



UN Environment Programme
Mediterranean Action Plan
Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre

First meeting of the Working Group for MSP on updating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

Marseille, 23 October 2024

Meeting report

The first meeting of the Working Group for MSP on updating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) was held on 23 October 2024 at the Plan Bleu premises in Tour la Marseillaise. The meeting gathered 15 participants from France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Türkiye, AFED, DG MARE European Commission and the Maritime Spatial Planning Assistance Mechanism, MedCities, and UNEP/MAP (CU, PAP/RAC, and Plan Bleu).

Plan Bleu, as the host, welcomed the participants, and recalled its role on the MSSD revision mainly around the quantitative evaluation through the MSSD indicators dashboard that highlight the evolution of the state of the environment over the period 2016-2024. Plan Bleu also leads the working group on ocean economy/sustainable finance, one of the three working groups within the frame of the MSSD revision. Participants then briefly introduced their roles and highlighted the importance of MSP for their respective countries or organizations. The MSP process varied across the represented countries: some are currently focused on preparing ICZM strategies and legislation, while others are advancing through MSP preparatory stages or developing new-generation MSPs.

Following an overview of the MSSD's current status, key evaluation indicators, and the update process, participants shared their initial insights on integrating MSP into the updated Strategy. Key general comments included:

- **Incorporating Lessons Learned and Policy Developments:** The updated Strategy should reflect relevant lessons learned and recent global and regional policy and legislative frameworks, such as the MSP Directive and EU's MSP experiences from its implementation across Mediterranean countries supported by various EU funding mechanisms, and recent legislative progress in the EU, particularly concerning the EU Restoration Law, the review of the MSFD, and the forthcoming Oceans Pact. In addition, synergies among regional initiatives should be also foreseen and taken into consideration (e.g. with the Union for Mediterranean-UfM, WestMed Initiative, Maritime Spatial Planning Mediterranean Community of Practice-MSP MED CoP).
- **Leveraging Spatial Management Tools:** The new MSSD could promote a comprehensive set of spatial management tools under the Barcelona Convention to enhance conservation and sustainable resource use in the Mediterranean. The Strategy should encourage the adoption and integrated use of these tools to maximize synergies and harmonize their implementation at all levels.
- **Focus on Ecosystem Approach and Good Environmental Status (GES):** The Strategy should prioritize implementing the Ecosystem Approach in the Mediterranean, aiming to achieve and maintain GES through the coordinated and adaptive application of ICZM and MSP at both national and transboundary levels.
- **Importance of Fisheries:** Fisheries are essential to the Mediterranean region, necessitating specific reference to spawning grounds, vulnerable areas, and small-scale fisheries as vital economic drivers. The relevance of protected areas for fisheries management should also be emphasized, with explicit mention of the role of GFCM.
- **Clarity through Definitions:** Including definitions, such as those for coastal and marine areas, would be beneficial to ensure shared understanding.
- **Streamlining Indicators:** The Strategy should avoid excessive indicators. It is crucial that selected indicators are compatible with existing regional and national monitoring processes to prevent duplicative efforts.
- **Accessibility of Coastal Zones:** The Strategy could acknowledge that many coastal areas are inaccessible to the general public due to specific use regimes, and consider how MSP might address these accessibility issues.

- **MSP as a Protective Tool for Cities:** MSP can be presented as a protective tool for cities by addressing barriers in vertical planning and cooperation due to the jurisdiction over different parts of the sea and coast being dispersed across various levels of governance. The goal is to achieve integrated planning, aligning coastal and marine areas under a unified framework.

For the issues listed in Box 1 of the MSSD, participants emphasized the need to include:

- **Increasing Spatial Conflicts between Marine Activities:** Over recent decades, the use of maritime space has grown substantially, with further increases expected in coming years. While conflicts between maritime activities and biodiversity are addressed, conflicts among the activities themselves—such as those between offshore wind energy (OWE) and fisheries, or between cables and anchoring/OWE—are not. These conflicts present challenges to achieving truly sustainable development.
- **Land-Sea (and Sea-Land) Interactions (LSI):** Some LSI consequences, like marine pollution originating from inland sources or the linear urbanization of coastlines, are already partially covered in Box 1. However, many other important LSI issues are not yet included, such as
 - Changes in sediment dynamics due to water retention in river basins
 - Disruption of natural coastal conditions due to climate change impacts on the sea
 - Increased demand for inland infrastructure driven by certain maritime activities
 - Impacts of the sea landscape on residential or tourist uses of coastal areas
 - Coastal cultural heritage areas requiring enhanced protection of adjacent sea landscapes
 - Increased atmospheric pollution in coastal urban zones due to maritime activities

Including these LSI aspects is essential to create a more comprehensive approach to managing the interconnections between land and sea and addressing the full spectrum of spatial and environmental conflicts.

