

CALL FOR EXPERTS TO BE PART OF THE MSP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN (MED-MSP-CoP)

WHO IS THIS CALL FOR?

If you are an expert on Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean, this call might be of interest for you and open up great opportunities for exchange and cooperation with peers.

The European Commission calls for expert involvement in the development of a voluntary-based **Community of practice for MSP in the Mediterranean (MED-MSP-CoP)**. The call targets enthusiastic experts from Mediterranean countries on MSP and related disciplines (e.g. sustainable blue economy, protection of the marine environment, etc.) who want to **actively participate and engage** in the work of the MED-MSP-CoP and **contribute** to its expected outputs. A series of preparatory meetings, which started at the WestMED hackathon in Malta (June 2022) and continued in the context of the MSPMED project (Tunis, September 2022; Rome October 2022) were held to set the CoP Coordination Team and to draft the CoP [Terms of References](#) and [1st-year Action Plan](#) (January 2023 – January 2024). This preparatory process culminated with the kick-off meeting in January 2023 in Brussels where this work was presented and the CoP was launched.

The European Commission provides technical support to the MED-MSP-CoP, notably through its MSP and WestMED Initiative Assistance Mechanisms. The CoP is a **voluntary-based, independent group of experts**. In any case the contents of the discussions and the outcomes of the MED-MSP-CoP are at the full discretion of its participants.

We invite you to consider your involvement in the MSP-MED-CoP and to confirm your interest in participating in this initiative through this [on-line form](#) by the **14th of April 2023**.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION

The MED-MSP-CoP aims at enhancing the dialogue on MSP issues of common interest relating to the **sustainable development of maritime sectors** and the **ecosystem-based approach** to planning and management of the sea space, recognizing the strict interconnections between the two. In the first year, the MED-MSP-CoP activity will focus on the structured analysis of MSP-related projects and initiatives as well as the identification of persisting gaps, related to two specific topics (see Annex 1 of the and [1st-year Action Plan](#) for more information) that have been discussed and prioritized throughout the series of preparatory meetings held till now:

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

Based on the outcome of this activity, the MSP-MED-CoP is expected to plan its work in the following years.

Till the end of this first year, the MED-MSP-CoP will **meet 3 times**, whenever possible in presence (financial support for these meetings cannot be assured). The first online meeting will take place on the **27th of April 2023**, when the CoP will be presented to the involved experts and its scope will be further discussed. Other online meetings may be organized on demand depending on the needs of the activities to be carried out.

WHY A MED-MSP-CoP IS NEEDED?

MSP is widely recognised as a tool to boost sustainable blue economy, ensuring the protection of the marine environment and the conservation of its biodiversity. The European Commission with the recent [Sustainable Blue Economy Communication](#) addresses the greater demand for use of the maritime space and stresses the role of MSP to prevent conflicts between policy priorities through the adoption of an ecosystem based approach. At the same time, the [Union for Mediterranean Ministerial Declaration of 2021](#) highlights the importance of MSP to manage and minimize the impacts associated with the expansion of activities in coastal areas and at sea.

We have entered a period in which MSP is being implemented/initialized by several Mediterranean countries (in both EU and non-EU Member states) through national processes delivering maritime, coastal or sectoral strategies and plans. Several research and pilot projects have supported these processes through data collection, capacity building, community building, good practices and knowledge sharing in general.

While the main implementation processes happen at the national level, the transboundary dimension of MSP is essential to guarantee coherence and effectiveness among plans and to approach common problems at the Mediterranean scale. Several international frameworks and initiatives (e.g., MSPglobal Initiative, UfM, UNEP-MAP, WestMED Initiative, EUSAIR, BlueMed, EU MSP Platform, etc.) recognise the crucial role of MSP for a Sustainable Blue Economy and an improved protection of the marine environment in the Mediterranean.

At this stage there is a momentum for a more **stable, continuous and structured dialogue** within the MSP Community at the sea basin and sub-sea basin level, to share knowledge and experiences on priority challenges and provide recommendations towards a “Mediterranean approach for MSP”. The MED-MSP-CoP offers a great opportunity to grasp such momentum.