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# **MSP Community of Practice in the Mediterranean (MED-MSP-CoP)**

**Sharing ideas and knowledge on MSP topics of common  
interest: results of the online workshops and the MED-MSP-CoP  
thematic session in the WestMED Stakeholder Conference in  
Malta**

## 1. Introduction

The first year [work plan](#) of the MED-MSP-CoP includes activities aiming at mapping and analysing MSP projects and initiatives in the Mediterranean focusing on two topics of common interest:

- MSP supporting the extension, improved management and improved connection of Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures in the Mediterranean, towards the targets set at the international and EU level on marine biodiversity protection.
- MSP as key enabler for the implementation of national Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) strategies and initiatives, through the adoption of an integrated approach and towards the balanced distribution of benefits.

In April-May 2023, experts of the MED-MSP-CoP contributed to gather information on MSP-related projects and initiatives in the Mediterranean and to point out knowledge and outcome of relevance for the two topics (so called *project-based analysis*). These topics are rather wide in scope, thus in parallel the MED-MSP-CoP members were engaged into two on-line workshops aiming at detailing each topic into subtopics and related key questions (part of the so-called *topic-based analysis*):

- A first on-line workshop was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2023, focusing on the first topic (in short “MSP for MPAs and OECMs”)
- A second on-line workshop was held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2023, focusing on the second topic (in short “MSP as key enabler for SBE strategies and initiatives”).

The outcomes of these two workshops are reported in the second chapter of this document. These, together with the initial results of the project-based analysis, supported the organisation and running of an MSP-MED-CoP session held in Malta on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023, as part of the WestMED Stakeholder Conference. The main results of this session are illustrated in the third chapter of this report.

## 2. MSP-MED-CoP on-line workshops on “Subtopic identification and specification”

The two on-line workshops were organised according to the same structure (workshop agenda in Annex 1). They initially included a presentation about the workshop approach and the topic to be discussed (being either “MSP for MPAs and OECMs” or “MSP as key enabler for SBE strategies and initiatives”). Participants (about 35 for each workshop) were then sub-divided into two or three virtual breakout groups, moderated by a facilitator and a rapporteur. Each breakout group:

- Identified sub-topics of interest for each of the two topics considered in the workshops.
- Further detailed each sub-topic through the identification of key questions.
- Discussed the sub-topics and related key-questions.

- Prioritised subtopics according to their interest for the Mediterranean countries and to the lever role that MSP can play for those subtopics.

The work of breakout groups was supported by Mural, an on-line digital environment enabling the visualisation and structuring of information emerging from collective discussion. The outcomes of the two workshops are summarised in the following tables. Some of the subtopics were more deeply discussed than others, also considering the available time.

*Table 1. Main outcomes of the on-line workshop on “MSP for MPAs and OECMs”.*

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Involvement of maritime sectors in environmental management</b></p>	<p>It is important to engage historical and emerging maritime sectors in the progress toward environmental conservation objectives. MSP is a crucial process that can foster this involvement.</p> <p>Beyond MPA designation and management, OECM appears as an important tool to engage maritime sectors in conservation matters.</p> <p>Different ways to engage economic stakeholders in conservation objectives exist, including those related to awareness raising or financial aspect. For example, MSP could facilitate fund raising for marine conservation from economic sectors.</p>	How to make benefit of OECM to recognise the involvement of economic sectors in environment conservation?
		How can OECM’s effectiveness be monitored?
		Is there a need for a shared categorization of OECM?
		Is there a need for harmonized management processes for OECM?
		How to raise awareness about the evolving scope of OECM?
		How to include OECM in Mediterranean strategies (related to UfM, Barcelona Convention, ACCOBAMS, GFCM, etc.)?
		What are the ways to involve stakeholders of private sectors in environmental conservation?
		What are the ways to involve stakeholders of local communities in environmental conservation?
		How are national authorities engaged with true governance of MPAs?
		How to mobilise funds from maritime sectors’ initiatives or taxes to support environmental management?
How to plan for sustainable food production (e.g. small scale fisheries, low trophic aquaculture) and MPAs?		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Planning and conservation coherence across scales (from the cross-border basin scale to the local scale)</b></p>	<p>Coherent management of the sea space and marine protected areas in particular, throughout the entire Mediterranean basin is a major challenge. To do so, planners and managers must rely on adequate and aligned knowledge in the whole basin as well as work on coherent planning across borders.</p> <p>Existing policy initiatives, mechanism and organisations (Barcelona Convention, UfM, ACCOBAMS, UfM, GFCM, Pelagos, etc.) provide important frameworks to pursue this challenging action. They should be</p>	How to align designation criteria for protected areas across the whole Mediterranean?
		How to align conservation area status in the different countries?
		How to progress toward a shared management plan and shared conservation measures at the basin scale?
		How to harmonise conservation policies through MSP?
		How to take better advantage of existing organisations or mechanisms available at the regional and sub-regional scale?

