Community of Practice on Maritime Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean

MED-MSP-CoP

MED-MSP-CoP II 2025 Workshop

NATURE PROTECTION THROUGH MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING (MSP) AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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MSP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN : THE MAIN REFERENCE

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is an essential element for the good governance of marine ecosystems. It advocates strategic balance in the use of marine/maritime areas to reduce conflicts between users and equitably guide planning at all levels of governance.

MSP in the Mediterranean and elsewhere transcends the decision-making powers of a government to subnational and local authorities. Various economic sectors, citizens, and scientists can play this role in implementing guidelines for sustainable marine activity and resource exploitation.

A protocol to the Barcelona Convention – the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol), adopted in 2008 – is a benchmark instrument that enables the planning of Mediterranean marine and maritime areas within a broader coastal management framework that defines regional, international, and transboundary cooperation
The Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean introduces MSP within the framework of the Barcelona Convention, and in particular:

1. Creates links between MSP and ICZM – considering MSP as the main tool or process for implementing ICZM in the marine part of the coastal zone and specifically for the planning and management of human maritime activities according to the objectives of the ecosystem approach.

2. Provides Contracting Parties (CPs) with a common context for implementing MSP in the Mediterranean region

MSP AND ECOSYSTEM APPROACH ANALYSIS

According to UNEP and MAP, the ecosystem approach and MSP planning tool was developed to enable a self-assessment process for the implementation, to create a list of specific tasks, and to identify the obstacles that may be encountered when integrating the ecosystem approach into MSP.

Analysis of Land-Sea Interactions (LSIs) The Land-Sea Interactions and LSI Planning Tool is an Excel-based tool that allows for LSI analysis. The tool was created based on the methodological guidelines on LSIs developed by the RAC/PAP.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING.

The conceptual framework proposes a seven-step MSP process.
Here are the steps of the MSP process:

Step 1. Prepare: Start the process and get organized;
Step 2 .Agree on the destination – Assess the context and define a vision;
Step 3. Map the present – Analyze existing conditions;
Step 4. Map the future – Analyze the future context;
Step 5. Define the parameters – Identify key issues;
Step 6. Design the plan: Develop the maritime spatial plan;
Step 7. Achieve results: Implement, monitor, and evaluate the plan.

https://iczmplatform.org/storage/documents/nqow3MMmQIP6Ypsc8kIxWO03ah169yplxLrVSgZA.pdf

GOVERNANCE AND MSP

the sustainable development of complex and dynamic coastal and marine areas represent the main challenges for MSP in the Mediterranean sea basin. Meeting this challenge requires a logical, coherent, and effective governance process for the preparation and implementation of plans resulting from maritime spatial planning. In addition, while MSP is primarily a national issue in the Mediterranean sea basin, maritime spatial planning may have to be implemented in a context of overlapping, international and transboundary issues with their reciprocal impacts and effects. Cross-border and transnational cooperation can therefore be an essential component of the MSP governance process.

Successful MSP process can only be achieved when:

1. A core group of well-informed and supportive stakeholders actively supports the process;
2. There is sufficient institutional capacity to prepare the plan and implement its policies;
3. The government's commitment to the plan is expressed through both legislation and the delegation of necessary authority, as well as the necessary financial resources.9Governance and MSP;
4. High-level objectives that address societal and environmental conditions are adopted and used to measure the plan's success;
5. Relevant transboundary engagement, capacities, and effective cooperation mechanisms are in place.

CLIMATE ACTION.

Climate action is key to sustainable planning and management of the Mediterranean Sea (a region emerging as a key climate change hotspot). The impacts of climate change on Mediterranean coastal and marine ecosystems, in addition to the pressures exerted by human activities such as tourism, shipping, oil and gas development, fisheries, and aquaculture, require better planning from start to finish. There is a need to include climate action in all plans and promote viable long-term actions that will contribute to climate change mitigation and carbon neutrality goals. This is a major challenge for all of us internationally, and one that we can address together.

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH.

