



Maritime Spatial Planning Country Profile

Italy

Contact

MSP National Level

Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport

Directorate General for the Sea, Maritime and Inland Waterways Transport

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this document does not represent the official view of the European Commission. It has been prepared for informational purposes only and should not be considered legally binding in any nature. The illustrative map shown on the cover and on page 1 should not be interpreted as a legal representation of jurisdictional boundaries (*Italy has not yet declared any exclusive economic zone, but an ad hoc law that authorizes the Competent Italian Entities to establish the Italian EEZ has been approved (Law 14th June 2021, no. 91, published in Official Journal no.148 dated 23-06-2021; In July 2025, the Council of Ministers today approved, at the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Regulation for the proclamation of Italy's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Mediterranean Sea*).

Last revision date

This version was last reviewed and updated by the European MSP Platform team in August 2025.

Funding attribution

The EU MSP Platform is financed by the EU Commission under the EMFAF. The EU MSP Platform is a result of the action MSP Assistance Mechanism implemented by CINEA on behalf of DG MARE.

Background Information

Basic facts on Marine Waters¹



Italy defined the baselines from which its territorial sea is measured in 1977 (D.P.R. 26/04/1977, n. 816). The breadth of its territorial sea is 12 nm. Italy has not yet declared any exclusive economic zone, but an *ad hoc* law that authorizes the Competent Italian Entities to establish the Italian EEZ has been approved (Law 14th June 2021, no. 91, published in Official Journal no.148 dated 23-06-2021). In July 2025, the Council of Ministers today approved, at the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Regulation for the proclamation of Italy's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the Mediterranean Sea. In 2011 an ecological protection zone has been established. Because of its position in the centre of the Mediterranean, Italy has concluded the most delimitation agreements among the Mediterranean coastal states:

- Territorial sea in the Gulf of Trieste with the Former Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia in 1975, now in force with Slovenia
- Territorial sea in the Strait of Bonifacio with France in 1986
- Continental shelf with the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia of 1968, which remains in force for the successor States, among them Croatia
- Continental shelf with Tunisia of 1971
- Continental shelf with Spain of 1974
- Continental shelf with Greece of 1977
- Continental shelf with Albania of 1992.

The line dividing the fishing areas on the boundary between Italy and France near Ventimiglia/Menton, as provided for in the draft bilateral fishing convention of 1892, is customarily recognised by the parties as the delimitation of the territorial sea, though

¹ The text on basic facts about Italian marine waters was provided on 03.08.2017 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (DGAP – DG Political Affairs and Security) through the Italian National MSP Authority “ Ministry of **Infrastructure and Transport**”(named Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport in 2017, Ministry of Sustainable Infrastructure and Mobility in 2019).

the fishing convention itself was never signed. An agreement for the delimitation of all maritime spaces between Italy and France was signed in 2015, but it is not yet in force.

Italy has repeatedly proposed reviving negotiations with Malta on the delimitation of the continental shelf. The *modus vivendi* of 1970 between the two parties, which is not in line with the UNCLOS provisions, is not considered satisfactory by Italy.

Italy, along with France and the Principality of Monaco, is also a party of the “Pelagos agreement” of 1999, creating the Sanctuary for Mediterranean Marine Mammals.

The main elements of the Italian marine waters can be summarised as follows:

- Size of internal waters (to the baselines): 39,339 km².
- Territorial sea (12 mn zone): 81,528 km²; (including 4,330 km² islands, not included in water areas).

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General

Planning at national level

On 1 December 2017, guidelines containing criteria for preparing maritime spatial plans were published². Italy adopted its Maritime Space Management Plans on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237. Italian MSP can be accessed [here](#)

National MSP Authority

According to the [Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201 \(art. 8\)](#), transposing the EU MSP Directive into national legislation, functions of MSP Competent Authority are the responsibility of the Ministry of **Infrastructure and Transport**. Indeed, MSP competences are shared among different institutions. An Inter-ministerial Coordination Table and a Technical Committee with defined scopes are established.

Three maritime areas have been identified, coherently with the definition of marine sub-regions under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EU): 1) Maritime Area “Adriatic”; 2) Maritime Area “Ionian and Central Mediterranean”; 3) Maritime Area “Tyrrhenian and Western Mediterranean”.