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
	<p>further and better integrated to improve coherence in planning and conservation.</p> <p>Implementation of EU environmental regulation should be also a lever for cross-border coherence in planning and management.</p> <p>Designation of cross-border MPA could be a way to promote coherence at transboundary scale.</p>	<p>How to bridge knowledge gaps to drive environmental management at the basin scale?</p> <p>Can crossborder cooperation enable transboundary MPA designation?</p> <p>How to make the best use of EU environmental regulations (N2000, MSFD, MSPD, etc.) to support coherence planning at the basin scale?</p> <p>How to foster international governance?</p>
<p><b>Climate change and environmental conservation</b></p>	<p>Climate change is one of the major issues that maritime sectors and ecosystems are facing and will continue facing in the future. Changes must be anticipated as much as possible and plans or conservation strategies must be enough flexible to be adapted to these changes, e.g. providing space for future conservation demands driven by climate change impacts</p>	<p>How do maritime spatial plans consider climate change at a strategic level?</p> <p>Do we have enough knowledge to plan and manage marine conservation appropriately in consideration to climate change issues (species displacement, improve diffusion of non-indigenous species, climate refugees, etc.)?</p> <p>Can MPA's design and management be flexible to face climate change effects? Can MSP support this flexibility and adaptability?</p>
<p><b>Monitoring and adaptive management</b></p>	<p>Plans and MPA monitoring programs should complement each other. MSP monitoring systems can provide a wider framework to integrate detailed monitoring programs set in place for MPAs.</p>	<p>Do maritime spatial plans consider indicators to monitor MPA status?</p> <p>Can monitoring and adaptation of maritime spatial plans provide information for and support to conservation?</p> <p>Can maritime spatial plans foster the flexibility of conservation measures to ensure they are enough adaptive (concerning climate change in particular)?</p>
<p><b>MPA designation and integration in MSP</b></p>	<p>MPAs and their networks should be fully embedded into maritime spatial plans. The effectiveness of the existing conservation tools (various MPA typologies and OECM types) should be evaluated, to be properly considered in the planning process.</p> <p>Mutual needs and benefits from planned uses and protected ecosystems should be clearly evaluated to make conservation and planning processes complementing each other.</p> <p>MSP can support the process of MPAs and OECMs designation and networking in various ways, e.g.: identifying areas to be possibly protected, providing priorities for conservation, including specific objectives and measures dealing with biodiversity conservation, etc.</p>	<p>Do we have enough knowledge on MPA and OECM effectiveness for conservation objectives, to properly support planning decisions?</p> <p>Do we have enough knowledge on marine connectivity to properly inform planning decisions?</p> <p>Are conservation objectives and related criteria SMART enough to be considered in the MSP process?</p> <p>Is environmental protection clearly defined in maritime spatial plans?</p> <p>How to expend the positive effect of MPAs beyond their borders?</p> <p>How to articulate MPA and OECM in a coherent network?</p> <p>How to assess uses compatibility with protected areas objectives?</p> <p>Can MSP provide regulations or measures to support MPA's conservation objectives?</p>

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
Environmental Restoration		Can MSP help in identifying restoration priorities?
		Can MSP support the design and implementation of a restoration strategy or plan?
Data		How to share data on planning and MSP at the transnational level, also to support planning across scales?
		What kind of data acquired by maritime sectors could be made available and used to support MPA designation and management?
Ocean Literacy for MSP		
Decision support tools		How to use climate change scenarios in MSP to improve environmental conservation?
		How can decision support tools be used to better engage the maritime sectors in conservation?

