



# GOVERNANCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA BASIN



*Please note that this document is intended to present a snapshot of the current governance of EU Sea basins as of November 2024. However as highlighted by the sections that follow, this can be dynamic and is subject to change.*

As a common good, for decades sea basins have been areas for cooperation between States. In the first instance, cooperation was driven by environmental aspects since marine ecosystems do not know legal borders, and their environmental status is dependent on the pressures/stressors from all around the sea basin. As a result, regional sea conventions (e.g., OSPAR, HELCOM, Barcelona Convention, Bucharest Convention) were set up in each sea basin with dedicated organisations to assess human impacts and to propose actions to recover a good environmental status for the marine ecosystems, notably under the policy framework of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

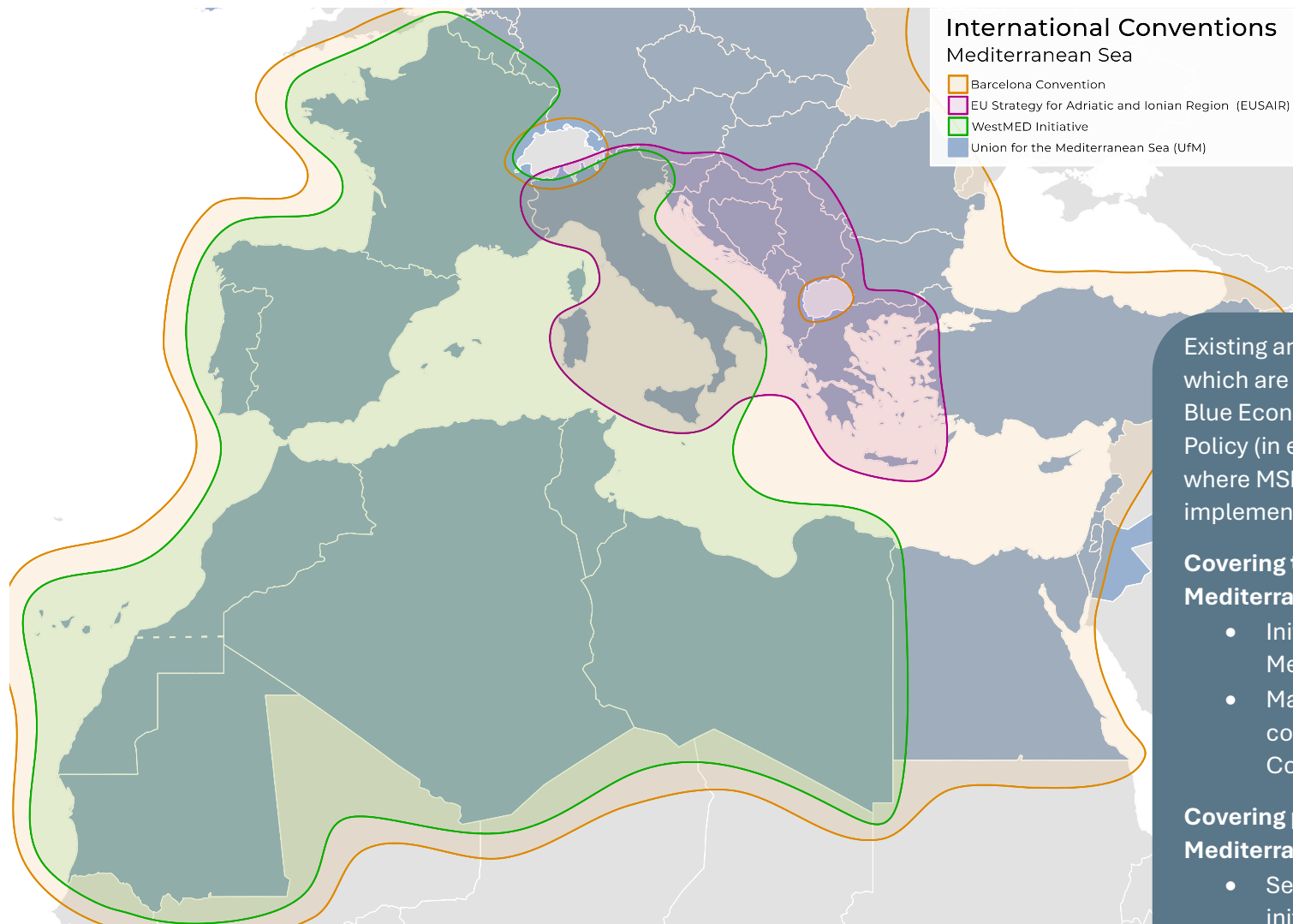
In parallel, and in line with EU integrated maritime policy (IMP), various maritime policy frameworks have been established and endorsed to support cooperation on maritime affairs in sea basins. Most of them have been engaging EU MSs and the non-EU neighbouring countries across whole sea basins (Mediterranean, Atlantic, Black Sea, Baltic, North Sea) or subsea basins (WestMED, Adriatic & Ionian Seas).

