

MSP Community of Practice in the Mediterranean

Terms of reference

1. Background

These ToRs have been designed as a continuation of the discussions started at the WestMED Hackathon organized by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism in Malta on June 30th 2022 regarding the creation of an open Community of Practice for exchange on MSP in the framework of the WestMED Initiative (hereafter MED-MPS-CoP). This document has subsequently been revised after the events organised in the frame of the MSPMED project in Tunis (September 2022, Pan-western Mediterranean workshop) and Rome (October 2022, Final Conference) where discussions were held in relation to the MED-MSP-CoP operationalization and objectives.

In the Mediterranean, there are many policy drivers for the implementation of Maritime/Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) at regional, sub-regional and national levels. These include the MSP Directive implementation for the European Union (EU) Member States, the Ministerial declaration on Blue Economy of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning developed by UNEP/MAP promoting a common approach to MSP as a key process for planning and managing the marine space in line with the provisions of the ICZM Protocol. Still, the MSPglobal pilot project in the Western Mediterranean Sea promoted by UNESCO-IOC and the European Commission allowed the creation of a network of experts and the publication of specific technical reports and recommendations.

Given the existing policy framework and the broader political will to commonly work on MSP, there is a shared interest to set-up a group of MSP experts, organized in an MSP Community of Practice in the Mediterranean, in the framework of the WestMED initiative. **The MED-MSP-CoP will be initially focused on the WestMED, being open to experts and observers from the whole Mediterranean.** The MED-MSP-CoP will **informally** share experiences and practices on MSP at a technical level and on a voluntary basis, connecting with and valorising past, ongoing and upcoming projects and initiatives. The MED-MSP-CoP will offer knowledge, experience and technical advice to WestMED countries. By having a good overview of MSP implementation in the Western Mediterranean, and sharing technical understanding on multiple aspects of the MSP processes and the implementation practices, the CoP will help ensuring consistency in MSP definition and implementation, while strengthening the cooperation between states of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean.

What is a community of practice

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfil both individual and group goals. Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this. A governance framework is usually defined for the functional organization and management of a community of practice; in the case of the MED-MSP-CoP the governance is described in section 3 of this document

2. Aim and objectives

Main objectives of the MED-MSP-CoP is to establish a permanent communication and dialogue across borders between experts on MSP (i.e. planners, technical experts, researchers), and to exchange knowledge and relevant experiences in the region, so as to reach a shared perspective on topics of common interest on MSP and enhance the cooperation between the north and the south of the Mediterranean. The MED-MSP-CoP will support MSP and MSP-related processes by examining useful practices and tools, and being a place for exchanges to develop common language and suggesting coherent and harmonized approaches for using MSP as an enabler to a more sustainable blue economy and to improve protection of the marine environment.

Additionally, the MED-MSP-CoP could formulate and provide recommendations that can support regional cooperation for MSP and, at the same time, national processes and decision making on the implementation of MSP plans in WestMED countries, and beyond as applicable. This group of experts should help anticipate changes of use in the WestMED region and avoid conflicts related to these changes, in line with the UfM Blue Economy roadmap¹ and as described in the Framework for Action of the WestMed Initiative².

Specific objectives of the MED-MSP-CoP are:

Short term

- Creation of the Coordination Team of the MED-MSP-CoP formed by a core group of experts (voluntary basis) and design of the annual plan of actions;
- Formalization of the MED-MSP-CoP within the WestMED framework;
- Identification of experts to be involved in the MED-MSP-CoP;
- Stocktaking of ongoing and upcoming projects and initiatives regarding the priority topics identified by the MED-MSP-CoP;
- Stocktaking of future events to capitalize on for the organization of back-to-back meetings
- Identification of major gaps and needs;
- Establishment of informal connections with the national MSP processes and the MSP competent authorities.

Mid term

- Design of capacity building activities according to the identified gaps and needs and available funding and resources in the sea basin;
- Assessment of R&I as key driver to provide recommendations for MSP in the WestMED - and for the wider Mediterranean Sea as applicable - and the way to address them;
- Assess how to include the private sector and the NGOs in the MED-MSP-CoP, i.e. pool of expert or within specific working groups.

¹ https://medblueconomyplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/1.A-roadmap_bocci_fernandez.pdf

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017SC0130>

Long Term

- Collaboration on specific actions capitalizing on results of previous projects and project development on transboundary issues;
- Extension of the MSP-CoP to the entire Mediterranean.

3. Governance and participation

The MED-MSP-CoP is composed of **voluntary experts from EU and non-EU States**, i.e. experts with technical knowledge on MSP issues and in good communication with decision-makers and planners involved in MSP process.