Table 2. Main outcomes of the on-line workshop on “MSP as key enabler for SBE strategies and initiatives”

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
MSP as a strategic framework for SBE	<p>Most of sectoral strategies are developed and implemented independently. Beyond the spatial approach, MSP can establish a framework to align sectors' perspectives at a strategic level. To do so, approaches considering pre-existing strategies should be developed, as well as methods to incorporate new uses perspectives.</p> <p>Direct integration of SBE objectives into MSP should be a key component of any maritime spatial plan, which can have different level of regulations of SBE sectors (from strategic to prescriptive). Flexibility of maritime spatial plan to adapt and fit with sector-based strategies should also be considered. Finally, the role of maritime spatial plans as surrogates of strategies for sectors without their own strategies should be investigated.</p>	How can MSP influence SBE strategies (being more than just zoning)? How can MSP support sector prioritization?
		How can MSP foster the dialogue among different sectoral administrations?
		Can maritime spatial plan integrate non spatial provisions (e.g. strategic objectives)? And how?
		Are maritime spatial plan enough specific to drive SBE strategies' elaboration?
		Can MSP be a surrogate of an SBE strategy? In which cases?
		Is MSP enough flexible to facilitate alignment between the plan with evolving SBE strategies?
		How to consider new or future uses in MSP?
		How to develop scenarios for the future and quantify trade-offs between them?
Practical implementation of SBE through MSP (and vice versa)	When maritime spatial plans are adopted and sector-based strategies exist, the practical articulation between both should be ensured. The challenge is to foster cross-	Does MSP competent authorities have the capacity to enforce SBE objectives through MSP?
		Can SBE objectives be directly integrated (and so implemented) in MSP?

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
	<p>implementation, through the setting of operational complementary objectives and measures.</p> <p>Maritime spatial plans shall include clear objectives and measures focused on SBE, while sustainable blue economy strategies are expected to clarify the role of MSP in supporting the development of the economic sectors.</p>	<p>Does MSP operationalize SBE objectives through concrete planning management measures?</p> <p>Do SBE stakeholders consider MSP as an implementation tool when elaborating SBE strategies?</p> <p>Are sectorial competent authorities informed of priorities defined into maritime spatial plans?</p>
<p><b>MSP supporting multi-use</b></p>	<p>MSP deals with the spatial and non-spatial organisation of maritime uses, aiming at reducing mutual conflicts and impacts on the environment. Multi-use is an important perspective to improve the rational use of the sea space.</p> <p>The concept offers opportunity for resource sharing, development of synergies among different uses, reduction of sea space occupation and reduction of impacts on the marine environment. Multi-use can be supported by MSP, both by zoning and measures.</p>	<p>Could MSP play a role in the articulation of SBE strategies including multi-use?</p> <p>How maritime spatial plan can support and manage coexistence among uses and multi-use?</p>
<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p>	<p>Stakeholder engagement is an MSP pillar, especially when bridging with SBE strategies.</p> <p>This implies bringing every maritime sector to the negotiation table, including those for which an alignment between MSP and their own strategy is needed and those which are not driven by a specific strategy and could rely on MSP as a strategic framework.</p> <p>Full, transparent, equitable and early engagement of all sectors in MSP is essential.</p>	<p>How to achieve a comprehensive stakeholder engagement and agreed decisions among different sectors?</p> <p>How to assess and address sector specific demands?</p> <p>How to bring industries to the negotiation table?</p> <p>How to develop stakeholder confidence in the MSP process?</p>
<p><b>Reducing environmental effects</b></p>	<p>Sustainability in planning of maritime sectors means to avoid or reduce environmental pressures and impacts. MSP requires and can even support the assessment of cumulative impacts from different blue economy sectors (and their strategies) as well as explore alternative options aiming to minimising their environmental footprint.</p> <p>Socio-economic approaches such as natural capital accounting could be carried out to balance blue economy development and nature preservation.</p>	<p>How can MSP support the reduction of single and cumulative impacts?</p> <p>How to measure cumulative impacts at a sufficiently large scale?</p> <p>How to understand cumulative impact consequences on SBE (as well as on ecosystems)?</p> <p>How to properly value the natural capital (natural capital accounting) and consider it in SBE-MSP?</p> <p>How to balance space allocation between blue economy and MPA to achieve the 30x30 target?</p>

