea Commission and fisheries organisations in the central Atlantic.
- MEP Santos commented that it would be interesting to see if blue growth can support a reduction of activities and/or impact elsewhere, rather than always focusing on economic growth. The recent vote on exploitation of oil and gas in the Arctic is an interesting illustration of predominantly short term and narrow economic thinking. Is ATLAS principally focused on advising on how and where economic activities can potentially grow in the deep-sea, or will the project offer advice on sustainability of current human activities in these areas? Prof. Roberts responded that ATLAS is not seeking to target new areas of growth, but instead aims to build a robust understanding of how ecosystems function so that if they are perturbed by an accident or change, then we can detect and react to that pressure. An important element of the project is to work with industry to enhance their EIA methodologies to improve sustainability.

[1] Ref https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/bibliography/related_files/td0802.pdf

[2] *European Commission, Directorate-General for the Environment "Living well, within the means of our planet". 7th EAP – the new general Union environment action programme to 2020. DOI: 10.2779/57220. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/action-programme*

[3] *European Commission High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (2016) International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans: Joint communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Ref JOIN(2016) 49, 10 November 2016.*

- A better understanding of drivers, pressures and impacts may trigger prevention or precautionary approaches in some cases.
- In terms of MSP, ATLAS will focus on two key aspects: i) the need to better define footprint of certain activities impacting the deep sea which will help better assess GES, and 2) the need to better assess ecosystem goods and services so that we can understand their value more fully.
- The concept of MSP is often interpreted differently on each side of the Atlantic. How can results or models be married up when two different legislative systems are being addressed? Different definitions do present a significant challenge.
- ATLAS will work on EIA to improve its use and try to foster a move away from caution to a more informed, pragmatic approach. There is an urgent need to promote data sharing with industry and amongst research organisations in order to achieve sustainable governance. The recent IOC UNESCO conference highlighted MSP in different parts of the world and how it can be applied to ABNJ.

Following these interventions, Dr Paul Snelgrove (Memorial University, Canada) presented on some of the current initiatives working to enhance trans-Atlantic cooperation and opportunity. ATLAS provides opportunities to work across jurisdictions to improve how we exploit and protect our oceans. The primary reason for trans-Atlantic cooperation is that many natural processes occur at scales larger than jurisdictional boundaries - for example the spread of pollutants, fisheries, climate change, etc. The EU has shown good leadership in trans-Atlantic strategy with the implementation of the 2013 Galway Statement; Canada is an enthusiastic partner, and there is good support at ground level from the United States.

There are currently a range of initiatives and projects fostering trans-Atlantic collaboration. On the European side these include the EU-funded SPONGES project, RESPONSEABLE, Sea Change, MERCES, ATLANTOS, and the Atlantic Ocean Research Alliance (AORA). On the North American side, initiatives include CHONE, EXPORTS, DOOS and the new ASPIRE project. Dr Snelgrove concluded by noting that collaborative research across ocean basins is essential due to the scale of the challenges, and the fact that nature ignores jurisdictional borders. However, he also noted that funding also does not typically cross borders, and that people are the most efficient currency in tackling ocean issues.

Dr Cova Orejas (Spanish Institute of Oceanography) then presented highlights from the recent MEDWAVES (MEDiterranean out flow WAter and Vulnerable EcosystemS**)** cruise, which took place in September-October 2016 as part of the ATLAS cruise programme. This cruise focused on understanding better the connection between Atlantic and Mediterranean biodiversity and the role that the Mediterranean Outflow Water plays in this relationship. The cruise collected a significant amount of data from two of the ATLAS case study sites: i) Alboran Sea - Strait of Gibraltar - Gulf of Cádiz, and ii) the Azores.

Dr Telmo Morato (University of the Azores) presented an overview of work carried out to develop a VME indicator tool based on data harvested from a literature review on ecosystems from the mid-Atlantic Ridge and supplemented by biological and biogeographic data from public databases. The VME indicator can be combined with an analysis of threats from different activities (such as fishing) to generate a VME Index, which combines how

intrinsically vulnerable to human impacts the VME indicator is deemed to be, and how abundant the VME indicator is. This study demonstrates that despite the limited availability of data in the deep sea, existing data can still form the basis for policy-relevant scientific analysis, upon which effective marine governance strategies can be developed, and opportunities for blue growth can be identified.

Industry representative Mr Gareth Parry (Woodside Energy) gave an overview of Woodside's approach to environmental risk management and their involvement of scientific research to fill knowledge gaps and minimise environmental impacts at an early stage in their offshore projects. He presented an example of a project in the Porcupine Seabight area where cetacean data were collected prior to undertaking seismic surveys, in order to minimise impacts on the local whale and dolphin populations. He stressed that the ATLAS project can help Woodside enhance its limited understanding of deep-sea ecosystems on the Irish margin.

