



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

MPA NETWORKS project

Support MPA effectiveness

through strong and connected networks in the Mediterranean

Project partners:



<https://mpa-networks.interreg-med.eu>

Priority Axis 3: Natural and cultural resources - Objective 3.2: Biodiversity protection

Output.5.1	Joint Governance Plan on Mobile Species
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WP5 – 1 | Output - Joint Governance Plan on Mobile Species

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About the MPA NETWORKS project

Project partners:



MPA NETWORKS aims to promote the dynamics of cooperation between MPA managers at all levels in the Mediterranean. The MPA NETWORKS project has focused on providing sustainable solutions to challenges that require an approach that goes beyond the boundaries of MPAs. These challenges include the global issue of management effectiveness, and more specifically the management of small-scale fisheries in MPAs, the conservation of mobile species, and the development of sustainable financing mechanisms for MPAs. The project has also helped to strengthen networks of MPA managers at national, sub-regional and Mediterranean levels and to ensure capacity building and scaling up of good solutions and policy recommendations. [Map of location of the partners](#)

Context

Some of the most prominent marine protected vertebrates in the Mediterranean Sea, such as cetaceans, elasmobranchs, marine birds and marine turtles, are highly mobile species. They are characterized by their large home ranges and long migrations. These species have indeed improved their survival and reproductive success by moving between different habitats, travelling distances. Many of them are top predators that play an important role in marine ecosystems and are considered “marine focal species”. Their status acts thus as important indicators of marine ecosystems, their state reflecting oceanographic processes and anthropogenic pressures.

Travelling through territorial waters, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJs), mobile species are going, during their life cycle, across varied, changing legislation and management frameworks. These migratory movements geographically link locations and stressors in distant ecosystems. This highlights the challenge of their conservation that requires coordinated actions at different scales by many nations, international and regional organizations, and stakeholders. Mobile species’ conservation requires it to be designed and implemented over a very large geographical area. This stresses the importance of capturing ecological connectivity between and beyond the MPA borders and the national boundaries. In this regard, MPAs and networks of MPAs managers play unarguably a key role. They protect important habitats of mobile species and, facilitate the implementation of harmonized protocols. But to embrace the geographical

scale¹ relevant to the ecology of these species, additional measures beyond the spatial boundaries of MPAs should be used. As an example, over recent years, reports on the mortality of Mediterranean monk seals due to fisheries are scarce, following the implementation of protection policies such as MPAs and closure of fisheries in those areas where monk seals occur. This has significantly helped to reduce the incidence of interactions with fisheries. Signs of population recovery, albeit minimal, have been recognized (Carpentieri et al., 2021).

Throughout their full life and seasonal cycles, mobile species encounter indeed different pressures and numerous anthropogenic threats: by-catch, pollution (oil spills, plastics, underwater noise, light pollution), ship-strikes, deliberate killing or accidental killing. The Mediterranean has the highest marine turtle threat scores in the world (Lewison et al., 2014); foraging grounds tend to be largely dispersed up to 2,000 km from the breeding sites, making them vulnerable to by-catch, ship-strikes, intentional killing, pollution and coastal development. Changes in marine food-webs are registered throughout; underwater noise impacts the behavior of species, such as feeding and mating, which leads to population declines; seismic surveys by many Mediterranean coastal nations present a 10-fold increase since 2005 (Magglio et al., 2016), and the incidence of ship strikes has neither decreased. Marine birds also travel long distances and some endemic species, such as the Balearic Shearwater (*Puffinus mauretanicus*) may become extinct due to by-catch. The European Union countries can apply measures through the process detailed under Article 11 of the Common Fisheries Policy – specifically for measures related to marine protected areas (MPAs). However, non- European Union countries have yet proposed joint measures to tackle seabird bycatch in their MPAs through this process. In general, based on the recent publications, Seabird bycatch has mainly been recorded from the western Mediterranean and in longline fisheries. Bottom trawlers, on the other hand, have the greatest impact on marine turtles, especially in the northern Adriatic Sea, Tunisia, Egypt and Turkey. The vessel groups most implicated in elasmobranch bycatch vary by subregion, with longliners accounting for nearly 80 percent of incidental captures in the central Mediterranean, for example, while pelagic trawlers are responsible for an even greater majority of incidental captures in the neighbouring Adriatic Sea. Historically, marine mammals were often caught in large-mesh driftnets, but the incidental capture of these species has declined since bans on driftnets were put in place in the late 1990s (Carpentieri et al., 2021). Mobile species conservation needs an ecosystem and threat-based approach that call for a combination of area-based conservation tools and measures from the main sectors using the sea (fisheries, shipping, tourism, oil and gas; etc.). In this regard, the Post- 2020 Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Roadmap (MPA Forum 2021) calls to “Boost biodiversity conservation beyond MPAs through other sectoral and spatial tools including in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJs), Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs), Fisheries Restricted Areas (FRAs) and Other Effective Area- Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)” (Recommendation 6.4).