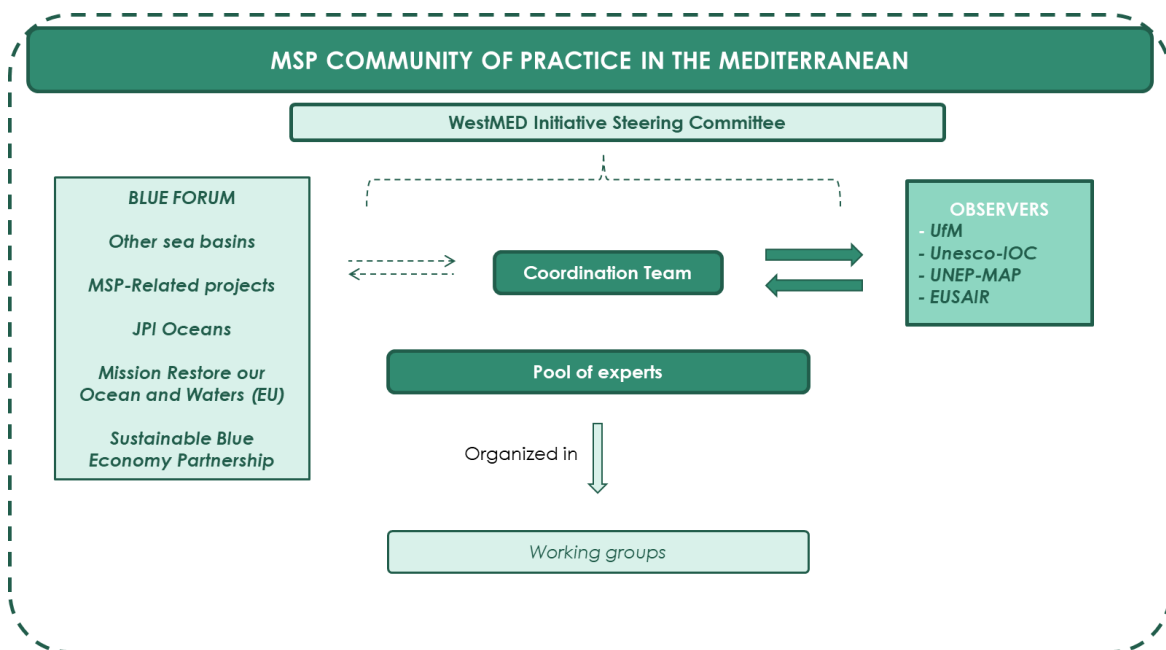


Figure 1. Structure of the MED-MSP-CoP.

Components of the MED-MSP-CoP structure are:

- **WestMED Initiative Steering Committee:** Includes national coordinators from the relevant ministries from participating countries (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Malta, Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya), the European Commission and the Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, as well as observers from International Organizations and financial institutions. Their role is to ensure operational coordination, guidance and necessary support to ensure the initiative's expected results are achieved.
- **Coordination team:** The Coordination team is composed by volunteer experts from WestMED countries able to perform in the science-to-policy interface. Their role is the overall management and design of actions of the MED-MSP-CoP. They work at a technical level and do not represent countries. It is important that the coordination team establish informal links with the MSP competent authorities of the WestMED countries.

- **Pool of experts:** Volunteer experts' group from different disciplines and institutions of the Mediterranean with expertise and interest in MSP and Blue Economy. Experts will be involved through an open call considering voluntary-based participation. The call could capitalize contacts established in the frame of: WestMED Initiative and the related Assistance Mechanism, MSP Assistance Mechanism, UfM Blue Economy and Environment stakeholders/experts communities, BlueMed initiative, MSPglobal experience, on-going and future projects, etc.
- **Working groups:** Technical discussion groups on the topics of primary relevance for the MSP-MSP-CoP. These groups will be composed by members of the Pool of Experts and will have an identified chair responsible of coordination and reporting.
- **Observers:** Other institutions with commitments related to MSP and blue economy that could contribute to and benefit from the MED-MSP-CoP outcomes by the establishment of reciprocal channels of communication (e.g. UfM, UNESCO – IOC, UNEP-MAP, EUSAIR, etc.).
- **Links with other ongoing initiatives/projects:** Links to be established with relevant on-going and future initiatives, including: the Blue Forum, other Community of Practices dealing with MSP, the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership, the Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters (EU), JPI Ocean initiatives, MSP-related projects, initiatives of relevance promoted in other sea basins, etc. Among these, the Blue Forum is an upcoming framework to initiate and coordinate a dialogue across the EU blue economy sectors, on the protection and future use of the oceans and seas. The organisation running this Blue Forum will also perform support activities similar to those currently provided by the Assistance Mechanism for MSP platform, including support to the EU Member States Expert Group on MSP, where EU MS exchange knowledge and expertise on the implementation of the MSP Directive.