Regional authorities are also involved in MSP (specifically in the Technical Committee), by their representatives.

Details

The overall picture of competences and responsibilities on marine and maritime issues is rather complex. Territorial waters are managed at state level, while planning and management in coastal and territorial waters is divided between the State, the Regions, the Provinces and the Municipalities according to Title V of Italian Constitution.

The EU MSP Directive was transposed into Italian legislation with the Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201. According to article 8, functions of MSP Competent Authority are the responsibility of the **Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport**.

Article 6 establishes an Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table, chaired by a representative of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Department for European Policies), with the participation of various Ministries: 1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; 2) Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport; 3) Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy; 4) Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry; 5) Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security; 6) Ministry of Culture; 7) Ministry of Tourism; 8) Ministry of Defence; 9) Ministry of University and Research; 10) Ministry of Health; 11) Ministry of Labour and Social Policies; 12) Ministry of Economy and Finance; 13) Department for Regional affairs and Autonomies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers; 14) Agency of Customs and Monopolies.

The main tasks for the **Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table** to implement are:

- Defining maritime areas for the development of maritime plans and coastal areas relevant for sea-land interaction analysis.
- Defining guidelines for the implementation of MSP and elaboration of related plans.
- Certifying that the Maritime Spatial Management Plans correspond with the planning process defined by the Guidelines.

A **Technical Committee**, coordinated by the Ministry of **Infrastructure and Transport**, is established by art. 7. It involves representatives of:

- Central Administrations: 1) Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport; 2) Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security; 3) Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry; 4) Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy; 5) Ministry of Culture; 6) Ministry of Tourism;

² Gazzetta Ufficiale, January 24th 2018, n. 19.

- The 15 Maritime Regions: Abruzzo; Basilicata; Calabria; Campania; Emilia-Romagna; Friuli-Venezia Giulia; Lazio; Liguria; Marche; Molise; Puglia; Sardinia; Sicily; Tuscany; Veneto.

For the maritime areas defined by the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table, the Technical Committee elaborates MSP plans, according to the guidelines defined by the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table, including Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and evaluation procedures related to Natura 2000 legislation.

Several sector-specific and MSP-relevant national plans have been considered in the development of Maritime Spatial Plans for the designated maritime regions:

- National strategic plan of the ports and logistics.
- Strategic plan for aquaculture in Italy 2014-2020.
- National strategic plan on the use of liquid natural gas (LNG) in Italy.
- The Programme of Measures needed to achieve Good Environmental Status of marine waters developed in the context of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive implementation.

Regarding coastal competence and ICZM, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security is responsible at national level and has activated the Italy - CAMP project (involving 5 Italian areas: one in Emilia Romagna, two in Tuscany and two in Sardinia). Within this process, MSP is acknowledged as a key issue. Moreover, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security is responsible for the protection of marine biodiversity.

Concerning coastal management, Regions, Provinces and Municipalities also hold specific competencies, as laid down in Title V of the Italian Constitution.

Maritime Spatial Plans

Progress

The adoption of Italy's Maritime Spatial Management Plans by Ministerial Decree No. 237 on 25 September 2024 was the result of a gradual and phased roadmap.

The Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table for Maritime Spatial Planning completed [guidelines](#)³ containing indications and criteria for the preparation of maritime spatial management plans (Decree of the Presidency of Council of Ministries, 1 December 2017, published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale on 24 January 2018, n. 19).

The guidelines include the identification of the maritime areas to be considered for the preparation of maritime plans and the definition of the areas relevant in terms of land-sea interactions. **Three marine areas are identified**, coherently with the definition of marine sub-regions under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EU): **1) Maritime Area "Adriatic"; 2) Maritime Area "Ionian and Central Mediterranean"; 3) Maritime Area "Tyrrhenian and Western Mediterranean".** The guidelines also provide an indication of the maritime plans expected geographical scope. They include the marine areas up to the limit of the national jurisdiction and the coastal and transitional waters, if not already considered under urban or rural plans. In the three proposed plans, each maritime area is therefore composed of planning units with different types of 'vocations' (generic, priority, limited, reserved) and 42 strategic objectives.