Comments on Objective 1:

- **Reflect the Ecosystem Approach in Introductory Text:** The introduction to Objective 1 could briefly but clearly articulate the interconnections among EcAp, ICZM, and MSP, encouraging Parties to develop management plans that enhance synergies among these frameworks.
- **Update the Conservation Target:** Amend the first target to state: *"By 2030, conserve at least 30 percent of coastal and marine areas, with 10 percent of these areas under strict protection, in line with national and international laws and based on the best available scientific knowledge."*
- **Incorporate a Nature Restoration Target:** Consider including an additional target focused on ecological restoration, beyond just fish stocks, to encompass broader ecosystem restoration efforts.
- **Expand MSP's Role in Objective 1:** Currently, MSP is referenced in a limited way; it should more fully emphasize MSP's purpose in promoting balanced and sustainable use of marine resources.
- **Broaden Focus Beyond Environment:** Objective 1 is primarily environmentally focused but should also address enablers of the blue economy, possibly expanding on these in other objectives. MSP should be framed as a tool to foster synergy between environmental and economic goals.

- **Revise Strategic Direction 1.1:** Update Strategic Direction 1.1 to include not only "implementation and compliance" but also the development of synergies among Barcelona Convention Protocols and other regional policies. Specifically, an action could be added for the adoption of national maritime spatial plans.
- **Reframe Strategic Direction 1.2:** Strategic Direction 1.2 should address broader uses of marine space, not limited to resource exploitation. This includes activities that utilize marine space without directly exploiting resources, such as navigation.
- **Address Coexistence of Maritime Uses:** Within Strategic Direction 1.2, include an action promoting coexistence of maritime sectors and uses, addressing the increasing spatial conflicts among maritime activities.
- **Foster Exchange of Good Practices:** Include an action to encourage sharing good practices around coexistence, conflict resolution, synergies, and multi-use, with suggested criteria for coexistence that could inform national MSPs or serve as guidance for countries developing their own criteria.
- **Align Strategic Direction 1.2 with EcAp Goals:** Shape Strategic Direction 1.2 and its actions to focus on achieving EcAp goals, incorporating relevant policies, frameworks, and management tools.
- **Consider Cumulative Impact Assessment:** Add activities that address cumulative impact assessments to evaluate and manage the combined effects of maritime activities.
- **Promote Data Integration and Sharing:** Develop activities exploring ways to establish common approaches for data integration and sharing, leveraging informal platforms for collaboration and information exchange. The Mediterranean Community of Practice could be instrumental for this purpose.
- **Support Ocean Literacy Initiatives:** Include activities to improve ocean literacy, from integrating ocean studies into formal school curricula to developing other educational and outreach programs.

Due to the cross-cutting nature of MSP, there is a valuable opportunity to mainstream it across all MSSD Objectives and relevant Strategic Directions. Objectives and Strategic Directions addressing areas like biodiversity conservation, fisheries, climate change, and renewable energy should emphasize the importance of considering these themes in the development of maritime spatial plans. This integrated approach could be strongly advocated in the explanatory text for each Objective or incorporated as specific actions within their Strategic Directions.

Comments on other Objectives:

- **Objective 5:** In Objective 5, MSP could focus on its **social and economic benefits** rather than environmental impacts. Consider adding actions to strengthen the connection between MSP and the blue economy, identifying specific synergies that promote sustainable economic growth.
- **Objective 4:** Emphasize "**climate-smart MSP**" by highlighting how the ocean offers significant opportunities for climate change mitigation, particularly through renewable energy exploitation. This concept could reinforce the role of MSP in supporting climate resilience and sustainability.
- **Strategic Direction 6.2:** Include an action to strengthen the role of regional and local governments in MSP, aligning with the objectives of the REGINA MSP project. MSP can create additional forums to address cross-cutting issues at multiple governance levels (local, subnational, national, regional, and international), fostering greater collaboration and coordinated action.

Meeting agenda

9.30 – 10.00	Opening, Welcome and Tour the Table
10.00 – 10.30	Introduction to the meeting: MSP and current Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 (MSSD) Discussion
10.30 – 11.00	Key issues, global and regional targets relevant for MSP in the Mediterranean Discussion
11.00 – 11.20	Café break
11.20 – 12.30	Objective 1 of the MSSD: Gaps and needs for Strategic directions, targets and related actions on regional and national level Discussion
12.30 – 13.00	Conclusions and next steps
13.00	Lunch

List of participants

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	NAME
EU	DG MARE European Commission	Ms Eleni Hatziyanni
	Maritime Spatial Planning Assistance Mechanism	Mr Athanasios Smanis
France	Ministry in charge of the Sea and Fisheries	Mr Pierre-Maxime Giora
		Mr Olivier DUFOURNEAUD
Greece	Ministry of Environment and Energy	Ms Elena Lalou
		Ms Anna Spyropoulou
Italy	Ministry of Environment and Energy Security	Mr Riccardo Piraccini
Spain	Ministry of ecological transition and demographic challenge	Ms Aurora Victoria Mesa Fraile
Türkiye	Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change	Ms. Tutku Karadoğan
		Ms. Özlem Örne
	MedCITIES (Municipality of Genoa)	Ms Stefania Manca
	University of Balamand (Lebanon)	Mr Manal Nader
	UNEP/MAP CU	Ms Patrizia Busolini
	UNEP/MAP PAP/RAC	Ms Marina Markovic
	UNEP/MAP Plan Bleu	Mr Antoine Laffite