¹ ACCOBAMS, 2021. Conserving Whales, Dolphins and Porpoises in the Mediterranean Sea: an ACCOBAMS status report, (2021). By: Notarbartolo di Sciara G., Tonay A.M. Ed. ACCOBAMS, 160 pp.

Pilot actions feedback

Two pilot activities on mobile species (see annex 1) were implemented in Landscape Park Strunjan and Torre Guaceto MPA as part of the MPA NETWORKS project (action of NMPZ was cancelled). The two pilot actions also had a fisheries component around which most of the recommendations are focused. Besides cross-cutting recommendations, that apply to any monitoring activity, such as the need for staff trained in the methodologies available to implement long-term monitoring, the more specific feedback on the mobile species component of the two pilot actions is the following:

- In response to the major constraint represented by the staff and nautical means to be mobilised for long-term cetacean monitoring, Strunjan gives an interesting account of the **interest of an approach combining on-board observations and acoustic monitoring**, which has made it possible to collect a large amount of useful data on the presence and distribution of species in the MPA in a short time.
- **It would be interesting to know if and how data collected on mobile species was used to support the extension of the MPA boundary to the adjacent N200 site**, which in the case of Strunjan as well as Torre Guaceto was an objective of the pilot action.
- There is a **recommendation to collaborate on mobile species monitoring with scientific NGOs or research institutes** but no particular feedback on the limitations and enabling conditions of such partnerships.

MedPAN's Working Group feedback

MedPAN, the network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Area managers, organised an online meeting of its Mediterranean MPA managers' Mobile Species Working Group (WG) on 8 March 2022. This meeting was organised to review the draft of a Policy Paper being developed for the MedPAN network within the framework of the MPA NETWORK project.

The WG underlined the following points:

- Mobile species imply collaboration at a wider scale to cover all the important areas for these species. They exacerbate the importance of cooperation and connection between MPAs and collaboration with other stakeholders;
- Connectivity is a masterword for mobile species. It is fundamental to establish ecological corridors and to combine conservation efforts through MPAs and OECMs in a transectorial approach. Municipalities have as well a role to play for mobile species;
- International agreements on marine conservation between countries at sub-regional scale are important in addition to the existing national and regional efforts. To that end identification, prioritisation of important areas for mobile species and their protection should be pursued. Data and maps have been actually elaborated and are available to support these important actions. This is strategically relevant to support the implementation of the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the EU

Biodiversity strategy targets “ 30% of the sea should be protected in the EU and 10% of EU sea – should be strictly protected” and to support the implementation of the EUSAIR strategy;

- Mobile species monitoring is demanding time and resource wise. Good collaboration with scientific organisations is thus an important enabling condition with a win-win spirit between MPAs and partner(s). To that end it is critical to have a shared understanding of the needs of the MPA and to formalise the collaboration with an MoU or even a contract;
- Acoustic monitoring is a good complementary tool to be combined with a traditional approach. It can help confirming the presence of marine mammals when traditional methods are not successful or not possible and provide as well information on underwater noise pollution;
- It is useful to remember the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP) that is fully integrated into the MAP and Barcelona Convention framework.