Considering the local, regional and sea basin specificities, this framework contributes to the Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE) in line with the European Commission's communication on "a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU" ([COM\(2021\)240 final](#)). Ministerial declarations, roadmaps and dedicated governance have been designed/anticipated to catalyse cooperation.

**After a detailed review of the Mediterranean Sea basin strategies, marine conventions and macroregions, this study provides an overview of how SBE and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) have been considered within the Mediterranean Sea basin by each initiative, and by recalling their objectives and governance, how each initiative can therefore be an enabler for SBE via MSP. It highlights the cooperation between EU MS and non-EU MS. This first edition will be published on the EU MSP Platform and updated accordingly following any related update.**

In summary, it states that MSP has been a long-standing topic in certain Regional Sea Conventions (e.g., HELCOM) while in others, it is just emerging (e.g., Barcelona Convention) along with other concepts such as land-sea interactions and Integrated Coastal Zone Management. In addition, it highlights that the EU Mission "Restore our ocean and waters", the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership but also projects under regional programmes and funding instruments (i.e. EMFAF) have a strong regional dimension with MSP playing an important role. Even if it is not a "governance framework" in the strict sense, it can steer cooperation amongst member states and beyond.

All the frameworks and initiatives included have declared an interest or have been implementing concepts and tools related to MSP to meet their respective objectives. All of them should enable the implementation of the future EU Oceans Pact via the cooperation framework that they constitute in each sea basin.



Existing and endorsed initiatives which are linked to the Sustainable Blue Economy or Integrated Maritime Policy (in extensive approaches where MSP could be implemented/promoted).

**Covering the whole of the Mediterranean Sea:**

- Initiative: Union for the Mediterranean Sea
- Marine environmental convention: Barcelona Convention

**Covering parts of the Mediterranean Sea:**

- Sea basin BE strategy or initiative: WestMED Initiative
- Macroregion: EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

*Initiatives' geographical coverage*

General note: the borders presented by the map are the ones agreed by the UN.

# Union for the Mediterranean Sea (UfM)

<b>PARTIES</b>	EUROPEAN UNION	ALGERIA	TUNISIA	MOROCCO	MAURITANIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA	ALBANIA	BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA	TÜRKIYE
										
	LEBANON	PALESTINE	JORDAN	ISRAËL	MONACO	LYBIA	EGYPT	<b><u>Date of endorsement – legal context</u></b> The Union for the Mediterranean was launched following a decision taken by the UfM Heads of State and Government in Paris in July 2008.		
										

**Syria's membership is currently suspended**, and Libya is an observer.

## MAIN GOALS AND TOPICS

The Union aims to promote stability and integration throughout the Mediterranean region. It is a forum for discussing regional strategic issues, based on the principles of shared ownership, shared decision-making and shared responsibility between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Its main goal is to increase both North–South and South–South integration and collaboration in the Mediterranean region, in order to support the countries' socioeconomic development and ensure stability in the region.

As mandated by the UfM Member States, these projects and initiatives focus on six sectors of activity among which are **Water, Environment & Blue Economy**.

## GOVERNANCE (MINISTERIAL – STEERING COMMITTEE)

The UfM's political dimension is structured around Ministerial and governmental representatives' meetings, that define the priorities of UfM's work through the adoption of common agendas in key strategic areas. Through declarations adopted by consensus (reached by the 43 UfM Ministers), the Ministerial Meetings address strategic priorities in the region and define the scope and objectives of a common Mediterranean agenda.