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
<p align="center"><b>Transboundary coherence between SBE</b></p>	<p>MSP and SBE share some challenges that need to be addressed at different scales, from the local to the transnational basin scale. Some of these challenges have a clear pan-Mediterranean nature (e.g. management of shipping).</p> <p>Crossborder cooperation on MSP can support alignment of national SBE strategies.</p> <p>On the other way around, economic international agreements or organisation actions should be considered when dealing with cross-border aspects of MSP (including the expected impacts of sectors development on the marine environment)</p>	How to articulate spatial scales in MSP (from the sea-basin to the local scale)?
		How to coordinate SBE at the transboundary scale? And what is the Role of MSP on this?
		How to take advantage of international cross-cutting and sectoral initiatives (UfM, WestMED, clusters, etc.)?
		How to encourage national authorities to better engage with regional and sub-regional institution and cooperation frameworks?
		How to better link initiatives between the two shores of the Mediterranean?
		Which governance framework is relevant to EU and non-EU countries to work on MSP, also in a SBE perspective?
<p align="center"><b>Land-Sea interactions</b></p>	<p>Land sea interactions inclusion in maritime spatial plan is an MSP pillar. It implies considering the interactions between land-based and sea-based uses, as well as the effects of planning the sea on the land and the other way around.</p> <p>SBE or sector-based strategies often consider LSI components of the value chain. MSP could build on it to strengthen LSI consideration.</p>	How can MSP implement or foster the implementation of ICZM?
		How to address coastal activities (often acting at the local scale) through MSP?
		How to align urban planning with needs from the maritime sectors (need for facilities located on coastal areas such as ports, marinas, other infrastructures, etc.)?
<p align="center"><b>Climate change consideration when planning for SBE</b></p>	<p>Climate change will bring dramatic changes for maritime uses (natural resource shift, increasing risks for coastal facilities and maritime infrastructure, demand for new space, etc.).</p> <p>MSP should anticipate these changes and support SBE strategies in anticipating and mitigating climate change effects, especially when allocating space to the different maritime uses. MSP shall also clearly define the way the management of maritime sectors can facilitate their green transition, toward carbon neutrality goals (climate-smart MSP).</p>	Do maritime spatial plans recognise and address climate change and their effects on the SBE sectors?
		How can MSP support SBE in anticipating climate change effects?
		How can MSP support SBE in climate change adaptation?
		Can MSP provide tools or measures to progress toward Carbon neutrality of maritime sectors?
<p align="center"><b>Performance assessment and monitoring of Maritime Spatial Plans</b></p>	<p>Economic performance is a part of the assessment and evaluation of MSP implementation, although this is often one of the major gaps of MSP processes. Monitoring programs and related indicators should be as much as possible integrated between MSP and SBE.</p>	Can MSP implementation and monitoring include collection of socio-economic data?
		How to quantify and monitor plans' economic benefits?
		Do effective indicators exist to assess plans' economic performance?

Subtopic	Description	Key questions
Capacity building	Capacity and expertise on MSP and SBE strategies development and implementation need to be enhanced at different levels, e.g.: competent authorities, maritime sector representatives, project owners, etc. The CoP provides an important opportunity to map capacity building needs and contribute to this challenge by sharing experiences among the whole Mediterranean community.	How to increase authorities' capacity in MSP?
		How to develop capacity in spatial economics to inform decision makers?
		How to develop capacity in decision support tools?