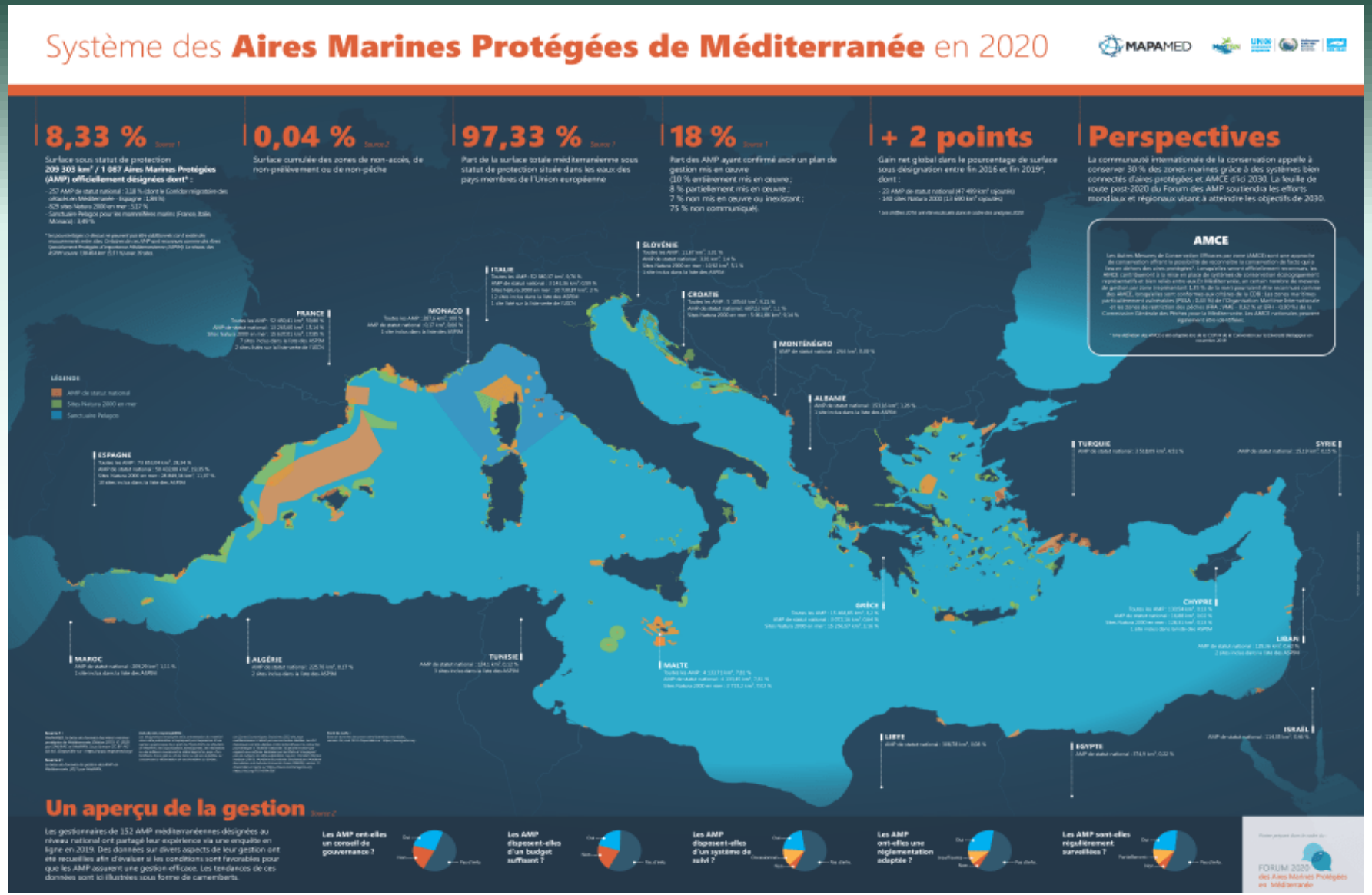
In the Mediterranean, the ecosystem approach is the guiding principle for all policy development and implementation undertaken under the auspices of the UNEP/MAP system of the Barcelona Convention, with the ultimate objective of achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) for the Mediterranean Sea and coast.

It operates through the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Program of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast (IMAP), which shares many elements with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The ecosystem approach is a key principle of the Barcelona Convention's ICZM Protocol to ensure that coastal zone planning and management enable sustainable development. It applies to all related planning processes for land-based and maritime marine activities, thus supporting the overall implementation of MSP. Although it does not cover all Mediterranean countries, the EU MSP Directives also demonstrates the relevance of the ecosystem approach to "contribute to promoting the sustainable development and growth of the maritime and coastal economies and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources." Therefore, MSP should contribute to the objectives of IMAP and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

More visible action and planning are needed in the marine space. By using MSP process tools, guidance, case studies, and best practice examples, you can incorporate the ecosystem approach into your plans to transform a well-thought-out concept into a successfully implemented program.

7.4% of the Mediterranean Sea basin is covered by Marine Protected Areas. But only 0.04% is subject to strong protection.



MARINE PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA BASIN (Year 2020)

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mediterranean is a particularly sensitive sea area . In this respect, it is important to emphasise the need to have a common policy for the management of blue economy activities paying attention to the creation of specific spaces dedicated to small-scale fisheries and artisanal fishing in the planning process. There is also the need to implement a common approach to the preservation of ecosystems, marine life and species that exist there enabling better endorse the recommendations agreed within the various bodies and initiatives of this basin. As such, the riparian countries have an interest in working together referring to MSP IOC-UNESCO recommendations and FAO blue ports framework, Westmed initiative and UfM Ministerial declaration so as to:

-Develop guidelines on cross-border MSP;
-Raise awareness among government authorities and parties of the importance of MSP;
-Engage in coordinated institutional dialogue between government authorities at regional, national and local levels;
-Increase cooperation between the involved parties. By providing a context conducive to active and effective participation of political decision-makers, scientists, businesses, citizens and other participating parties;
-encourage transboundary cooperation for the creation of marine protected areas that benefit local communities and overlapping ecosystems;
-Plan for fishing villages and artificial reefs to restore marine ecosystem in small scale fisheries areas .