There is also the UfM Regional Platform on Blue Economy (BE), which is a technical group composed of representatives designated by the UfM countries. It is co-chaired by the two co-Presidencies with the support of the UfM Secretariat. It focuses its efforts on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on BE.

## **INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND**

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The 2021 UfM Blue Economy ministerial declaration recalls the various related frameworks in the Mediterranean Sea (i. Barcelona Convention) and international commitments (e.g. CDB, 2030 Agenda) which must be considered by the UfM and its parties throughout the course of any action related to the blue economy.

The [roadmap for the implementation of the 2021 UfM Declaration](#) recalls the need to cooperate through a multiscale approach using the variety of frameworks, initiatives and actions at the regional and subregional scale in the Mediterranean sea. It reiterates that MSP is a tool to be implemented through an approach embedding Integrated Coastal Zones Management (ICZM), in particular the ad hoc ICZM Protocol with the Barcelona Convention, but also EU MSP related regulation and directives. It provides a long list of multi countries' projects as best practices for replication.

## **STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM**

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The 2021 UfM Declaration related to the Blue Economy highlights the importance of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). The Ministers recognised them as “important tools” to support Sustainable Blue Economy (SBE), with ICZM being integrated in MSP as a way to ensure greater synergies through the land-sea interaction principle and address the increasing competition for marine and coastal space and resources. Both tools have been recognised as significant enablers to attract investments and reduce impacts on the environment due to increasing competition for the use of marine and coastal space and resources in the Mediterranean. By nature, the Ministerial declaration goes beyond the EU. The statement on MSP and ICZM are valid for the whole of the Mediterranean. Therefore, it is a booster in the entire sea basin where all Parties (EU MS and non-EU MS) call for further involvement and coordination of national and local authorities.

## **REFERENCES**

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- [Roadmap to set the path towards the implementation of the 2021 UfM Ministerial declaration on the sustainable Blue Economy](#)
- [UfM Ministerial on the Blue Economy 2021 website and declaration](#)
- <https://medblueeconomyplatform.org>



# Barcelona Convention



**Date of endorsement:** the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention) was adopted on 16 February 1976 in Barcelona and entered into force in 1978.

The Barcelona Convention was amended in 1995 and renamed as the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. The amendments to the Barcelona Convention entered into force in 2004.

The work of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) - Barcelona Convention system - is guided by a six-year Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) and implemented through two-year Programmes of Work and budgets adopted during the meetings of the Contracting Parties. The UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for 2022-2027 was adopted during the 22nd Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22, 7-10 December 2021, Antalya, Türkiye).

## MAIN GOALS AND TOPICS

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The Barcelona Convention involves 22 Contracting Parties determined to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment while boosting regional and national plans to achieve sustainable development.

## GOVERNANCE

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The meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The 22 Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols meet every two years to review the implementation of the Convention and its Protocols and make necessary Decisions.

The Contracting Parties appoint Focal Points to review the progress of work and ensure the implementation of recommendations at the national level. The MAP Focal Points serve as the official conduit for communication between the Secretariat and Contracting Parties. A rotating Bureau of six representatives of the Contracting Parties, elected in their personal capacity by the Ordinary Meetings of the Contracting Parties, provides guidance on the implementation of the Programme of work in the interim period.

## **INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND**

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The strategy is aligned with the Rio+20 Outcome Document and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets as part of the UNEP/MAP mandate.

Underpinning the UNEP/MAP's role as an integrator of global processes at the regional level, the strategy encompasses contributions to the implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, the UN Decade of Action for the SDGs, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

## **STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM**

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The Barcelona convention was a leader on ICZM. The **UNEP-MED Action Plan for the Implementation of the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean** (2012-2019) has been adopted by Contracting Parties (CPs) to focus on three major objectives further articulated into a series of actions, entrusting PAP/RAC and UNEP/MAP to support them in their implementation namely (1) Support the effective implementation of the ICZM Protocol at regional, national and local levels including through a Common Regional Framework for ICZM; (2) Strengthen the capacities of CPs to implement the Protocol and use in an effective manner the ICZM policies, instruments, tools and processes; and (3) Promote the ICZM Protocol and its implementation within the Region. The Common Regional Framework for ICZM in the Mediterranean was adopted by the COP21, in Naples (Italy), 2-5 December 2019, Decision IG.24/5. To support the implementation at national level, UNEP/MAP has funded, for decades, Coastal Area Management programmes in several countries of the Mediterranean Sea.