### 3. The MED-MSP-CoP thematic session in Malta

The WestMed stakeholder conference held in Malta on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023 hosted a thematic session focusing on the work of the MED-MSP-CoP. About 45 people participated to this session. This session was organised as a highly collaborative workshop (see the agenda in Annex 2), capitalising on the on-going results of the screening and analysis of MSP-relevant projects and initiatives as well as the outcome of the two on-line workshops previously held.

#### 3.1 Part I: Introduction and panel discussion

A first part of the session set the scene introducing the MED-MSP-CoP and illustrating the draft results of the screening of MSP-related projects and initiatives. Successively, the session included a panel discussion on good practices and experiences on key MSP challenges in the WestMED. Panellists were stimulated by a moderator to reflect on the following two interlinked questions:

- Can you briefly introduce your work, project or initiative related to the CoP scope and discuss possible “solutions” (data, information, reports, tools, good practices, evidence-based case studies, methodologies, guidelines, recommendations, capacity building activities, ocean literacy initiatives, networks, specific CoPs, etc.)? Can your work, project or initiative tackle some of the major challenges and needs related to the two topics of interest for year 1 activities of the CoP: “MSP for MPAs and OECMs” and/or “MSP as key enabler for SBE strategies and initiatives”?
- Can you discuss what you expect from the MED-MSP-CoP with regards to the general and the specific objectives of your work, project or initiative?

Panellists reflected on the above two questions and others posed by the audience, referring to some of the projects and initiatives they are currently involved in, including: ReMAP and MSP4BIODIVERSITY (Andrea Barbanti from CNR-ISMAR), MSP-GREEN (Folco Soffiatti from IUAV), REGINA-MSP and MSP4BIO (Neil Alloncle from CEREMA), Morocco experiences and projects on blue economy (Aomar Bourhim, ex focal point for WestMED initiative and MSPglobal).





Figure 1. MED-MSP-CoP thematic session at the WestMED stakeholder conference in Marta, 22 June 2023

### 3.2 Part II: Breakout groups

In the second part of the session participants were engaged into two breakout groups (one group for each of the two topics of interest), moderated by a facilitator and a rapporteur. Within each group the discussion focused on the sub-topic and the related key questions prioritized during the on-line workshops held in late May and early June, specifically:

- “MPA designation and integration in MSP”
- “MSP as a strategic framework for SBE”

The discussion was supported by a table summarising for above subtopics the key questions already identified. Based on their experience, participants were invited to provide their opinion around the following elements:

- Additional key questions
- Additional projects or initiatives on MSP relevant for the discussed sub-topics.
- Available “solutions” from known projects and initiative
- Persisting gaps related to the key questions identified,

The following boxes summarised the outcome of the two breakout groups.

### Breakout group “MSP for marine protection”

Discussed subtopic: Involvement of maritime sectors in environmental management

#### *Introduction to the subtopic*

It is important to engage historical and emerging maritime sectors in the progress toward environmental conservation objectives. MSP can establish a framework and a process to foster this involvement. Beyond MPA designation and management, OECM are considered important instruments for environmental conservation and to further engage maritime sectors in conservation matters. The identification of ways to properly engage economic stakeholders in conservation is a key point, including modalities related to awareness raising or financial aspect for example. Concerning the latter, MSP could facilitate fund raising for marine conservation from economic sectors (through voluntary engagement or taxes).

#### *OECM and other sector-based environmental measures*

The process of setting environmental measures and regulations (OECM or any sector-based measure having potential benefits for the environment) could be a way to concretely engage sector stakeholders into ecosystem management and environmental conservation. Different sector-based measures and regulations that spatially overlap can strengthen protection, but also bring to a lack of clarity, implementation difficulties or even counterproductive effects. MSP shall rationalize integration of these multiple measures/regulations and create a comprehensive picture of these different instruments at the plan’s scale.