MedPAN’s Policy Paper

Mediterranean recommendations to support policy-making have been developed through a unique policy paper (coordinated by MedPAN with inputs from PPs and Associated Partners):

- On the project key topics with contribution from thematic working groups.
- On MPA management effectiveness needs and networks of MPA managers added value thanks to joint contribution from all national/sub-regional networks and coordination by MedPAN.
- The project’s recommendations are also based on the 2020 evaluation of the Mediterranean MPA situation (2020 Mediterranean MPA Status Report) and the post-2020 Mediterranean MPA Forum Roadmap.
- Elements related to climate change come from the MPA-Engage project.

The Policy paper highlights 17 key recommendations of the Mediterranean MPA community on the key topic of Mobile Species and conveys messages to be integrated into local, national, European, sub-regional, Mediterranean and International policies.

At the national & local level

1 Identify priorities and needs for Mediterranean mobile species, map and protect their critical habitats and identify the hot spot negative interaction areas to comply with the Barcelona Convention regional Action Plans (on marine turtles, marine and coastal birds, Mediterranean monk seal, cartilaginous fishes and cetaceans), and ACCOBAMS and GFCM/FAO recommendations.

2 For EU countries, to comply also with the Natura 2000 framework and further designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for the protected mobile species and ensure consistency of legal frameworks to avoid conflicting activities in the Natura 2000 sites.

- 3** Combine area-based measures including MPAs, ecological corridors, other effective conservation measures and mitigation sectoral measures in a trans-sectoral approach through marine spatial planning.
- 4** Establish national networks of stranding, rescue, and rehabilitation centres, both for cetaceans and marine turtles.
- 5** Submit national (or transboundary) mobile species corridors, having appropriate legal status, and protection and management measures, for inclusion in the Barcelona Convention's IList of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List).
- 6** Welcome and promote code of conduct initiatives on data sharing on mobile species and contribute to harmonized monitoring protocols.

At the Mediterranean level

- 7** Stress the need to go beyond bilateral MoUs and strengthen cooperation and synergy in defining joint actions among all relevant regional institutions on mobile species.
- 8** Support the joint cooperation strategy on spatial-based protection and management measures for marine biodiversity among the secretariats of ACCOBAMS, GFCM, IUCN-MED and AND UNEP/MAP that aims at bolstering effective regional cooperation and embody a strategic alliance at the regional level.
- 9** Foster at the sub-regional and regional levels, identification and mapping efforts with combined maps of all mobile species important areas (Important Bird Areas (IBAs), Important Marine Mammals Areas (IMMAs), Important Marine Turtles Areas (IMTAs), ACCOBAMS Cetacean Critical Habitat (CCH) and encourage/support designation of protection /management measures for those areas.
- 10** Acknowledge the need for and induce the adoption of new agreements on marine mammals conservation between countries at the sub-regional scale, like the Pelagos Sanctuary agreement, to catalyze and support the national and regional efforts in the implementation of the post- 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, and the EU Biodiversity strategy 30x30 targets ("30% of the sea should be protected in the EU and the 10% strict protection target for the EU) sea – should be strictly protected" and more particularly the EUSAIR strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region.
- 11** Pursue capacity-building efforts and promote the implementation of harmonised monitoring protocols that are cost-efficient, cost-effective and easy to implement.
- 12** Promote and organise periodic regional surveys.
- 13** Support transnational experience sharing on mobile species conservation involving different actors (MPAs, municipalities, regions, State services, scientists, NGOs, fishers, sailors, economic actors) such as the one of the Pelagos area and using networks of MPA managers (MedPAN and its mobile species working group, national and sub-regional networks).
- 14** Support through the MedPAN Fisheries working group the development of guidelines to adapt or ban the use of fishing gears that are the most harmful to sharks

and rays, marine turtles, seabirds, and cetaceans, in support to countries and relevant regional and intergovernmental organizations working on the subject, to develop a mechanism for by-catch mitigation strategies.