The guidelines cover various other topics, including strategic goals, multi-level governance, cooperation and consultation with other countries, stakeholders' participation and public communication of the MSP process, etc. Moreover, the guidelines highlight the need to ensure coherence between the maritime plans and objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (annex n. 1 of the guidelines). It is necessary for the plans to include a matrix of interactions between the aims and objectives of the maritime spatial plans and the Descriptors of the Marine Strategy, whose state should guarantee the achievement and maintenance of Good Environmental Status. The importance of adopting an ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning is confirmed by the requirement to develop a specific annex to the plans (annex n. 2 of the guidelines) on how this is considered. Examples of available approaches are provided in the guidelines.

On the 1st of February 2022, the Italian competent Authority on MSP (Ministry for Sustainable Infrastructures and Mobility), as proposing Authority, sent to the competent Authority on strategic environmental assessment (SEA), the Ministry of Ecological Transition, the documentation related to the activation of the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) procedure.

Consequently, on the 7th of February 2022 three environmental preliminary reports (one for each of the three maritime areas: "Adriatic"; "Ionian and Central Mediterranean"; "Tyrrhenian and Western Mediterranean") were sent to the national Authorities with environmental competences.

³ In Italian only

Similarly, on the 10th of February 2022 the Ministry of Ecological Transition sent ad hoc notes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in order to proceed to notify the following countries with a request of interest in participating in the cross-border consultation:

- Maritime Area “Adriatic”: the Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania; the Hellenic Republic.
- Maritime Area “Ionian and Central Mediterranean”: the Hellenic Republic and the Republic of Malta; the Republic of Tunisia and the State of Libya.
- Maritime Area “Tyrrhenian and Western Mediterranean”: the Republic of France and the Kingdom of Spain; the Republic of Algeria and the Republic of Tunisia.

National and cross-border public consultations on maritime spatial management plans and related environmental assessments:

on the 15th of September 2022 the public national consultation on the three maritime spatial management plans (one for each Maritime area: “Adriatic”; “Ionian and Central Mediterranean”; “Tyrrhenian and Western Mediterranean”) was opened by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport. More than 130 stakeholders representing national institutions; regions; coastal cities; associations, participated in the VTC meeting. The public consultation, in accordance with Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201, was opened from the 15th of September 2022 until the 30th of October 2022 (published documents are available on the link <https://www.sid.mit.gov.it/>; further information is also provided on the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport website at the following link <https://www.mit.gov.it/documentazione/pianificazione-dello-spazio-marittimo>). A total of 37 feedback contributions were received, many of which concerned more than one maritime area of reference.

- “Tyrrhenian Sea – Western Mediterranean” maritime area: n. 28 contributions.

- “Adriatic” maritime area: n. 30 contributions.

- “Ionian – Central Mediterranean” maritime area: n. 21 contributions.

➤ in parallel, with regards to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure, the competent Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport transmitted to the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security the three Environmental reports resulting by the numerous comments received about the three preliminary reports and the relevant opinion issued by the National Environmental Impact Assessment Commission EIA/SEA. Documents and information are provided at the following link: <https://www.sid.mit.gov.it>

➤ the Public Consultation for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure of the Maritime Space Management Plans was held in the period 30 September 2022 - 14 November 2022.

➤ on the 30th of November 2022 an *online* meeting on the Transboundary Consultation on the Italian Maritime Spatial Plans and their Strategic Environmental Assessment was held. The aim of the meeting was to present the Italian maritime spatial plans and their transboundary impact assessment analysis, in order to facilitate potential contributions and suggestions to Italian plans. Following the requests received from participants in the meeting the deadline for submitting comments has been extended to 30th December 2022.

The documentation was available at an *ad hoc* link on the Italian portal “SID il Portale del mare”.

The three proposals for a Maritime Spatial Management Plan have been revised, according to the above-mentioned observations received during the Public national consultations phase on MSP Plans and their SEA.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure:

According to Italian legislation, the three Plans have been subject to the SEA procedure, which requires the issuing of an opinion by the Environmental Impact Assessment Commission, established inside the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security (Competent Authority for SEA matters).

