
**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional Marine
Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the
Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

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Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business

International Developments in Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response

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Note by the Secretariat

This document is an information paper summarising recent developments in international oiled wildlife preparedness and response, prepared by the Sea Alarm Foundation (a member of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit).

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN OILED WILDLIFE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Background

REMPEC and the Sea Alarm Foundation have in place an MoU which allows Sea Alarm to participate in the Mediterranean Assistance Unit on request of a Contracting Party (CP). Sea Alarm's membership in the MAU is to help in enhancing the capability of the Contracting Parties in responding to oiled wildlife incidents. The objective of the MoU is to facilitate the mobilisation of wildlife response expertise in case of the activation of the MAU by REMPEC following a request for assistance by a Contracting Party to the Emergency Protocol to the Barcelona Convention.

The MoU also allows for CPs to seek Sea Alarm's expertise in the development of national contingency plans, particularly regarding protection of sensitive species, and related operational procedures to be implemented in cases of emergency. The MoU also allows for Sea Alarm to support and participate in relevant training activities organised by REMPEC in the Mediterranean region. In the interests of visibility and sharing of information, Sea Alarm has linked its Country Wildlife Response Profiles providing national data on oiled wildlife response to the corresponding Country profiles of REMPEC's website (sections response strategy and expertise). Sea Alarm's country profiles are available at <http://www.sea-alarm.org/publications/country-wildlife-response-profiles/>.

Update on international developments

This information paper provides an update on relevant international developments in oiled wildlife preparedness and response, namely:

1. Firming up EUROWA as an international concept for mutual assistance regarding oiled wildlife response
2. Outcomes of the EUROWA-2 project: tools for CPs.

1. Firming up EUROWA as an international concept for mutual assistance regarding oiled wildlife response

For incidents where marine wildlife is threatened or impacted, EUROWA is a network of European wildlife response organisations, that provides a framework of professional standards, training and accreditation on the basis of which mutual assistance between countries can be facilitated. EUROWA was created with EU funding in 2015 as a professional resource that is available to European member states facing oiled wildlife incidents and which can be activated by the European Commission's ERCC. The network was formalised in 2019 when founding organisations signed the EUROWA Charter, which also new candidate organisations can sign to join the membership. Membership currently consists of 12 Network Members in 11 European countries (10 Associate, 2 Affiliate). Sea Alarm Foundation holds the Secretariat of the EUROWA Network and represents the Network in the different Regional Agreements in Europe (EUROWA itself is also an observer to the Bonn Agreement).

EUROWA aims to develop and guarantee professional emergency response capabilities amongst experts from its Members. To this aim, EUROWA Members are engaged in a collective process of creating tools, guidelines and training materials to the highest international professional standards that enable its experts to provide response capabilities and to pass knowledge onto local stakeholders. This cooperation, underpinned by the EUROWA Charter, provides a professional work force of trained and aligned responders who can mobilise internationally for an emergency, working alongside local authorities and in-country responders who have been educated to the same standards.

The engagement of authorities at national and regional levels should further ensure and support the effective integration of mobilised EUROWA expertise into a national response system. In this way EUROWA aims to provide a reliable resource for Contracting Parties of the Barcelona convention in their aim to improve and implement the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031).

CSO 1 of the Mediterranean Strategy Prevent, prepare for, and respond to, operational, illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships, in the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031) specifically states the following actions:

1.2.1 *To increase as much as practical, the level of knowledge in the field of preparedness and response to accidental marine pollution by oil and other harmful substances by delivering trainings on the following subjects :*

- i) *EUROWA model wildlife courses (BASIC Responder, ADVANCED Responder, SPECIALIST Responder, Manager, Wildlife Branch Director).*

1.3.4 *To develop a framework for holistic integrated management of marine pollution incidents that enable a coordinated preparedness and response operation at sea and onshore, incorporating the response to oil affected wildlife, at a national level and in the region-wide cooperation*

The EUROWA Network can support Contracting Parties in achieving these actions from CSO 1. With regard to action 1.2.1, EUROWA training courses are available for Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties on request. With regard to action 1.3.4, a similar objective is also included in the strategic action plans of both the Bonn Agreement and HELCOM Convention. The outputs of the EUROWA-2 project (see below) provide Barcelona Convention CPs with tools and guidelines explaining the importance of applying an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to wildlife emergency management, and ways to develop it.

