

Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general,
and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular,
during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995
for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998

Contracting Party: PORTUGAL

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority ICN

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Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

a. What are/will be its main features?

ICN is developing a strategy for wetlands conservation in Portugal. This document follows the Mediterranean Wetlands Strategy 1996-2006 and pretends to be a guide for ICN actions and policies for the next five years (1999-2003) in what wetlands are concerned.

The general objectives of the ICN's Strategy for Wetlands Conservation in Portugal (1999-2003) are: 1) to increase knowledge about wetlands, their functions and values; 2) to promote suitable management actions and a sustainable use of wetlands and species dependent on wetlands, including habitat rehabilitation; 3) to promote public education and awareness of the importance of wetlands; 4) to assure legal protection of wetlands at regional, national or international level; 5) to purchase cooperation between national and international bodies in order to fulfil this strategy and to prepare a National Strategy for Wetlands Conservation.

b. Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

The Ramsar Administrative Authority, ICN, which belongs to the Ministry of Environment, will adopt the referred above strategy. As mentioned in its 5th general objective, this strategy is meant to evolve into a National Strategy for Wetlands Conservation.

c. How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

A National Nature Conservation Strategy is being developed and will include the main concerns mentioned in the ICN Strategy for Wetlands Conservation in Portugal (1999-2003). The National Strategy for Wetlands Conservation will be prepared taking into account the results of the implementation of these two strategies.

2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

As mentioned above, the development of a policy for wetlands conservation depends on the implementation of the ICN Strategy for Wetlands Conservation in Portugal (1999-2003).

2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with:

a single Government Ministry,

Yes.

b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or

c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

A team of thirteen experts on conservation and wetlands study and management is responsible for the implementation of ICN Strategy for Wetlands Conservation in Portugal. The team has a coordinator, assessed by a secretariat and meets whenever it is necessary.

2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices that impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes that assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.

To be done by the ICN team for wetlands conservation.

2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:

national

In 1983 the national law defines 'National Ecological Reserve' (REN), a biophysical structure to protect the ecosystems and to maintain and increase their natural processes in order to support human activities in a sustainable and integrated way. REN includes coastal areas, inland waters, river ecosystems, maximum infiltration areas and sloppy zones. These areas are defined in every land plan, at regional, local or sectorial level, and their use is conditioned.

In 1993 the Portuguese Government approved a law proposed by the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources concerning the coastal zone (Decreto-Lei n° 309/93, 2 September). This law regulates the elaboration and approval of Coastal Zone Planning Plans. These plans concern coastal marine areas, their water beds and edges, including terrestrial and marine protection belts, and focus on the management of uses and nature protection and conservation.

In 1994 the Portuguese Government approved another law proposed by the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources. This law (Decreto - Lei n° 45/90, 22 February) regulates the water resources planning process and the elaboration and approval of the plans. On its 2nd Article, it reminds that this planning process should be rational and integrated. The water resource plans include a Water National Plan and the Watershed Plans. These plans are being developed since the beginning of this year by

private enterprises and are supervised by a group of experts of the Ministry for Environment, through a cross-sectorial committee.

provincial

As mentioned above, all regional land plans (PROT) have to include a map for the REN areas, as well as the Protected Areas of the National Network of Protected Areas and consider their regulations.

c. local

As mentioned above, all local (PDM) or sectorial land plan have to include a map for the REN areas, as well as the Protected Areas of the National Network of Protected Areas and consider their regulations.

2.7 Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines?
Yes/No

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then “to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands” (Operative paragraph 9).

Paul do Boquilobo marsh

A project is in course for depolluting the Almonda river and its tributaries, with the construction of three Residual Water Treatment Stations (ETAR). On the other hand, the site is preparing a monitoring program for water quality, as well as surveillance actions, together with the Regional Agency for Environment.

Ria Formosa

There are several programs in course involving the construction and improvement of Residual Water Treatment Stations (ETAR). As the main origin of pollutants is in cities around the site, these programs are being carried out together with the local authorities.

2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

There is a project in an initial phase at Ria Formosa that focuses on the development of interactive modelling methodologies as a tool for decision making and management of protected areas. This project previews the evolution of these methodologies to a process that, not only returns the main interactions between ecology and economics – scooping models -, but also helps in investigation and management – research and management models.

Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

ICN's Strategy for Wetlands Conservation in Portugal (1999-2003) includes, in its 2nd general objective, the intent to take action in wetlands restoration. In 1999 this will focus on sites that have been already identified and involve planning the recovery of dikes, dune systems, saltmarshes, salt pans, streams, coastal lagoons, river vegetation, as well as the reintroduction of species and a programme for buying land. Meanwhile, the inventory of these wetlands continues, mostly with the national wetlands inventory that is in place.

2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.” (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

Organisation of a Seminar entitled ‘Boquilobo Freshwater marsh – a Biosphere Reserve’;
Elucidation of the Agriculture Good Practice Code;
Candidature to Life Program with a project (Project BALBUL) for the implementation of wise use techniques in the site (project not accepted by the EC).