At the international level

14 Pursue exchanges and twinning between MPAs on mobile species with the support of MPA networks.

15 Advocate for transnational corridors within and beyond the Mediterranean Sea and long-distance twinning programmes such as in the transatlantic to protect marine mobile species' long migratory paths or superhighways.

16 Support tracking of large-scale movements of mobile species to mitigate threats with sectoral measures over superhighways.

17 Support the adoption of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Dissemination of key lessons learned and recommendations

Lessons learned and recommendations have been adapted and promoted at different levels and this will continue beyond the end of the MPA NETWORK project:

- By each PP at both national and local levels (7 countries). At local and national level, each partner will develop advocacy material (and translate it into national language if needed) and organize events to disseminate those recommendations.
- With the support of the Associated Partners (APs) for integration in territorial strategies (national fisheries policies, local maritime spatial planning etc.).
- With support from national and sub-regional networks to target national and sub-regional levels,
- They will also be integrated into European, Mediterranean and international strategies (GFCM, Union for the Mediterranean, Barcelona Convention post 2020 strategic documents for MPAs and SAP-BIO, EU new programming period, CBD post 2020) thanks to joint contribution from MedPAN, APs, key Mediterranean partners (including partners from MBPC and MPA-Engage projects), and other networks beyond the Med.
- They will be promoted during key Mediterranean and international events (IUCN WCC in 2021, IMPAC 5 in 2022, CBD COP and SBSTTA in 2021 and 2022, UN SDG14 Ocean Conference in 2022, Monaco Blue Initiative, Barcelona Convention COP...)

Summary table of MPA NETWORKS dissemination activities between January 2022 and June 2022

DATE OF EVENT (2022)	LOCATION (City, Country)	EVENT TITLE	ORGANISED BY	SCALE OF THE EVENT	SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT
18 January	Online	Mediterranean Wetlands and MPAs Governance	MBPC-Tune UP	Regional	Exchanges on Mediterranean Wetlands and MPAs Governance experiences from TUNE UP and the MBPC – capitalizing best practices and building a stronger network
4 March	Online	experiences from TUNE UP and the MBPC – capitalizing	Strunjan NP	Regional	Presentation to EUSAIR of MPA NETWORKS project activities and results
23 March	La Rochelle	Life EU Platform	Life Marha project, the European Climate, Environment and Infrastructure Executive Agency and NEEMO EEIG	International	The goal of this gathering was to share local or national experiences regarding the implementation of strong protection zones in European Marine Protected Areas in view of fulfilling the objectives of 10% of strict protection at sea by 2030 set forth in the EU biodiversity strategy adopted by the European Commission in May 2020
29 March	Online	Roundtable on “National Parks in the Adriatic Ionian region as a driver of	EUSAIR	Regional	Debate on EU regional policies and strategies on PA

		sustainable development"			
21 April	Strunjan	Slovenian Capitalisation event	Strunjan NP	National	National Capitalisation event
21 April	Cala Rajada - Mallorca	Joint commissions of marine fishing reserve	Marilles	Local	Local capitalisation of MPA NETWORKS in Spain
22 April	Andratx - Mallorca	Joint commissions of marine fishing reserve	Marilles	Local	Local capitalisation of MPA NETWORKS in Spain
22 avril	Torre del Cerrano	Project Networking: Interreg Italy-Croatia CASCADE, NET4mPLASTIC Interreg Mediterranean MPA NETWORKS, LIFE DELFI, CALLIOPE	Torre del Cerrano	Local	Exchange of lessons learned and recommendations from several projects
28 avril	Vlora, Albania & online	Local event Interreg mpa networks Albania	INCA	Local	The Institute for Nature Conservation in Albania (INCA) in cooperation with RAPA Vlorë, organized an informative local meeting on the topic "MPAForum and post -2020 Roadmap for MPAs in the Mediterranean: Post-2020 challenges and