2. Outcomes of the EUROWA-2 project: tools for CPs.

The EUROWA-2 project (2021-22, funded by EU Civil Protection and coordinated by Sea Alarm) has delivered a range of products that will help coastal states to develop preparedness systems for oiled wildlife. One of the main objectives of the project was providing governmental authorities and Regional Agreements with educational tools to help ensure that wildlife incident scenarios are better understood and better prepared for as part of existing national and international response preparedness systems. Amongst the preparedness tools developed, which will be available for use by the European Regional Agreements are:

1. The Future of Professional Oiled Wildlife Response in Europe Document: to provide European coastal authorities with information that helps them to prepare better for marine wildlife emergencies. The document provides a vision for the future of professional oiled wildlife response in Europe, 12 reasons why wildlife response should be professional and guidance on preparedness with an annotated table of contents for an Integrated National Oiled Wildlife Response Plan. The document also lays out action plans at different levels, including national authorities and regional agreements.
2. Guidelines for exercise development: document providing guidelines for scheduling and designing exercises. helping to develop in-country wildlife preparedness. The document highlights the importance of exercising in emergency response preparedness and provides multiple wildlife response exercise examples
3. Education materials that can be used by authorities to understand and be prepared for challenges that may be connected to visible impacts of incidents on marine wildlife in the public domain and the reaction of the public. These include a set of e-learning Modules for authorities which have been published in the EUROWA website and a set of short animated films that provide an additional tool for raising wildlife preparedness and response awareness, including EUROWA.
4. WildX Wildlife Tabletop Exercise package: a very rich tool to educate authorities and other stakeholders on wildlife operational management allowing these stakeholders to playfully explore oiled wildlife response challenges as a way to better identify issues that need to be solved as part of the wildlife planning process.

The EUROWA-2 project also provided the opportunity to increase the pool of experts and expertise in Europe, including in several countries which are CPs to the Barcelona convention. 6 different training courses were provided in 10 different training events (6 in-person and 4 online) with a total of 91 people trained and 142 new EUROWA training qualifications awarded. Of particular note for the Mediterranean region is that the project has developed new Oiled Sea Turtle responder protocols and training courses (Advanced and BASIC oiled sea turtle responder). A first sea turtle training event was held in Greece (April 2022) with responders from 11 different Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention.

The project has also delivered three workshops on integrated management design for dealing with wildlife challenges in pollution emergencies. The aim of the workshops was to introduce European

authorities to the topic of integrated management of wildlife response as part of pollution emergency response and to explore which tools and processes can be used to optimise an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to marine wildlife emergency management. Two of the workshops were done online in 2022 but the third one was delivered in-person in Brussels in May 2023. The workshops were attended by multiple representatives of European authorities (61 attendees in total throughout the three events) working in the fields of at-sea pollution response, shoreline pollution response, habitat protection/conservation, and civil protection including several representatives of *Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention*. Representatives from the Bonn Agreement Secretariat, HELCOM Secretariat and REMPEC Secretariat also took part in the online workshops.

One of the main tools used during the workshops, especially the one held in-person, was the WildX exercise package, where participants went on a learning journey with the aim of getting them better skilled in emergency response strategies and actions concerning wildlife, ensuring effective integration of wildlife into the overall response efforts and assessing oiled wildlife assistance at national and international levels. The event was highlighted as a great opportunity to meet and discuss with peers, other countries, hear different perspectives and preparedness levels, sometimes as good examples to follow. The WildX tabletop was qualified as an extremely useful and insightful tool to see the practical side of oiled wildlife preparedness and response.