Consequently, the plan proposals have been updated to reflect the comments received during the public consultations and the observations and recommendations contained in the SEA opinions.

The Technical Committee, in its 17th meeting held on 26th June 2024, agreed on the text of the MSP Plans to be sent to the Interministerial Coordination Table. On 11 July 2024 the Plans were sent to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - EU Policy Department for the convening of the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table, which met on 24th July 2024 and certified that the Plans correspond to the Guidelines.

On 12th September 2024, the favorable opinion of the Permanent Conference for Relations between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano was acquired on the draft decree of the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport approving the maritime space management plans.

The planning procedure was completed by autumn of 2024 and Italy adopted its Maritime Space Management Plans on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237.

Implementation and monitoring phase of the Plans.

Implementation and monitoring of the Plans are foreseen in the Operational proposal for the launch of the plan implementation and monitoring phase's document (*"Proposta operativa per l'avvio della fase di implementazione e monitoraggio dei piani"*) which forms an integral part of the Ministerial Decree No. 237. It includes the planning of future actions. To this end, technical tables and working groups have been established. These are currently ongoing, particularly those focused on the development of offshore wind power and the relevant stakeholders' hearings.



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

The application of the Ecosystem-based Approach is envisaged in the scope of the Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201, establishing a framework for Maritime Spatial Planning. The importance of adopting an ecosystem-based approach to maritime spatial planning is confirmed by the Guidelines issued by the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Table for Maritime Spatial Planning.

Italian MSP adopted on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237, contain specific paragraphs dedicated to the ecosystem approach.



Co-existence of uses

Italian MSP adopted on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237, contain specific paragraphs dedicated to co-existence of uses.



Land-sea interactions

Land-Sea interactions (LSI) is mentioned in the transposition of MSP Directive into Italian legislation (Decree 201/2016). Article 3 describes this as "interactions in which terrestrial natural phenomena or human activities have an impact on the marine environment, resources and activities". Building on this concept, the Guidelines for maritime spatial planning (Decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministries 1

December 2017) make several references to the need to identify identification areas relevant in terms of land-sea interactions and provide a list of elements and factors to be considered in order to identify such areas:

- relevant river basins according to their identification under the provisions of the Water Framework Directive (Decree 152/2006)
- terrestrial and marine protected areas (including SCI, SPZ and Natura 2000 network)
- UNESCO sites
- coastal areas with high landscape/seascape value
- areas with important coastal marine infrastructures (e.g. ports).

Italian MSP adopted on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237, contain specific paragraphs dedicated to Land-sea interactions.



Stakeholder Involvement

Italian MSP adopted on 25th of September 2024 by Ministerial Decree No. 237, contain specific paragraphs dedicated to Stakeholder Involvement.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The MSFD was transposed into national legislation in 2010. The competent authority is the Ministry of Ecological Transition. In 2012 and 2014 two public consultations were carried out, on the initial evaluation of the state of the marine environment and the monitoring program, respectively. Consultation on the Programme of Measures was opened between 30 September 2016 and 30 October 2016. Documents are available for consultation (in Italian) at the following link <http://www.strategiamarina.isprambiente.it/consultazioni/consultazione-2016>.

Its relevance to MSP regards the application of the ecosystem-based approach in the process of monitoring and evaluation of the status of marine waters. In addition, the Programme of Measures specifically introduces one new spatial measure, concerning the completion of the network of Natura 2000 sites at sea and subsequent identification of conservation measures.

The Guidelines for MSP (Decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministries 1st December 2017) highlight the need to ensure coherence between the maritime plans and objectives of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (annex n. 1). The plans need to include a matrix of interactions between the aims and objectives of the maritime spatial plans and the Descriptors of the Marine Strategy, whose state should guarantee the achievement and maintenance of Good Environmental Status.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

The Ministry of Ecological Transition is responsible for ICZM at national level and has activated the Italy - CAMP project (involving 5 Italia areas: one in Emilia Romagna, two in Tuscany and two in Sardinia). MSP is recognised as a relevant issue within this process.

