

RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

of the GEF Adriatic project

GEF Adriatic promotes the adoption of an ecosystem approach in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Adriatic sub-region of the Mediterranean Sea. Its aim is to work and mobilize others to make the Adriatic Sea cleaner, healthier and safer.



■ Summary

GEF Adriatic is the first project within the UNEP/MAP system to have demonstrated the integration of an ecosystem approach in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). Using this approach, conservation measures, remediation initiatives and development activities in marine areas can be carried out adhering to a coherent strategy. This helps planners and policy makers to support a sustainable blue economy and, at the same time, improve the well-being of the marine environment towards the achievement of the Good Environmental Status (GES).

GEF Adriatic is also the first project within the UNEP/MAP system to have demonstrated how to apply an ecosystem approach in managing marine resources of the Adriatic Sea, in a fully integrated manner.

The project is a pioneer in the full application of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP): from scientific research and data management, through integrated assessments and policy frameworks for the integrated monitoring, to the proposal of joint actions needed to achieve and sustain GES.

■ Contribution to GEF targets

The first ever marine spatial plan for the entire marine area of Montenegro was developed as part of the project. The plan is based on the ecosystem approach and it addresses how to maintain and improve biodiversity as well as ecosystem goods and services in 247,000 ha of marine areas.

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG14: Conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



- **Name:** Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning - GEF Adriatic
- **Timeline:** 2018-2021
- **Scope:** National and sub-regional
- **Countries:** Albania, Montenegro
- **Grant:** \$1.8 million
- **Co-finance:** \$12.01 million
- **Implementing agency:** UNEP
- **Executing agency:** UNEP/MAP, with its Regional Activity Centres PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC
- **National partners:** Ministry of Tourism and Environment and National Agency for Protected Areas (Albania), Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (Montenegro)
- **Project website:** www.adriatic.eco

■ Environmental and Policy Implications

■ Setting up regulatory frameworks and shared approaches towards reaching Good Environmental Status (GES) of marine and coastal areas

The project bolstered national efforts to adopt the ecosystem approach in the Adriatic sub-region of the Mediterranean, through the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast (IMAP) within the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system. This harmonized regional framework allows UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention to evaluate the well-being of ecosystems in the Mediterranean, through eleven Ecological Objectives which address key elements of the marine and coastal environment. IMAPs are being embedded into national governance systems of Albania and Montenegro, in a coherent manner as part of the project through the following: the

Detail from the cover of the UNEP/MAP publication (2016) summarizing the key IMAP requirements.



setting up of an integrated marine and coastal monitoring system, undertaking marine surveys based on it, storing and assessing data and undertaking assessments towards good environmental status. This facilitates comprehensive consideration of all elements of the marine system, in their interactions and complexity, when developing marine-related policies.

The project resulted in:

The first ever national Integrated Monitoring Programmes for marine and coastal environment prepared for Albania and Montenegro, fully based on Barcelona Convention's EcAp/IMAP.

The first ever integrated assessments of the marine and coastal environment status in Albania and Montenegro with policy recommendations, fully based on Barcelona Convention's EcAp/IMAP.

Increased knowledge of the state and pressures of marine and coastal environments in Albania and Montenegro, especially in areas where marine surveys were carried out (Patok Rodoni Bay, in Albania, and Montenegrin marine waters).

Innovative data storage, representation and reporting systems implemented for Albania and Montenegro, following the standards of the IMAP Info System.

■ Preserving globally important biodiversity

To restrain growing human pressures, the marine environment requires increasingly careful and well-coordinated management. However, an integrated approach is primarily dependent on data collection: this is why GEF Adriatic conducted marine surveys in Albania (with Patok Rodoni as a pilot site) and Montenegro (along all the coastline and in offshore areas). These surveys provided a better understanding of the status of biodiversity and physicochemical parameters such as temperature, salinity, transparency, as well as the level of different pollutants, including marine litter. Within the study areas, hot spots, threats and vulnerable areas were identified. Particularly important findings were observed in Montenegro where the largest Mediterranean colonies of *Savalia savaglia* (coralligenous)

Savalia savaglia in Boka Kotorska Bay, Montenegro. Photo by Egidio Trainito.



were recorded in Boka Kotorska Bay. Also, in the same area *Spinimuricea klavereni* (coralligenous) was observed for the very first time in the Adriatic Sea, which confirms the particular environmental conditions of the Boka Kotorska Bay but also its vulnerability to various threats. These findings resulted in formal government conservation of two marine sites in Montenegro.

The project resulted in:

A Government decision that made 3 ha of marine area in Dražin Vrt and Sopot under preliminary protection based on the outstanding quality of these environments.

At least 8% of the total marine area of Montenegro were designated for conservation, i.e. at least 13% of both coastal and marine areas considered together. This exceeds the 2021 national target value by more than 30%.

Results and findings of the marine survey in Patok-Rodoni to be used for future actions towards protection of the marine and coastal area from Cape Rodoni to Patoku lagoon, where an MPA is envisaged.

