

Evaluation overview

Final evaluation of the COGITO project

Country / Region: **Mediterranean**

Topic: **Biodiversity**

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Key FFEM support data

Project name: COGITO (Supporting the integrated and sustainable management of coastal territories, islands and maritime areas and MPAs in the Mediterranean)

Project number : CZZ 2276

Amount financed by the FFEM: €1.77m

Project grant date : 20/03/2018

Duration : Initially 4 years, extended to 6 years

Context

In a context of increasing pressures on natural resources in the Mediterranean, the COGITO project aimed in particular to demonstrate that through consolidating processes and actions on pilot sites in a number of countries in the South and East of the Mediterranean (Albania, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey), co-management by local actors could contribute to the building of integrated and sustainable forms of regional governance encompassing islands, coastlines and the sea.

Participants and operating methods

The project's 4 sponsors (the MedPAN Association, the French Coastal and Lake Shore Conservation Authority, the Mediterranean WWF and the association for Small Mediterranean islands (PIM)) developed this project jointly with their national and local networks based on learnings from the preceding project (GETLIM) in which the first 3 partners had participated.

The project was co-managed by the sponsors, with responsibilities divided up by action and some regional actions being undertaken jointly. A Memorandum of Understanding between the 4 organisations was signed at the outset of the project, with the MedPAN Association acting as project coordinator and facilitator.

COGITO

project



Aims

The goal of the project was “Contributing to the support and consolidation of Mediterranean coastal, island and marine integrated and sustainable management processes, benefiting ecosystems and local communities while integrating the challenges of co-management of the target regions, in order to reproduce this at larger scale in the longer term.”

Specific objectives

1. Consolidating the preceding project's pilot initiatives and supporting new pilot sites in respect of the co-management of coastal, island and marine territories.
2. Capacity building for institutions and for site managers and their partners.
3. Developing advocacy and awareness-raising for the integrated co-management of the territories at national, regional and international scales.
4. Developing and harnessing scientific knowledge for management and policies.
5. Optimising the synergy between partners and coordinating project actions.

Performance appraisal

Relevance

The project and its 5 main objectives have good relevance. Activities aimed at capacity building addressed real needs and resulted from prior consultation with local actors. The relevance of the candidate profiles benefiting from the training is also good, with participation by a wide range of actors. The tools for dialogue between scientists and managers addressed the needs of the benefiting managers although they appear limited in number.

Coherence

Internal coherence of the project is reasonably good, with an efficient cooperation dynamic between sponsors, derived from shared exemplary activities rather than through systematic complementarity. A number of vectors for the exchange and transmission of scientific information have been put in place, although the absence of data centralisation and valorisation by the sites is regrettable.

External coherence: complementarity of the project with the many other environmental initiatives in the Mediterranean (in particular synergy with the MedFund). Difficulties have been encountered in the implementation of the planned support on some pilot sites (local and national context not always conducive to project completion).

Effectiveness

The project has been effective or partially effective for components C1 to C5:

- . For C1 (Co-management on pilot sites), the project has been partially effective, with in particular:
 - (i) the formalisation of agreements for shared governance and management, but on a limited number of sites;
 - (ii) strengthening of the management models in place, which are transposable;
 - (iii) support for sustainable economic development initiatives, albeit at a modest level;
 - (iv) consolidation of the MedPAN mechanism for small project calls. In fact, the study to advance PMA structuring using the “compass card” tool has shown that almost all sites have made progress in their structuring as PMAs.
- . Effectiveness of C2 (Capacity building) has been good, with good strengthening of skills in-situ and one of the regional skills goals achieved.
- . C3 achievement (Advocacy and awareness-raising) is largely sound, although the mobilisation and level of involvement of national authorities have been somewhat disparate. The project has enabled the dissemination of experience and good practices on a large enough scale.
- . C4 goals (Scientific knowledge) have been achieved in part. The project has facilitated dialogues and partnership-building between managers and scientists, but the consolidation and constitution of regional monitoring networks, and definition of conservation strategies shared between local and national actors could not be successfully completed. Also, the valorisation of scientific data, and its communication to decision-makers and managers seem insufficient.
- . For C5 (Synergies and coordination), while the synergy between sponsors could have been better, the coordination has allowed a large number of activities to be delivered and most objectives to be achieved.

Efficiency

Financial resources of the project have been correctly applied, even if the amount dedicated to activities implemented by local beneficiaries has fallen and remains somewhat low (13%).

Implementation system: human resources would have benefited from having a greater role at central level (at least half their time); the monitoring tool worked, even if financial monitoring was rather complex and monitoring for the training and logical framework indicators was only partial; intra-sponsor monitoring committees would have benefited from being more frequent.

Governance arrangements for the project worked well and evolved throughout the course of the project.

Impact

Several unexpected impacts from the project were cited by sponsors (for example, the creation of the Mediterranean Consortium (CMB) and by local actors (for example, strengthening NGO credibility among other funding partners and the administration).

Viability/sustainability

Participants interviewed testify to a real sense of project ownership, which is key to viability. They cited some 15 results achieved which they consider as sustainable, or as a factor in sustainability. Sponsor activity continues in the formation of several consortia and the implementation of new projects inspired by COGITO. Stakeholders cited several consolidation approaches for financing their actions (the MedFund being cited as an essential financial partner for managers of Mediterranean MPA). Additionally, several actions undertaken in pilot sites are considered to be exemplary, and show potential for replicability.

Added value of the project and FFEM support

The main added value of the project, according to the beneficiaries, is that the actions sparked by COGITO would not have been achieved without it. A significant added value brought by the FFEM is the effect of leveraging the project to mobilise co-financing (increased by 50% over the course of the project).

Recommendations & learnings

FOR SPONSORS

1. Factor in communication with local project partners
2. Direct part of the end-of-project workshop toward experience feedback and post-project insights
3. Integrate complementary objectives into MPA development projects in the Mediterranean
4. Ensure that there is “fertile ground” on the sites identified, before committing to a project.
5. Limit the number of pilot sites supported to align with the project team’s capacity
6. Provide extensive information to the authorities, both at outset and throughout the life of the project
7. Provide a more significant part of the support budget for actions on the ground in the pilot sites
8. Ensure sufficient time is allowed to perform the on-site actions
9. Devise training for the instructors
10. Provide for the centralisation and valorisation of scientific monitoring and experiments

FOR SPONSORS AND FUNDING PARTNERS

11. Ensure there are synergies between projects supporting Mediterranean MPAs
12. Designate a lead partner to centralise administrative, financial and technical monitoring
13. Set up a joint bank account unique to the project (or as a minimum, a dedicated line)
14. Distinguish administrative and staffing costs from the rest of the budget
15. Allow for a coordinator/project manager dedicated at least part-time to the project
16. Establish a sponsors’ monitoring committee which meets regularly
17. Define from the outset a joint communication plan and editorial committee
18. Set up a webpage on a platform to which project material can be uploaded (or linked to)
19. Provide for long-term flexibility in project handling
20. Ask applicant projects to demonstrate how they would minimise the project’s carbon footprint