Knowledge and data remain very poor in several areas, making difficult to designate appropriate MPAs or OECMs.

A proper and shared definition of what is an OECM and a reflection about how OECM can be mainstreamed into MSP are needed, also to improve the common understanding of these instruments among representatives of the private sectors. Moreover, criteria to consider environmental conservation measures and regulation as “effective” are still debated. From a strict conservation point of view, research on MPAs shows that to be effective, regulations should be strict, spatially extended and properly enforced. It should also be considered that MPAs can have different objectives depending on their status, from strict protection to sustainable development. Additionally, there is a need to progress further on the OECMs management (i.e. in terms of monitoring and adaptation). It was also stressed that economic evaluation of benefits of conservation measures can support their effective implementation.

#### *Strengthening sectors engagement towards sustainability*

Examples were provided from Morocco in relation to environmental conservation and small-scale fisheries and from Malta concerning tourism and environmental protection.

The work carried out in Morocco with small scales fisheries is an inspiring example. Support has been provided by the State to structure the sector by creating fishermen cooperatives. These groups are responsible for several environment-related actions such as the installation and management of artificial reefs (that can be used to avoid fishing in sensitive areas and limit industrial/bottom trawling) or the direct management of MPAs dedicated to artisanal fishing.

The Cirkewwa marine park in Malta is considered of particular importance to support the sustainable development of tourism and leisure activities (such as diving) in the country. It is considered as a good example of how MPA management could engage maritime sectors and raise sustainability. To do so, economic benefits of marine protection should be demonstrated. At the same time, environmental monitoring should be properly carried out to be sure that MPA designation has a significant effect on the ecosystem status and biodiversity conservation.

It was also mentioned that several maritime uses need to implement monitoring activities of their environmental effects, as for example in the case of offshore renewable energy

(particularly windfarm) in France and Spain. This mandatory task can be considered a way to engage sectors in environmental conservation and could be replicated to the whole range of maritime activities, including emerging ones.

#### *Funding conservation by sectors*

The evaluation of the economic benefits of environmental conservation measures appears as a very important tool to improve their effectiveness. It can also be used to define the level of economic contribution that sectors could provide for conservation on a voluntary basis or through taxation. More in general taxes could be applied to sectors to compensate for some environmental (as well as socio-economic) effects, as for example in the case of renewable energy in France. These instruments shall be integrated in maritime spatial plans.

### **Breakout group “MSP as key enabler of Sustainable Blue Economy”**

Discussed subtopic: MSP as a strategic framework for SBE

#### *Introduction to the subtopic*

Most of sectoral strategies are developed and implemented independently. Beyond the spatial approach, MSP can establish a framework to align sectors' perspectives at a strategic level. To do so, approaches considering pre-existing strategies should be developed, as well as methods to incorporate new uses perspectives.

Direct integration of SBE objectives into MSP should be a key component of any MSP plans, which can have different level of regulations of the SBE sectors (from strategic to prescriptive). Flexibility of MSP plan to adapt and fit with sector-based strategies should also be considered.

Finally, the role of MSP plans as surrogates of strategies for sectors without their own strategies should be investigated.

#### *Discussion and key results*

The starting questions identified in the on-line MSP-SBE workshop held on June 5, were grouped in the following categories: (i) MSP and national SBE Strategies, (ii) Future scenarios and future uses, (iii) Ecosystem Approach, (iv) Governance. Three additional key questions were proposed:

- How important is the involvement of the private sector? (Actually, the question is also included in an extended form in the sub-topic “Stakeholder engagement”)
- Which are the economic implications of SBE Strategies and MSP Plans and how to quantify them?
- What are the transboundary dimensions of the SBE and MSP in the Med?

The discussion focused mostly on the logical and operational connection between national SBE Strategies and MSP Plans, beyond sectors, but serving sector demands and needs in a win-win and sustainable manner. It considered the different processes characterising each country: (a) countries with SBE strategy as a way to develop MSP, (b) countries with MSP plans triggering SBE Strategy, (c) countries that do not need SBE Strategy because they have sectoral policies.