2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to “encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands” (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use? Yes/No

If yes, please provide details.

In the last few years, the public in general has increased its opinion and concern about the environment. The Environment Lawyer is a field of law practice that is growing and environmental laws are increasing in number, some of them directly or indirectly related with wetlands. The cost of restoring a river or recreating new nesting conditions for a protected species and dealing with a decreasing popularity of a company is now greater than having mitigation measures included in the initial planning of the company.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels

3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country that focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/No? If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions that can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and modus operandi.

As said before, the Environment Ministry is preparing the Watershed Plans and the Water National Plan, which are based in a strong cooperation between several governmental agencies and private institutes, national and international, involved in water/ land study, planning and management. On a long term, the ICN strategy will result in an increase in this kind of cooperation, in order to establish a National Strategy for Wetlands Conservation.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a. a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Yes/No? If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/No?

The sub-project Training of the MedWet initiative included the inventory of training courses relevant to wetland and water management. This inventory took place in Portugal, Spain, Greece and France.

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/No? If yes, please give details.

Participation in MEDCOAST 95, in Tarragona, Spain, which held a training course entitled Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Participation in a Summer Course in Sines, Portugal, entitled Management of Nature Protected Areas.
Participation in the East Atlantic Network of Ramsar Sites (until the year 2000)

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans:

a. being prepared? 4

b. fully prepared?

c. being implemented? 2

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

There is a national winter monitoring scheme for waders and water birds that gives an idea of the global behaviour of these groups and points out the probable reasons for changes in numbers, species or distribution.

5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No. If Yes, please give details.

Paul do Boquilobo marsh

Positive changes – important increase in numbers of reproductive bird species (*Platalea leucorodia* and *Ardea purpurea*);

Negative changes – increase in the aquatic invasive species *Eichornia crassipes* and change in water quality.

5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, “Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties”, please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention’s criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

The existing inventory is a preliminary approach to wetlands inventory and characterisation in Portugal, finalised in 1994. The data are presented in an ICN/ MedWet publication (Farinha, J.C. & A., Trindade, 1994. Contribuição para o inventário e caracterização de zonas húmidas em Portugal Continental. MedWet/ Instituto da Conservação da Natureza) that can be consulted/ bought in ICN head quarters in Lisbon:

Instituto da Conservação da Natureza
Loja da Natureza
R. Ferreira Lapa, 29
1150 Lisboa
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Each site is described as follows:

Name

Administrative divisions

Geographical coordinates

Map

Conservation status

Area

Description

Factors of disturbance

Fauna:

Birds (species from Annex I of the Birds Directive, species with a conservation status as mentioned in the Red Data Book for Vertebrates in Portugal, species with additional information);

Other vertebrates (Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians, Freshwater and migrating Fishes; species with a conservation status at national level - Red Data Book for Vertebrates in Portugal - or international level - Annex II of the Bern Directive and Habitats Directive; endemic species)

Wetlands of International Importance – according to the Ramsar criteria for birds and the criteria used to define Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Europe.

Additional Information

References

6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of “important” wetlands for your country or region?
Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for “important” were used, and the types of information it contains.

The above mentioned publication has a reference to the main national wetlands, based on the medium number of individuals of anatidae, waders and coot occurring during the period between 1989 and 1992. A table shows the thirteen wetlands with greater frequency of each of the group of these waterbirds in decreasing order.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of “wetland” was used.

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

- a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
- b. meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
- c. are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
- d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)
- e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)
- f. are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

ICN does winter waterfowl census every year. These reports always list the species that meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations considering the data provided by the International Waterfowl Census.

6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

Sapais de Castro Marim.

6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

> The only existing bilateral activities is in Castro Marim area, where > occur a Programme of school visits at nature areas near the border.

7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are “twinned” with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

> Ria Formosa is “twinned” whit Domain de Certes Le Teich, Parc Naturel > de Lande de Gascogne (France).

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

- a. Convention on Biological Diversity There is a focal point and a Secretariat at ICN for the implementation of CBD with whom there is constant dialogue and change of experiences.
- b. Framework Convention on Climate Change
- c. Convention to Combat Desertification There is a focal point at ICN
- d. Convention on Migratory Species There is a focal point at ICN
- e. World Heritage Convention

7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

Monitoring of waterbirds, conservation of White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, bird ringing schemes (e.g. Flamingo, White Stork, and Spoonbill).

7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? Yes/No.

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget? It is part of the budget of ICN.

7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? Yes/No. If yes, please give details.

7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? Yes/No

If yes, what is that process.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/No.

If yes, please provide details.

8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

These are optional questions relating to cooperation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of cooperation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this optional section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the cooperation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular “business” in your country?

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

National organizations Quercus – Lagoa de Santo André

Local organizations A ROCHA - Ria de Alvor

Boquilobo freshwater marsh

At least two NGOs are working for the conservation of the site together with the Ramsar site authority.

9.2 Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

- a. to each other? Yes/No
- b. to the government? Yes/No

If yes in either case, please give details.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/No

9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details.

9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- c. The Ramsar Bureau
- d. The Ramsar NGO partners

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.

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