The composition of the Coordination Team and/or of the Pool of Experts shall consider gender balance and involvement of EU and non-EU countries. It will be based on following general criteria:

- The MSP-CoP it is not a policy group or an institutional group;
- Participation of experts is on voluntary basis /interest to join;
- Yet, nationally recommended experts are welcome;
- Experts do not represent countries;

The WestMed assistance mechanism of the Commission will support the organisation of meetings and events.

4. Scope

Key elements framing the scope of the MED-MSP-CoP are here described, and better detailed in yearly action plans. Major ones are recalled hereafter:

- Given the existing EU policy framework and the broader political will to work on MSP, as expressed at UfM level for the Mediterranean, there is a shared interest in an

“enlarged MSP-CoP”. The MED-MSP-CoP will be open for experts and observers around the Mediterranean, initially focusing on WestMED, and therefore UfM, areas of interest.

- Work on a multilevel approach (Mediterranean, sub-regional/WestMED, national and subnational) for MSP to ensure vertical integration, capitalising relevant on-going and upcoming initiatives, also to ensure the appropriate flow of information between the MED-MSP-CoP (building on the work of WestMED), and the UfM Working Group on Blue Economy (via its Focal Points), UNEP/MAP, MSP Global, BlueMed, and other regional and sub-regional initiatives.
- Establish links with other on-going and future MSP-related working groups (i.e. TEG on Data for MSP) and initiatives, as in particular the Blue Forum.
- Develop interactions and synergies with existing and upcoming MSP projects (e.g. REGINA, MSPGREEN, REMAP, eMSP-NSBR, Co-Evolve for Blue Growth, etc.).
- Ensure transfer of knowledge, good practices, tools, technics and research to planners and decision makers.
- Link with national and local actions related to MSP, ICZM and MPA in WestMED countries.
- Provide recommendations in relation to the most urgent/important emerging topics identified by the MED-MSP-CoP members and partners.
- Envisage exchanges with experts from other sea-basins.

5. Topics of discussion for the MED-MSP-CoP

Topics relevant for the activities of the MED-MSP-CoP were discussed during the participatory session of the MSPMED Pan Western Mediterranean workshop held in Tunis (September 2022)³, where actors of the WestMED countries prioritized the previously identified topics⁴ and suggested specific actions to be developed by the MED-MSP-CoP. The result of this consultation can be found in the annex at the end of this ToRs document and remain open as an inventory of possible topics to be addressed in the future by the MED-MSP-CoP.

The CoP aims at addressing topics of common interest relating to the sustainable development of maritime sectors and the ecosystem-based approach to planning and management of the sea space, recognising the strict interconnections between the two. Keeping this interconnection in mind, some specific topics were selected as a priority and organised into two major blocks for operational reasons:

- To examine MSP contribution for planning, establishing and managing MPAs to protect natural capital as well as for ensuring Ecosystem Based Management/Approach (EBM or EBA) to recover the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the seas, in line with the objectives and targets set by the Barcelona Convention, the UfM Ministerial on Environment and Climate Change, the EU Strategy on biodiversity, the international

³ Outputs from the MSPMED Pan-Western Mediterranean Workshop hold in Tunis on the 26th-28th September, 2022 are included in the full report of the event.

⁴ The Western Mediterranean Roadmap on Marine Spatial Planning and Sustainable Blue Economy of MSPglobal was reviewed for this purpose

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Potential actions to be developed through this topic could include studies, and assessments, for example regarding: restoration, connectivity, marine green infrastructure, how MSP can be a useful tool to plan and manage MPAs and ensure coherence in planning; how MSP can support multi-use approach in MPAs, etc.

- To support the implementation of the EC sustainable Blue Economy Strategy (EC COM (2021)240 final) and of the UfM Ministerial declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy⁵, with a selection of sectors or sub-topics for which there is a shared interest (linking to the Technical Groups of the WestMed initiative and to the TEG on data for MSP), as for example: green shipping, sustainable aquaculture, inclusion and promotion of the multi-use of the marine space to reduce conflicts and develop synergies between sectors, etc.

Topics of discussion remain open for suggestions from the experts involved in the MED-MSP-CoP and experts consulted in related activities. Their more precise definition will inform and address the yearly work plan.