Several options, views and experiences were brought to the discussion, which can be summarised as follows:

- SBE strategies are broader than maritime spatial plans and should come first and inform, in terms of strategic objectives, the maritime spatial plans;
- Maritime spatial plans are per se SBE Strategies;
- Maritime spatial plans may act as surrogate of SBE strategies, where they are not in place;

- Maritime spatial plan can trigger the process of preparation of SBE national strategies, where not in place;
- Sectoral plans plus environmental objectives and prescriptions are used to prepare maritime spatial plans;
- Presently, the situation and the experiences are quite scattered: some countries have SBE Strategies but not maritime spatial plans, some countries have maritime spatial plans but not SBE strategies, some countries have ongoing processes, more or less coordinated, on both instruments.

No clear consensus was reached in the discussion on the optimal process and geometry.

Moreover, some reflections were raised on the transboundary needs and implications of this topic, i.e. how important (and when and how) is to think and act beyond national processes (and interests) and move towards Mediterranean SBE strategies and Mediterranean MSP frameworks (“Plans”). This is not easy, considering current disputes and conflicting interests in some areas of the Mediterranean. But maybe this is exactly the motivation to “think Mediterranean” and use this approach to explore solutions.

Finally, it seems that there are not projects investigating this quite important sub-topic and related questions, and therefore analysing the state of the art and the experiences in the different countries, in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. It was suggested that this may become one specific action that the CoP can take forward by the end of Year 1.

### 3.3 Main conclusions and next steps for improved cooperation on MSP

After about a year of preparatory work, the MED-MSP-CoP has been established and had its kick off meeting in January 2023 in Brussels. Currently, it involves more than 80 experts who met for the first time on-line on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April this year. The panel and audience discussion held in the first part of the session as well as the outcome of the two parallel breakout groups brought to a few overall conclusive considerations, also highlighting next steps for improved cooperation in the frame of the MED-MSP-CoP:

- A lot of knowledge is available in MSP-related projects and initiatives that can be capitalized to respond to the key questions identified for the topics and sub-topics of interest for the first year activity of the MED-MSP-CoP.
- In the next months, the CoP will finalise the mapping of projects and initiatives, extract from these the available knowledge (e.g. data, reports, tools, good practice, evidence-based case studies, methodologies, guidelines, ocean literacy initiatives, networks, specific CoPs, etc.) responding to the topics/sub-topics key questions, identify persisting gaps and provide some possible recommendations.
- The panel discussion highlighted some elements of common relevance to be considered when dealing with both topics and related sub-topics: decision support and decision making tools, science to policy to society interfaces, data harmonisation and sharing, cost/effective solutions to address both topics (i.e. *two face of the same coin*), definition of a governance framework at the regional scale (Mediterranean basin), multi-level governance for MSP.
- The work of the MED-MSP-CoP can advance only if we keep working together. Indeed, the CoP is a voluntary based expert platform open to any new members interested in approaching MSP topics and challenges of common interest.



- The future activities of the MED-MSP-CoP will be likely structured around sub-groups, to be identified through a bottom-up approach. Participants to the session expressed the interest into two possible sub-groups: (i) the way MSP could support the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries and (ii) the way MSP could support the extension and sustainability of aquaculture (the latter linking to the work of the WestMED thematic group on sustainable aquaculture).
- As a concrete next action, it was suggested and agreed to organise “MED-MSP-CoP webinars” to present and discuss the outcome of one or several projects and the way they respond to some of the identified key questions. The webinars are aimed at providing a highly dynamic and interactive space, inviting all participants to contribute to the discussion.