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS (MPAs) and MSP

Marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Mediterranean play a crucial role in the conservation of marine biodiversity and the sustainable management of marine resources. They are essential to preserving the region's marine resources. Their effective management requires international cooperation, financial support, and the involvement of local communities. Here are some key points:

Importance of MPAs in the Mediterranean

1. *Biodiversity*: The Mediterranean is home to a wide variety of endemic and threatened marine species. MPAs help protect these species and their habitats.
2. *Coral reefs and Posidonia meadows*: These ecosystems are essential for ocean health and are often protected within MPAs.
3. *Sustainable fisheries*: MPAs can contribute to the sustainable management of fisheries resources by protecting fish breeding and nursery areas.

Examples of MPAs in the Mediterranean

1. *Port- Cros National Park (France)*: Protects part of the marine biodiversity of the northwest Mediterranean.
2. *Zakynthos Marine Reserve (Greece)*: Known for the protection of the Caretta caretta sea turtle.
3. *Cape de Creus Marine Natural Park (Spain)*: Protects the unique marine ecosystems of this region of the northwest Mediterranean.
4. *Souss Massa Marine protected Area*: on the Moroccan Atlantic side and *Al Houceima National Park * on the Mediterranean Side.

Challenges and Opportunities

1. *Funding*: MPAs require financial resources for their management and protection.
2. *Community Participation*: Involving local communities in the management of MPAs is crucial to their success.
3. *Regulation and Enforcement*: Ensuring compliance with rules and regulations within MPAs is essential for their effectiveness.

International Initiatives and Agreements

1. *Barcelona Convention*: A framework for the protection of the marine environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean.
2. *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*: MPAs contribute to several SDGs, particularly those related to ocean and ecosystem conservation.

MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING AND THE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION (1)

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) can be a powerful tool for ensuring biodiversity conservation while promoting sustainable use of marine resources. Here's how:

Key Principles

1. *Ecosystem-based approach*: MSP should consider the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems and the impacts of human activities on biodiversity.
2. *Stakeholder engagement*: Involve various stakeholders, including conservationists, fishermen, shipping industries, and local communities, to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered.
3. *Science-based decision-making*: Use scientific research and data to inform MSP decisions and ensure that conservation objectives are met.

Implementing MSP for Biodiversity Conservation

1. *Identify conservation priorities*: Determine areas of high biodiversity value, such as marine protected areas (MPAs), habitats, and species of conservation concern.
2. *Map human activities*: Identify and map human activities, such as fishing, shipping, and offshore energy development, to understand potential impacts on biodiversity.
3. *Develop spatial plans*: Create spatial plans that balance human activities with biodiversity conservation objectives, ensuring that conservation priorities are protected.
4. *Monitor and adapt*: Continuously monitor the effectiveness of MSP and adapt plans as needed to ensure that biodiversity conservation objectives are met.

MARITIME SPATIAL PLANNING AND THE BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION (2)

Benefits of MSP for Biodiversity Conservation

1. *Reduced conflicts*: MSP can help reduce conflicts between different user groups by identifying areas of high conservation value and allocating space for different activities.
2. *Increased efficiency*: MSP can promote more efficient use of marine space, reducing the environmental impacts of human activities.
3. *Improved conservation outcomes*: By considering biodiversity conservation objectives in MSP, we can ensure that marine ecosystems are protected and restored.

Challenges and Opportunities

1. *Data limitations*: MSP requires high-quality data on marine ecosystems and human activities. Addressing data gaps is essential for effective MSP.
2. *Stakeholder engagement*: Engaging stakeholders in MSP can be challenging, but it is crucial for ensuring that plans are effective and acceptable to all parties.
3. *International cooperation*: MSP often requires international cooperation, particularly in transboundary marine areas.

By using MSP as a cross-sectoral tool, we can ensure that biodiversity conservation is integrated into marine planning and management, promoting sustainable use of marine resources while protecting marine ecosystems.

WG ON NATURE PROTECTION

Objective: a forum to discuss in the context of the MED-MSP CoP about nature protection in the context of MSP

Main topics to be discussed:

- how much is effectively managed MPA now and what MSP can support it?
- future targets (10% and 30%)
- major spatial conflicts, major synergies, gaps and challenges (e.g. on OECMs)

Additional activities that can complement the working group:

- Webinars proposed in the context of the MED-MSP-CoP related to nature protection
- Other activities related to the WG, such as, specific workshop/partipatory session/training/etc.
- Related activities in the context of MEDIGREEN Project that can complement the WG work, i.e. The technical report on nature protection.

Breakout sessions

First option

- Slot 1: Fisheries and Nature Protection in parallel
- Slot 2: Aquaculture and ORE in parallel

Second option

- Slot 1: Fisheries, Aquaculture and ORE in parallel
- Slot 2: Nature protection

Third option

- The four groups in parallel