					solutions”.
12 May	Online	European Marine cooperation in the Mediterranean region and beyond	MedPAN & Ocean Governance	International	1st event of a series of 3 on MPA networks
14 May	Online	La pesca professionale nell'AMP Portofino	Portofino MPA	Local	Web Conference focused on one of the topic of the project (small scale fishery)
15 May	Online	joint commissions of marine fishing reserves	Marilles	National	Directed to MPA Managers, discussion of the MPANetworks Policy paper
31st May - 1st June	Dubrovnik, Croatia	Transboundary governance in the South Adriatic Ionian Straight Ecologically or Biologically Significant Area (SAIS-EBSA) and contiguous regions: from the identification of an area to biodiversity conservation'	MBPC	Regional	The workshop will be the first official event of the SAIS-EBSA Conservation Community (SECC).

1&2 June	Zagreb, Croatia	MPA networks capitalisation Days in Croatia	Brijuni NP	Regional	National and Adriatic capitalisation event of MPA NETWORKS
3 - 4th of June	Online	Green week event	MedPAN	International	EU Green week
22 June	Port-Cros & online	Meeting of the economic, social and cultural council	Port-Cros	Local	Meeting of the economic, social and cultural council to present the main results of the MPA Networks project
23 June	Tirana, Albania & online	"Toward a sustainable marine environment"	INCA	National	A National hybrid round table meeting with the theme "Toward a sustainable marine environment" was organized in two days, combined in a national meeting held in Tirana on 23/06/2022 and a field trip organized on 25/06/2022 in the MPA of Sazan Karaburun, Vlore. This event marked in the meantime the closing of the project "MPA Networks" in Albania.
27th June - 1st July	Lisbon, Portugal	UN Ocean Governance	UN	International	UN SDG 14 conference

In addition, a Mediterranean capitalisation workshop was organized as a hybrid event where Mediterranean Marine Protected Area practitioners discussed and brought important recommendations to the attention of policy makers. Mid June in Spain, from Palma de Mallorca, to Barcelona and Roses, Marine Protected Area (MPA) practitioners and policy makers discussed the most important measures that must be put in place to empower MPA networks and their stakeholders to tackle climate change consequences and biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean.

The objectives of the week's event were two-fold: ensure the technical and political uptake of the solutions identified in the MPA NETWORKS project at a Mediterranean level and discuss

key recommendations for decision-makers concerned with climate change and biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean.

To support MPAs in their crucial role to safeguard our marine environment, and to reach the international and regional ambitions of 30% of marine protection by 2030, efforts must be boosted on several complementary fronts. The key recommendations on Mobile Species for that event were :

- Identify priorities and needs for Mediterranean mobile species, map and protect their critical habitats and identify the hotspot negative interaction areas to comply with the Barcelona Convention regional Action Plans (on marine turtles, marine and coastal birds, Mediterranean monk seal, cartilaginous fishes and cetaceans), ACCOBAMS and GFCM/FAO recommendations.
- Submit national (or transboundary) mobile species corridors, having appropriate legal status, and protection and management measures, for inclusion in the Barcelona Convention's List of Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMI List).
- Acknowledge the need for and induce the adoption of new agreements on marine mammals conservation between countries at the sub-regional scale, like the Pelagos Sanctuary agreement, to catalyse and support the national and regional efforts in the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Post-2020 Regional Strategy for MCPAs and OECMs in the Mediterranean, and the EU Biodiversity strategy 30x30 target (and the 10% strict protection target for the EU) and more particularly the EUSAIR strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region.
- Support the development of regional guidelines to adapt or ban the use of fishing gears that are the most harmful to vulnerable species (sharks and rays, marine turtles, seabirds, and cetaceans), in support to countries and relevant regional and intergovernmental organisations working on the subject, to develop a mechanism for by-catch mitigation strategies.