Building on the ICZM experience and considering the MSP dynamics in the COP 23 with IG.26/10, the Contracting Parties of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols have *adopted* the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean, *invited* the Contracting Parties to implement the MSP Conceptual Framework and strengthen regional cooperation in line with the provisions of the ICZM Protocol and *requested* the Secretariat (PAP/RAC) to continue supporting the Contracting Parties in their effort to implement ecosystem-based Marine Spatial Planning by providing capacity building and training, regularly updating

the Marine Spatial Planning Workspace, and helping create national and local Communities of Practices for Marine Spatial Planning. Spatial planning of the coastal zone is considered an essential instrument for implementing the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol). MSP can be considered as the main tool/process for the implementation of ICZM in the marine part of the coastal zone, specifically for its emphasis on sustainable planning and management. The operational application of MSP within the context of the Barcelona Convention focuses on the marine area within the territorial sea of a country, according to the geographic scope of the ICZM Protocol (Art. 3). This operational application can be embedded into a multi-scale approach (from the Mediterranean scale to subnational to local scale) combining top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

## REFERENCES

- <https://msp.iczmplatform.org/>
- [The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development \(MSSD\)](#);
- [The UNEP Strategy for 2022-2025](#)
- [Signatures and ratification of the convention and its protocols](#) (last modification received October 2020)
- [UNEP/MAP Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2027](#)

## WestMED Initiative

PARTIES	EU MEMBER STATES					
	FRANCE	ITALY	SPAIN	PORTUGAL	MT	
						
	NON-EU MEMBER STATES					
	ALGERIA	TUNISIA	MOROCCO	MAURITANIA	LYBIA	
						



European  
MSP Platform



European  
Commission



**Date of endorsement:** the Initiative follows up on the [Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration on the Blue Economy](#) endorsed by the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) which took place on 17 November 2015.

The [Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean region](#) was adopted by the European Commission on 19 April 2017 ([COM\(2017\)183 final](#)) and endorsed by the Council of the EU on 26 June 2017.

## MAIN GOALS AND TOPICS

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The WestMED initiative is the result of years of dialogue between ten countries in the western Mediterranean region involved in the “5+5 Dialogue”.

The **Framework for Action** outlines the steps to achieve the initiative’s goals (1) a safer and more secure maritime space; (2) a smart and resilient blue economy; (3) improved maritime governance.

Under the framework for Action, with the [2023 WestMED Ministerial declaration](#), the countries streamlined the priorities to focus on:

- Sustainable production and consumption, and in particular, through the support of the transition of Maritime Transport, Green shipping, and Ports towards carbon-neutrality and zero emission and ports as hubs for energy; Innovative and restorative aquaculture and fisheries and Coastal and maritime eco-Tourism.
- Maritime Clusters
- Blue skills and jobs
- Ocean literacy and youth
- **Promoting Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)**
- Decarbonisation of the blue economy and, importantly, boosting the Marine Renewable Energy sectors
- Stepping up the efforts to tackle air and marine pollution
- Increasing ambition for preserving marine and coastal biodiversity in the Mediterranean
- Promoting training and technology transfer
- Developing coastal resilience solutions and early warning systems
- Maritime security and surveillance as a pre-condition for a prosperous and sustainable blue economy in the Mediterranean.

## GOVERNANCE

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The [5+5 Ministerial meeting on Foreign Affairs in Algiers 2018](#) endorsed the principle to establish the **western Mediterranean Steering Committee** (WestMED Steering Committee or WMSC). WMSC provides high-level stewardship for the implementation of the Framework for Action. It ensures operational coordination, provides guidance and necessary support to ensure the initiative’s expected results are achieved, and monitors its

implementation. The WMSC is supported by technical working groups, which are comprised of representatives with technical expertise designated by the participating countries.