From 2011, the Italian legislative framework involved a shift of the main coastal competences from the State to the regions. The regions are considered most suited to implement planning policies and ICZM. Some regions (Liguria, Marche, Tuscany, Lazio, Abruzzo and Emilia Romagna) have developed their own coastal strategies and/or plans, which include coastal protection, beach nourishment, marinas, coastal traffic issues and the development of public and tourist facilities in the coastal area. These plans were based on the awareness that the overall coastal governance requires a methodological planning instrument, instead of the previously adopted “urgent measures”.

Transboundary cooperation. Cooperation with Member States and third parties

Italy is a party to the Barcelona Convention and cooperates with France and Monaco on managing the Pelagos Sanctuary MPA (the only MPA in the high seas in the Mediterranean Sea basin).

Additionally, Italy is involved in the European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian region (EUSAIR). In both cases, MSP is considered a relevant tool/process for the sustainable management of the marine space.

As laid down in art. 11 (“*Cooperation with Member States and third countries*”) of the Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201, the competent Authority, in agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and after consulting the Technical Committee referred to in Article 7, shall ensure cooperation with Member States and third countries in their respective maritime spatial planning activities.

Moreover, cooperation with third countries has also been recognized as essential in the development of regional projects. Both the SHAPE and ADRIPLAN initiatives, focusing on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, involved partners from third countries such as Montenegro and Albania

Sources

Consulted references

Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport web site, at the following links:

- <https://www.mit.gov.it/documentazione/pianificazione-dello-spazio-marittimo> ;
- <https://www.sid.mit.gov.it/mappa> .

Relevant legislative acts

- Ministerial Decree 25th of September 2024, No. 237. Adoption of Italian Maritime Space Management Plans
- Legislative Decree 17 October 2016, n. 201. Implementation of Directive 2014/89/EU, establishing a framework for Maritime Spatial Planning. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2016/11/07/16G00215/sg%20>
- Legislative Decree 9 January 2012, n. 4, with measures for the reorganization of legislation on fishery and aquaculture, according to art. 28, Law 4 June 2010, n. 96. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gunewsletter/dettaglio.jsp?service=1&datagu=2012-02-01&task=dettaglio&numgu=26&redaz=012G0012&tmstp=1329130706752>
- Decree of the President of the Republic, 27 October 2011, n. 209, with regulatory norms for the establishment of Ecological Protection Zones of North-Western Mediterranean, of Ligurian Sea and Tyrrhenian Sea. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2011/12/17/011G0252/sg>
- Legislative Decree 13 October 2010, n. 190, implementing the Directive 2008/56/CE establishing a framework for communitarian action in the field of politics for the marine environment (Marine Strategy Framework Directive). http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2010-11-18&atto.codiceRedazionale=010G0212&elenco30giorni=false
- Law 8 February 2006, n. 61, establishing ecological protection zones beyond the external limit of the territorial sea. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2006/03/03/006G0075/sg>
- Legislative decree 3 April 2006, n.152, with norms for the environmental sector. http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=2006-04-14&atto.codiceRedazionale=006G0171
- Law 2 December 1994, n. 689, ratifying and executing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - Montego Bay, 10 December 1982, and the agreement on the application of part XI of the same Convention, included Annexes - New York 29 July 1994. http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1994-12-19&atto.codiceRedazionale=094G0717&elenco30giorni=false
- Law 6 December 1991, n. 394, framework law on protected areas. <http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1991/12/13/091G0441/sg>
- Law 25 January 1979, n. 30, ratifying the Convention on the safeguard of Mediterranean Sea from Pollution, including two protocols and their Annexes, adopted in Barcelona on 16 February 1976. http://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/atto/serie_generale/caricaDettaglioAtto/originario;jsessionid=aBLbujbuNtrqSzR+9pGSz_w_ntc-as5-guri2a?atto.dataPubblicazioneGazzetta=1979-02-09&atto.codiceRedazionale=079U0030&elenco30giorni=false
- Decree of the Ministry of Shipping and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Environment, 12 July 1989, with norms to protect marine areas of historical, artistic and archaeological interest.
- Decree of the President of the Republic 26 April 1977, n. 816, with operative norms to apply the Law 8 December 1961, n. 1658, authorizing adhesion to and execution of the convention on the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, adopted in Genève on 29 April 1958.