The road ahead

Recommendations will continue to be promoted on the topic of mobile species and the Mediterranean joint governance plan will continue to be developed through:

- The Mediterranean MPA Roadmap and Forum process, (MPA Networks Project Partners and Associated Partners are associated with this process)
- The MedPAN 2019-2023 and beyond strategy (almost all MPA Networks Project Partners and Associated Partners are members or partners of MedPAN)

References

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Annex 1 -

Summary table of MPA NETWORKS pilot actions

	TORRE GUACETO	STRUNJAN
Scope and objective of the pilot action	<p>Monitoring to assess the impact of marine mammal populations on fisheries was also conducted in this pilot activity. The Pilot action enabled 1-year research programme consisting of systematic surveys at sea complemented with photo-identification of encountered dolphin groups, questionnaires to fishermen and monitoring of damage and predation of fishing gear by dolphins. These actions will be coupled with training of local operators (MPA STAFF) so they can give continuity to these activities independently in subsequent years.</p>	<p>Definition of conservation measures for mobile species (particularly marine mammals), with a view to identifying necessary protection regimes for the conservation of Natura 2000 site at the limits of the MPA.</p> <p>The monitoring of mobile species generated new data about the mobile species present in the MPA and contributed to a better knowledge about the species presence and their spatial distribution. Within the activity guidelines for effective and long-term conservation of mobile species in the MPA were prepared. Those guidelines will be included in the Landscape Park Strunjan management plan and will allow a better management of the human activities in the area with respect to mobile species. With the integration of the guidelines in the management plan of Landscape Park Strunjan, the activity will directly contribute to the general objective of adaptation of the management of MPA Strunjan with respect to mobile species.</p> <p>The results of the study also provided an additional scientific baseline for potential expansion of MPA boundaries on the Natura 2000 site. Within the pilot action the proposal for the extension of the limit of the park and a new zonation of the entire MPA were prepared. The proposal of extension of the limit of the MPA and the new zonation of the MPA represents a starting point in the process of a more effective management of the MPA and Natura 2000 sites that will allow the preservation of favourable conservation status of marine habitat types and species in the area.</p>
Methodologies		Monitoring of dolphins in Slovenian waters for the reporting period 2013-2018- CLIMAPARKS

Enabling conditions	<p>The engagement of fishers in the monitoring protocol guarantees on the one hand their active involvement in the management of the MPA, on the other hand the creation of a relationship of collaboration and trust, useful for identifying the most effective regulation with a participatory approach.</p>	<p>The combined monitoring methods for mobile species consisting in boat-based visual monitoring of birds, sea turtles and marine mammals and acoustic monitoring of marine mammals worked really well and permitted the collection of a large quantity of useful data in relatively short time. Especially for the marine mammals, the acoustic monitoring turned out to be really useful as we did not record any dolphin sightings during the formal monitoring period, but the acoustic monitoring showed that they were relatively regularly present in the area during the entire period. The several dolphin sightings in the close vicinity of the MPA in the two months after the end of the formal monitoring period shows how a long-term monitoring scheme is needed to get a better understanding about the presence and the distribution of mobile species.</p>
	<p>Staff training in the implementation of monitoring protocols ensures the continuity of the action over time.</p>	<p>In order to assess the effectiveness of the MPA a long-term monitoring program needs to be set by MPA managers. MPA managers need to provide appropriate staff and equipment in order to ensure a long-term monitoring of mobile species in the area and/or collaborate with NGOs running such programmes on a regular basis.</p>
	<p>The creation by the MPA staff of the webapp for recording and managing fishing effort monitoring data ensures an effective management of the data and their conservation over time, as well as interoperability with geographic information systems.</p>	
Difficulties / limitations	<p>Small-scale fisheries monitoring activities require regular funding, in order to constantly monitor the level of effort and to define and implement the necessary management measures.</p>	