■ Applying the ecosystem approach for marine spatial planning

GEF Adriatic is based on a remarkable approach which uses the results of an IMAP related ecosystem approach to develop methodologies and scientific tools and provide a comprehensive management vision of the marine ecosystem ensuring GES. To demonstrate this approach, the project undertook a series of environmental effect assessments to identify not only the most fragile and threatened marine areas in Montenegro, but also the most valuable ones. Through Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), protection and remediation measures were proposed, along with development opportunities in areas that showed promise for

strengthening a sustainable blue economy. The resulting integrated plan ensures that the capacity of marine ecosystems to respond to human induced changes is not compromised thus contributing to the achievement of GES. This was the first time such an approach was implemented within the framework of a UNEP/MAP system. The approach was applied in Montenegro, but it can be used as a model to be replicated in other Adriatic and Mediterranean countries.



The project resulted in:

The first ever marine spatial plan for Montenegro, encompassing 247,000 ha of productive seascape, addressing conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment.

New methodological approaches for the harmonised implementation of MSP in the Adriatic region, also integrating ecosystem approach.

■ Strengthening national capacities for improving the status of the marine and coastal environment

In order to build a sustainable future for the region, both for the marine environment and for those who directly depend on its resources, it's important to manage marine activities collaboratively, across borders and sectors, at a scale that encompasses the entire Adriatic. Therefore, GEF Adriatic

is built on collaboration, capacity building and awareness raising; working with diverse stakeholders to draft future policies, mobilise funding opportunities, launch new initiatives and share best practices.



The project resulted in:

More than 50 workshops, 14 awareness events and public conferences.

The involvement of more than 80 national and international experts and 800 stakeholders.

The preparation of more than 70 reports.

■ Facilitating sub-regional cooperation, a key for GEF in the Adriatic

Environmental problems have no national borders, especially in the sea. Many of the issues addressed by the GEF Adriatic project are transboundary, such as non-indigenous species, hydrographic conditions, marine litter etc., and require sub-regional cooperation. Aiming to facilitate this process between scientists, public authorities, and stakeholders and reach efficient management and protection of the whole Adriatic basin, the project prepared harmonised policy documents, approaches and proposed measures for the two beneficiary Adriatic countries as well as joint capacity building programmes.

■ Facilitating EU accession and implementation of the Barcelona Convention process

Many of the initiatives conducted as part of GEF Adriatic work towards the fulfillment of obligations of pre-accession to the European Union, specifically the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive. These initiatives include the preparation of national integrated monitoring programmes, the assessments of GES along with implementation measures, and the draft MSP for Montenegro. Moreover, enacting IMAP facilitates implementation of specific policies agreed on under the Barcelona Convention system. The implementation of ICZM along with MSP and the application of the ecosystem approach in Albania and Montenegro will improve management of coastal and marine areas while providing a structured, multi-stakeholder approach to mitigate the growing pressures on coastal and marine resources.



■ The project in a nutshell

GEF Adriatic (Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning) is a sub-regional project carried out in Albania and Montenegro between 2018 and 2021.

It aims at restoring the ecological balance of the Adriatic Sea through the implementation of the ecosystem approach and the improvement of marine management capacity with Marine Spatial Planning as a viable tool. The project provides technical assistance to Albania and Montenegro by:

- increasing knowledge that will help to achieve joint assessment, protection and sustainable use of marine areas;
- strengthening national capacity for sub-regional marine management through a targeted demonstration of successful tools and practices;
- sharing knowledge and experience to secure the successful engagement of stakeholders.

GEF Adriatic brings an innovative hands-on approach to the application of the ecosystem approach by fostering:

- collaboration among diverse international, regional and national actors;
- integration in addressing several Ecological Objectives under IMAP;
- innovation, since it supports non-EU countries in conducting GES assessments, preparing and implementing integrated monitoring programmes and in introducing a novel methodological approach for MSP based on the ecosystem approach;
- knowledge acquisition at national level, including through capacity building;
- synergy; as resulting outputs and methodologies are used to implement other MSP and IMAP initiatives as well as IMAP/MPA and phase III of EcAp-MED.

Aplysina aerophoba
and *Aplysina cavernicola* in Boka
Kotorska,
Montenegro.
Photo by Egidio
Trainito.



Patok Rodoni bay,
Albania. Photo by
Simone Modugno,
SPA/RAC.



Aerial view of
Kotor and its bay,
Montenegro.
Photo by Faruk
Kaymak.



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- Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism (Montenegro)

and:

- Centre for Ecotoxicological Research (Montenegro)
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- Institute for Hydrometeorology and Seismology (Montenegro)
- Institute of Marine Biology (Montenegro)
- Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (Albania)
- Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries (Croatia)
- Nature and Environment Protection Agency (Montenegro)
- National Environment Agency (Albania)
- Public Enterprise Morsko Dobro (Montenegro)
- Programme for the Assessment and Control of Marine Pollution in the Mediterranean (MED POL)

...and all the other organisations, experts and volunteers that supported our initiative.

Visit adriatic.eco to read all the outputs of the project

#cleanier #healthier #safer #Adriatic #BarcelonaConvention

