

**Report on the participation of the ATLAS project in the workshop of the IDEM project  
(Implementation of the MSFD to the DEep Mediterranean Sea) held in Valletta Campus (University of  
Malta) on 5-7/9/2018.**

**by Dr Georgios Kazanidis - invited speaker**

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is the European Union's ambitious plan for the efficient protection of the marine environment across Europe. The cornerstone in the MSFD is the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) of the EU's marine waters by 2020. This on-going process requires collaboration among people and countries to secure a healthy and productive environment for future generations.

The deep sea (i.e. regions below 200 m water depth) is the largest ecosystem on Earth, serving a wealth of goods and services to the society. However, due to a number of reasons (e.g. remote environment, technological challenges) our knowledge about the deep-sea realm is little. This limited availability of information hampers the establishment of efficient conservation strategies for deep-sea organisms and resources. The ATLAS project ([www.eu-atlas.org](http://www.eu-atlas.org)) is a transatlantic alliance (Europe, USA, Canada) funded by the European Union and it aims to advance our understanding about the deep-sea ecosystems of the North Atlantic, to support effective governance and to stimulate Blue Growth. As part of its Work Package 3 "Biodiversity and Biogeography", ATLAS addresses the challenge of assessing GES in the deep North Atlantic. Through this ambitious exercise, ATLAS aims to record strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in the process of addressing GES in the deep sea.

As part of knowledge exchange among EU projects, ATLAS was kindly invited to participate in the workshop organized by the IDEM project (Implementation of the MSFD to the DEep Mediterranean Sea) (<http://www.msfd-idem.eu>) held in Valletta Campus (University of Malta) on 5-7/9/2018. The presentation entitled "The challenge of assessing the Good Environmental Status in the deep sea: the ATLAS approach" was given by Dr Georgios Kazanidis (University of Edinburgh) with Dr Cova Orejas (Spanish Institute of Oceanography), Dr Angel Borja (AZTI), Dr Lea-Anne Henry (University of Edinburgh), Dr David Stirling (Marine Scotland), Dr Lenaick Menot (IFREMER) and Prof J Murray Roberts (University of Edinburgh) as coauthors.

Georgios Kazanidis gave an overview of the procedure followed in ATLAS referring to the 9 Case Studies under examination for GES, the methodology followed for the selection of appropriate indicators and the use of the software NEAT (Nested Environmental status Assessment Tool) which is used in ATLAS for GES assessment. The presentation was followed by questions/discussion with participants from the IDEM project as well as other projects in the field of the MSFD. Through these fruitful discussions several aspects of MSFD/GES were approached which unraveled common threads among the projects and served as basis for possible collaborations in the future.

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Dr Georgios Kazanidis presenting the work in progress done by the ATLAS project assessing the Good Environmental Status in the deep-sea ecosystems of the North Atlantic.