Discussions following this presentation touched on the importance of influencing industry early on to help their transformation towards ore sustainable practices and on the availability of and access to data, particularly that held by industrial operators. Mr Parry observed that data collected from their monitoring programmes is openly published on the regulator's website. He also observed that the sharing of metadata is straightforward as an initial step, and does not generally present any commercial complications - an operational example of this is the Industry-Government Environmental Metadatabase (IGEM) initiative in western Australia (www.igem.com.au).

MEP Santos asked what the differences in policy and regulation were for operators in different regions. Mr Parry observed that in Australia everything is federally regulated, whilst for operations offshore Ireland, the EU adds another layer of regulation in addition to any national legislation.

The final presentation of the afternoon was given by Prof. David Johnson (Seascape Consultants), who focused on how ATLAS project results can be translated and communicated to policy fora. Some countries have a desire to use other area-based planning tools and this provides an opportunity for ATLAS. Prof. Johnson highlighted the complexities of the current legislative framework for the High Seas, and explained the ongoing United Nations BBNJ process[4]. The ATLAS project will be the focus of a side event at the forthcoming third meeting of the BBNJ Preparatory Committee in New York, 27 March - 7 April 2017. Ms Gruber noted that the Commission should be informed when these kinds of events are taking place so that they can notify the EU representatives and provide the necessary support.

Ms Gruber went on to explain that ATLAS is one of the 'star' projects in DG Research and expectations are high. They wish to take full advantage of the work that ATLAS is doing, along with complementary work in other DGs (MARE, ENV - but also with the European Parliament and Member States). It is important that ATLAS continues to raise the visibility of

[4] *Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction*

AORA, and cooperation with Canada will evolve quickly (with supporting funding). A mid-term review of the Atlantic Strategy is planned (in collaboration with DG MARE), and it will be interesting to see how the ATLAS results can be used to support the Common Fisheries Policy. Internationally, the Atlantic is now being viewed as a system and interest is starting to move southwards. The Commission would like to collectively look into ways to engage with a wider community along and across the southern part of the Atlantic. A step in this direction is the EC's meeting entitled 'A New Era of Blue Enlightenment' which will take place in Lisbon on 12-14 July 2017. A slot of 60-90 minutes on 12 July will be devoted to promoting the connection to the wider community of the Atlantic as a whole, and it is hoped that ATLAS will make a contribution to this session. The Commission is also reviewing how project results are taken forward into policy.

MEP Santos wrapped up the meeting by thanking Ms Gruber and Ms Caetano for their support - they have championed deep-sea research for many years, and fully support the Atlantic agenda. He noted that it is increasingly necessary for everyone to think and operate at a global level as we enter this new era of the Anthropocene. Some issues are not well handled under UNCLOS, and biodiversity and climate change are primary concerns. Europe must be a leader in these fields but the course of action must based on scientific knowledge. MEP Santos closed by thanking the ATLAS team for the meeting.

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MEETING PROGRAMME

15.00	Arrival, coffee
15.15	Welcome and introduction from the Chair *Dr Sybille van den Hove, Iodine*
15.20	Overview of the ATLAS project *Prof. Murray Roberts, University of Edinburgh, UK (ATLAS Coordinator)*
15.40	Questions and discussion
16.00	A view across The Pond: Enhancing trans-Atlantic cooperation and opportunity *Dr Paul Snelgrove, Memorial University, Canada*
16.15	Following the Mediterranean path through the Atlantic: the MEDWAVES cruise *Dr Covadonga Orejas, Instituto Español de Oceanografia, Spain*
16.30	Using past data to inform future management *Dr Telmo Morato, IMAR/University of the Azores, Portugal*
16.45	Common goals: Industry perspective on collaboration in the Atlantic *Gareth Parry, Woodside*
17.00	Bridging the great divide: making connections between science and policy *Prof. David Johnson, Seascape Consultants, UK*
17.15	Questions and discussion
17.30	Concluding remarks (Sigi Gruber, DG RTD and Ricardo Santos MEP) Reception drinks and informal discussion
18.00	Meeting close

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List of participants

** denotes ATLAS project participants*

Last name	First name	Organisation
Bellion	Ute	Pew Trusts
Borger	Raphael	MEP Meissner office
Caetano	Ana Teresa	EC DG Research
Cardigos	Frederico	MEP Santos office
Economou	Christos	EC DG MARE
Friess	Bernhard	EC DG MARE
Grehan*	Anthony	National University of Ireland, Galway
Gruber	Sieglinde	EC DG Research
Gunn*	Vikki	Seascape Consultants
Hoermandinger	Guenter	EC DG ENV
Johnson*	David	Seascape Consultants
Morato*	Telmo	IMAR Azores
Nastaseanu	Ariana	EC DG Research
Orejas*	Cova	SIO
Parry	Gareth	Woodside Energy
Petrikovicova	Alena	DG MARE
Priestland	Emma	Seas at Risk
Rae	Margaret	AORA/ Marine Institute
Roberts*	Murray	Edinburgh University
Serrao Santos	Ricardo	MEP
Simpson*	Katherine	Edinburgh University
Snelgrove*	Paul	Memorial University
Valerio	Bruno	MEP Santos office
Van den Hove*	Sybille	Iodine