The WMSC includes national coordinators from the relevant ministries from participating countries, the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, as well as observers from International Organisations and financial institutions. The WMSC prepares the WestMED ministerial declarations.

## **INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND**

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The Ministerial declarations reiterate the contribution/commitment for the international frameworks (i.e. UN Agenda 2030, UNFCCC) but also regional ones (UfM) or European (e.g. European Green Deal). The WestMED Initiative focuses on the Western Mediterranean Region following the cooperation under the Dialogue 5+5. The 2023 Ministerial declaration calls for synergies with the Sea Basin strategies (Atlantic Strategy and the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea) in particular with the support of the coordinated technical assistance, which has been set since 2022. It also calls for the reinforcement of the collaboration with the Barcelona Convention and the EUSAIR.

## **STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM**

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In the related EC Communication (COM(2017)183 final) under Goal 3 “Better governance of the sea”, “consistency is sought in the implementation of MSP and Marine Strategy Framework directives and the ICZM protocol. Actions listed are (i) Improve the management of maritime and coastal areas by local actors and ensure an appropriate and coordinated implementation of the MSP Directive and the ICZM protocol, including an ecosystem-based approach, (ii) Improve knowledge of land-sea interactions and develop eco-friendly engineering solutions towards a good environmental status of seas and coasts, (iii) Develop tools to select appropriate sites for offshore installations and to fulfil the energy and environmental requirements of the region.”

The 2023 Ministerial declaration confirmed MSP as one of the priorities for action. It also welcomed the advancements made by WestMED Countries in the use of MSP and the development of the Community of Practices on MSP in MED in 2023.

## **REFERENCES**

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- <https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/westmed-initiative/>
- [2018 WestMED Ministerial Declaration and Roadmap](#) endorsed in Algiers (Algeria)
- [2023 WestMED Ministerial declaration](#), endorsed in Valetta (Malta)

# EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

PARTIES	<b>EU MEMBER STATES</b>					
	ITALY	CROATIA	GREECE	SLOVENIA		
						
	<b>NON-EU MEMBER STATES</b>					
	ALBANIA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA	NORTH MACEDONIA	SAN MARINO
						

**Date of endorsement:** the Initiative follows up on The European Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was endorsed by the General Affairs Council on 29 September 2014 and the European Council on 23 -24 October 2014.

## MAIN GOALS/TOPICS

The Region is a functional area primarily defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas basin. Covering also an important terrestrial surface area, it treats the marine, coastal and terrestrial areas as interconnected systems. With intensified movements of goods, services and people owing to Croatia's accession to the EU and with the prospect of EU accession for other countries in the Region, port hinterlands play a prominent role. Attention to land-sea linkages also highlights impacts of unsustainable land-based activities on coastal areas and marine ecosystems.

The Strategy is founded on four thematic priorities/pillars, (i) Sustainable Tourism, (ii) Environment Quality, (iii) Connecting the Region and (iv) Blue Growth. For each pillar, specific topics and actions have been identified, taking into account the needs, urgency of the issue and the added value of joint actions taken in order to solve the existing challenges or build upon the future opportunities.

For Pillar 1 on Blue Growth, the topics are (i) blue technologies, (ii) fisheries and aquaculture and (iii) Maritime and marine governance and services. EUSAIR Pillar 3 (Environmental Quality) also addresses the promotion of sustainable growth by implementing ICZM and MSP as one of the flagship priorities of the Pillar.

A revised action plan devised in 2020 is under implementation. This plan is currently under further revision.

## GOVERNANCE

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In addition to the political level, consisting of the Ministers for EU Funds and/ or Ministers of Foreign Affairs from nine participating countries taking strategic decisions at the EUSAIR Annual forums' ministerial meetings, the EUSAIR architecture involves two main levels: the coordinating level represented by a Governing Board, and the implementation level represented by Thematic Steering Groups. Operational support to both levels is provided by the EUSAIR Facility Point strategic project.

Each pillar is coordinated by two countries, i.e., Greece and Montenegro coordinate Pillar IV "Blue Growth".