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**Annex 1 – Agenda of the on-line workshops on “Subtopic identification and specification”**

**MSP Community of Practice in the Mediterranean**  
**Subtopic identification and specification workshops**

30th May – 10-12am

5th June – 10-12am

The first-year work plan for the MED-MSP CoP will focus on two topics of common interest:

- MSP supporting the extension, improved management and improved connection of Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures
- MSP as key enabler for the implementation of national Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) strategies and initiatives

The first step of the topic-based analysis aims at detailing these 2 broad topics in so called “sub-topics” enough specific and MSP related to allow proper analysis of lessons learned, strengths and weaknesses of existing MSP experiences and projects.

To do so, 2 online brainstorming workshops are proposed (MPA/MSP on the 30<sup>th</sup> May – SBE/MSP on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June). The two workshops will follow the same structure:

10:00 – 10:20: Welcome and introduction

- Presentation of the approach (topic/subtopic/Key question with example)
- Presentation of the topic of the day
- Q&A

10:20 – 11:30: Brainstorming into breakout groups

- Introducing Mural and session work mode
- Identification of subtopic of interest
- Specification of each subtopic through the definition of key questions
- Prioritisation of subtopics according to their interest for the Mediterranean countries and to the lever role that MSP can play for those subtopics.

10:30 – 12:00: Plenary wrap-up and next steps.

Annex 2 – Agenda of the MED-MSP-CoP thematic session part of the WestMED Stakeholder Conference in Malta

## WestMED Stakeholder Conference 2023

### Session 4: Community of Practice (CoP) on Maritime Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean

22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2023, 12:00-13:30 and 14:30-15:30

Villa Arrigo, Naxxar (Malta)

The session capitalizes on the recent work carried out by the MED-MSP-CoP on the screening of MSP-related projects and on the identification of key challenges for MSP in the Mediterranean, in relation to the two main topics of interest for the CoP activity in 2023:

- MSP supporting the extension, improved management and improved connection of Marine Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures;
- MSP as key enabler for the implementation of national Sustainable Blue Economy strategies and initiatives

The session provides an opportunity of interactions among participants to share good practices and experiences addressing priority needs of these two topics, identifying persisting gaps and potential recommendations.

AGENDA – Part I	
Chair: Emiliano Ramieri - CNR-ISMAR	
12:00 – 12:30	<b>Setting the scene</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Introduction to the MED-MSP-CoP: building on the on-going work</b> <i>Emiliano Ramieri - CNR ISMAR (10 minutes)</i></li><li>• <b>Towards the capitalisation of the available and upcoming knowledge: screening of MSP projects and initiatives</b> <i>Cristina Cervera-Núñez - IEO-CSIC (10 minutes)</i></li><li>• <b>Q&amp;A (10 minutes)</b></li></ul>
12:30 – 13:15	<b>Panel of experts: good practices and experiences on key MSP challenges in the WestMED</b> <b>Moderator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Cristina Cervera-Núñez - IEO-CSIC</i></li></ul> <b>Participants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Andrea Barbanti – CNR-ISMAR (Italy)</i></li><li>• <i>Aomar Bourhim - ex focal point for WestMED initiative and IOC-UNESCO (Morocco)</i></li><li>• <i>Folco Soffietti – IUAV (Italy)</i></li><li>• <i>Neil Alloncle – CEREMA (France)</i></li><li>• <i>Samir Bachouche - National Center of Research and Development of Fishing and Aquaculture (Algeria)</i></li></ul>
13:15 – 13:30	<b>Q&amp;A and open discussions</b>

13:30 – 14:30 Network Lunch

AGENDA – Part II	
14:30 – 14:40	<b>Introduction to the interactive session: improved specification of the focus topics</b> <i>Neil Alloncle – CEREMA</i>
14:40 – 15:20	<b>Breakout group discussion on key questions for selected sub-topics: identification of good practices, gaps and possible recommendations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>MSP for marine protection</b> <i>Facilitator: Neil Alloncle</i> <i>Rapporteur: Emiliano Ramieri</i></li><li>• <b>MSP as key enabler of Sustainable Blue Economy</b> <i>Facilitator: Andrea Barbanti</i> <i>Rapporteur: Monica Campillos-Llanos</i></li></ul>
15:20 – 15:30	<b>Wrap up: next steps towards improved cooperation</b>