6. Preparatory work process

The preparatory work consisted in several online and face to face meetings (major ones are summed-up in Figure 2) and, till now, have resulted in the development of this ToRs and the linked action plan with one-year work perspective/time-line as well as in the establishment of the Coordination Team of the MED-MSP-CoP.

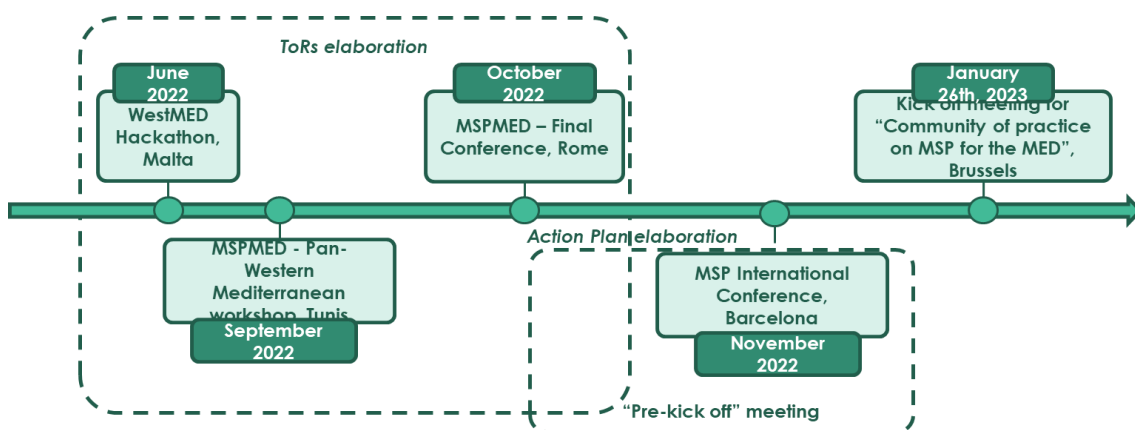


Figure 2. Preparatory work timeline

During the first year, it is expected that the MSP-MED-CoP will meet 4 times, whenever possible in presence, as better defined in the work plan. One on presence meeting will be supported by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism.

⁵ <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf>



7. Communication and dissemination

The MED-MSP-CoP will regularly inform the WestMED Steering Committee and its observers (UfM, UNESCO – IOC, UNEP-MAP, EUSAIR, etc.) on the progress achieved and will be supported by the WestMED Assistance Mechanism. Ad-hoc collaboration of the WestMED Assistance Mechanism with the MSP Assistance Mechanism might be envisaged, in the context of the latter's tasks to support MSP development and cooperation in the Mediterranean Sea basin. At the same time, experts involved could use and communicate the outcomes of the group to their ongoing activities/projects for further awareness.

Annex: The following table shows the results from the discussions with actors of the WestMED countries regarding possible topics of discussion and specific actions to be developed by the MSP-CoP during the MSPMED Pan-western Mediterranean workshop held in Tunis (September 2022).

Topic	Challenges and needs	Actions
<p>Sustainable Blue Economy with a selection of sectors – supporting the ongoing work of the Technical Groups of the WestMED Assistance Mechanism (AM) (i.e., green shipping and aquaculture).</p>	<p>A socio-economic view is needed. Sectors have to be considered in light of countries’ priorities.</p> <p>Regional dialogue and bilateral meetings are needed.</p> <p>Capitalizing on the output of WestMED initiatives and clusters. Important: data and knowledge gaps especially EU/non-EU countries.</p> <p><i>Specific needs:</i> Marine biotechnology and green transport in Tunisia, aquaculture in Morocco.</p>	<p>Setting specific thematic group or sub-group for strategic issues (e.g., energy):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ offshore renewable energies (OWE): need to have a common approach for the data regarding OWE and sharing the methods to define the good areas. ○ aquaculture zoning: Med countries to share their zones for aquaculture and know-how. ○ safety and security for green harbour/green shipping in the frame of transport. ○ sustainable coastal and marine tourism: including marinas, small ports. ○ Sustainable coastal urban settlements and issues for residential.
<p>MSP as a tool for defining, establishing, monitoring and managing MPAs.</p>	<p>The definition of protected areas differs from country to country. Need to use “protected areas” in a broader perspective, not limited to the national definition but also to Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>Need to consider other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM) as fisheries restricted areas (FRAs), or the Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA), into MSP.</p> <p>MSP plan has to promote MPAs and provide framework, however, MPA is not the first or the only priority of MSP.</p> <p>MSP is important to have a picture of the interactions between the different activities.</p>	<p>Maintain and continue the collaboration and dialogue with experts as demonstrated within the pilot/case study “Gulf of Lions” regarding underwater noise and Cetacean Expert groups.</p> <p><i>Sub-action:</i> MSP and underwater noise.</p> <p>Integrate multi-vision in the MSP-MPA process.</p> <p>Design a multilateral workshop to involve all institutions dealing with MPA (UNEP/Map/Barcelona Convention system including its regional activity centres like PlanBleu, PAP-RAC or SPA/RAC; MedPAN, etc.) at a regional level.</p> <p>The CoP should work/study the possibility of transboundary MPA in a pilot area.</p>