## INTERACTIONS AND SYNERGIES WITH OTHER FRAMEWORKS IN THE SEA BASIN OR BEYOND

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Partial interaction with WestMED Initiative (Italy). Mainly at EU level as it is a European framework.

## STATEMENT ON MSP PROMOTION, IMPLEMENTATION, COOPERATION UNDER THE INITIATIVE BETWEEN EU MS (MSPD) AND ICZM

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As underlined in the revised action plan in 2020, the actions and projects under EUSAIR are to reinforce existing EU policies and directives such as MSPD and MSFD. Under Pillar I and III, the topics related to maritime and marine governance and services, indicative actions are mentioned on governance of maritime space with possible projects such as the implementation of coordinated MSP and Integrated Coastal Management to support the process of setting up MSP.

Under Pillar 1, a cross-pillar strategic project is ongoing between 1&3 related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) & Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) - Using high quality research to strengthen dialogue and institutional capacities for effective implementation of MSP/ICZM in support of inclusive and sustainable growth in the AIR. A background paper related to the Multi Use of maritime space and Innovation was issued. The above statements will be updated with the new action under revision.

## ANY BEST PRACTICES OR RELATED ACTIONS IN THE SEABASIN

- [MSP Global Pilot Project: West Mediterranean](#)
- [Toward the operational implementation of MSP in our common Mediterranean Sea \(MSP MED\)](#)
- [Supporting Maritime Spatial Planning in the Western Mediterranean region \(SimWestMED\)](#)
- [ADRIatic Ionian maritime spatial PLANning \(ADRIPLAN\)](#)
- [Coastal Area Management Programme \(CAMP\)](#)
- [MARitime REGions cooperation for the MEDiterranean \(MAREMED\)](#)



- [MSP Med - Paving the Road to MSP in the Mediterranean \(UNEP/MAP\)](#)
- [People for Ecosystem-based Governance in Assessing Sustainable development of Ocean and coast \(PEGASO\)](#)
- [SUPREME - Supporting Maritime Spatial Planning in the Eastern Mediterranean](#)
- [Cross border cooperation for Maritime Spatial Planning Development \(THAL-CHOR\)](#)
- [Cross-border Cooperation for Maritime Spatial Planning 2 \(THAL-CHOR2\)](#)
- [Regions to boost National Maritime Spatial Planning \(REGINA-MSP\)](#)

## REFERENCES

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- [Joint Statement on Governance of EUSAIR](#)

## Conclusions at sea basin level

In the Mediterranean Sea at regional and subregional level, each initiative considers MSP as a key enabler for A Sustainable Blue Economy, echoing the [EC Communication \(COMM\(2021\)240 final\)](#). Each of the frameworks call for cooperation between Countries in their geographical scope. In addition with the listed frameworks, it is important to bear in mind that under the umbrella of the [Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda \(SRIA\)](#) and now the Mediterranean declinations of the Mission Ocean and Waters and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, several EU funded projects such as BlueMed and [Blue Mission Med](#) have contributed to developing cooperations between the [stakeholders](#), in particular the scientific community on several sectors of interest, among which is spatial planning.

The association of UfM or UNEP/MAP in the WestMED steering committee is a key enabler for consistency in action in accordance with their main respective political objectives. The convergence between the approach to develop ICZM and MSP facilitates the engagement of stakeholders and Countries building on their own development/actions, in particular for the Mediterranean Countries which signed the ICZM protocol. In addition to the existing policy frameworks and considering the broader political will to commonly work on MSP, an MSP Community of Practice in the Mediterranean (MED-MSP-CoP) was established under the framework of the WestMED initiative and with the support of the EU MSP AM. Initially focused on the WestMED, it has been opened to experts and observers from the whole of the Mediterranean.

Notably capitalising on EU funded projects supporting cooperation on MSP, it aims at ensuring consistency in MSP understanding, definition and implementation, while strengthening the cooperation between the States of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean by providing technical expertise. By informing the WestMED Steering Committee and its observers (UfM, UNESCO – IOC, UNEP-MAP, EUSAIR, etc.) on its activities, it ensures a liaison with the policy makers.