<p>Multi-use</p>	<p>The case-by case approach is preferred for multiuse.</p> <p>To find multi-use according to the context and the scale of each country and waters, always involving the private sector.</p> <p>Multi-use should also include environmental protection, human activity, preservation of cultural heritage.</p> <p>One important issue will be data and knowledge gaps, especially EU/non-EU countries.</p>	<p>The action could involve the sharing of practices (i.e., Netherlands: how to combine an area of renewable energies with protected area? fisheries and eco-tourism, aquaculture and energy).</p> <p>Identify the multiuse practices in the WestMED, considering the different cycle of MSP, scales and priorities of the country in order to adopt the multiuse approach in a specific area.</p> <p>Need to highlight the compatibility of Offshore Wind Energy (OWE) with other activities.</p>
<p>EBA in MSP: restoration, connectivity and marine green infrastructure</p>	<p>Restoration is a long-term process and shall not be confused with protection, that comes first. In fact, in the southern shore MPAs protection is still very urgent and a priority.</p> <p>Also, restoration is not always evident; results take time to become visible. It is also important to include elements for improved connectivity in the plan (i.e. MGI).</p> <p>There still a lack of practice on nature restoration at sea, therefore the action here should be scientific oriented.</p> <p>Restoration is a topic that is just beginning and it would be a good opportunity to have both North and South of Med area thinking around the same table with an equal level of knowledge. It is important to pass from restoration as a concept to an operational tool.</p> <p>Ecosystem should be mapped at the level of the Mediterranean basin and not just within water under national jurisdiction in order to have a good continuity of the knowledge regarding them. The same for marine litter, pollution.</p> <p>This priority is really linked with the previous one of MSP and MPAs. (For EU) How we link and translate the information of MSFD into MSP.</p>	<p>Sharing practices regarding restoration methodologies.</p> <p>Collection and harmonization of data regarding ecosystems at the sea basin scale.</p> <p>Which tools and how should be implemented to achieve an EBA? Share experiences at a technical approach to find solutions to the problems we are having in a technical way.</p>



Other topics proposed		
Topic	Challenges and needs	Actions
General public/Blue Economy sectors engagement	<p>Strategies for improving stakeholder engagement to mobilize the data and information from the sector, strengthening bonds with private actors. This is highly important as some private actors treasure important data to apply EBA-MSP. Sharing stakeholder engagement strategies can be helpful.</p> <p>Also, citizens need to be more aware, there is a lack of representation in general media. An important issue here is how to effectively involve stakeholders when there is lack of resources (human and economic).</p>	<p>Design of exchanges event with governance, industry and research actors. For this, clusters might be of help. Also, many countries need to enlarge the clusters and invite more private actors. The sharing of experiences, as the Moroccan one, can be of interest.</p>
MSP and landscape and cultural heritage protection.	<p>It could be interesting to have a common framework for all Mediterranean and to share ideas on how to protect and valorise better those sites.</p>	
MSP and climate change		
MSP and underwater noise	<p>(proposed as sub-action of MSP and MPAs).</p>	



From a one of the round tables composed by representatives of non-EU countries, the following additional needs and possible actions were highlighted:

Specific needs (possibly) for non-EU	Actions
<p>Regarding MSP:</p> <p>Need of an institutional framework for MSP and a model to follow also for non-EU countries.</p>	<p>Analysis of the experience of neighbouring countries and sharing of good practices, i.e. regarding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Definition of the needed legislative framework for MSP2. Methodological framework for the collection, harmonization and validation of data and their translation into usable knowledge.3. Methodology to involve all the stakeholders and to properly consult them4. MSP approaches applied in other countries.5. Criteria for coexistence of uses.
<p>Regarding MPAs:</p> <p>Important to identify what should be protected.</p> <p>There is a lack of data and of criteria for MPA definition.</p>	<p>Development of research programs to get the data needed for the design of MPAs.</p> <p>Share of methodologies regarding data to be collected</p>