

BRIGHT SPOTS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

An assortment of projects funded by the European Union and executed by the Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) is strengthening the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols



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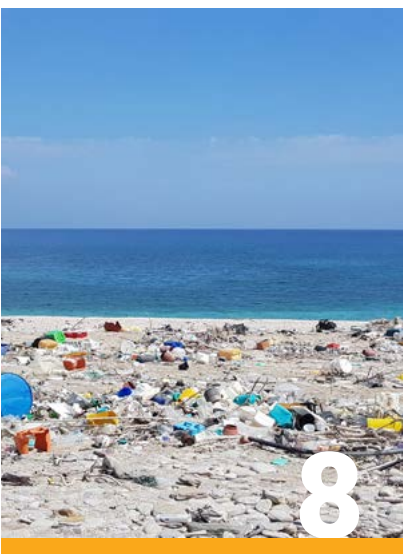
A push for the achievement of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean



EcAp MED III



IMAP-MPA



Marine Litter MED II



Views from the field



A word from the UNEP/MAP Coordinator



A push for the achievement of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean

In 2008, under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols – 21 coastal countries and the European Union (EU) – decided (COP 15, Decision IG.17/6) to progressively apply the Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) to the management of human activities that may affect the health of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment for the promotion of sustainable development.

The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach underpins efforts by the Contracting Parties in fulfilling their shared vision: a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse contributing to sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.

In line with this vision, the overall objective of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap is to achieve and, in some contexts, to maintain Good Environmental

Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea and coasts.

GES is well defined in terms that have been negotiated and adopted (COP 17, Decision IG. 20/4) by the Contracting Parties. It is based on 11 Ecological Objectives (EOs) addressing key elements of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. To facilitate implementation and reporting, the EOs come in two main sets: operational objectives and associated targets.



In 2016 the Contracting Parties adopted (COP 19, Decision IG.22/7) the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP). Devised and introduced by UNEP/MAP, IMAP has transformed the way environmental monitoring is conducted in the region, introducing greater harmonization and rigor in the collection of crucial environmental data.

The adoption of IMAP was an unprecedented achievement as it provided Mediterranean countries with a harmonized toolkit to monitor the environment and to assess progress towards achieving GES under the Barcelona Convention.

Based on the flow of data generated by IMAP, UNEP/MAP delivered in

2017 the first edition of the Quality Status Report for the Mediterranean (2017 MED QSR), a flagship report endorsed by the Contracting Parties (COP 20, Decision IG.23/6). The preparation of an enhanced version of the report titled 2023 MED QSR, to be published in 2023, was decided at COP 21 (Decision IG. 24/4).

In the context of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, the quest for quality data on the state of the marine and coastal environment continues to generate benefits for the Contracting Parties and the region as a whole. All Mediterranean countries have established national IMAPs, developed centralized data collection and management infrastructure, which are linked to the IMAP Info System (a central data platform maintained by UNEP/MAP). They have also refined technical

specifications on IMAP indicators, and are in the process of devising common methodologies for the integrated assessment of the marine and coastal environment.

An assortment of three projects funded by the European Union and implemented by UNEP/MAP, namely EcAp MED III, IMAP-MPA, and Marine Litter MED II, provide support to national teams as they set about activating IMAP. Project activities are coordinated by the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention Secretariat and implemented with the participation of several Regional Activity Centres of the Mediterranean Action Plan. In addition to capacity building, activities include the sharing of experience and best practices among communities of practice nurtured by the three projects.



EcAp MED III

“Support to Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts and to the delivery of the 2023 Quality Status Report (MED QSR) in synergy with the EU Marine strategy framework directive (MSFD)”

FACTSHEET



FUNDED BY

The European Union



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

September 2020 – August 2023



BUDGET

US\$ 2,494,790, including an EU allocation of US\$ 2,200,000 and the co-financing from the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF) of US\$ 294,790



BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia



IMPLEMENTED BY

MAP Components (INFO/RAC, MED POL, PAP/RAC, SPA/RAC and Plan Bleu), under the coordination of the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit.

EcAp MED III builds on the successful outcomes of the previous two instalments of the EcAp MED project (2012-2015, 2015-2019). The third phase focuses on supporting the field implementation of IMAAP and the delivery of the 2023 MED QSR. This support comes in various forms, including capacity building at the national level. The delivery of EcAp MED III project activities is carried out in synergy with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).



Data harvested in the field is key to environmental monitoring
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Data harvested in the field is key to environmental monitoring
© SPA/RAC

ECAP MED III ACTIVITIES:

- > Boosting the effective implementation of the IMAP in the Mediterranean;
- > Contributing to the fine-tuning and harmonisation of monitoring and assessment of the marine and coastal environment at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- > Expanding the current [IMAP Info System](#) to cover all IMAP Common Indicators and feeding into the IMAP database that will underpin the delivery of the 2023 MED QSR;
- > Strengthening Science-Policy Interfaces (SPI) at national and regional levels.

WHEN IT REACHES FULL IMPLEMENTATION, THE PROJECT WILL DELIVER TWO MAIN OUTCOMES:

- > Progress is made and consensus reached on environmental monitoring and assessment processes at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- > Operational national IMAPs are in place in all beneficiary countries, thus producing and providing quality-assured data that will feed into the 2023 MED QSR and other knowledge products and decision-support tools that the UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention system provides to underpin evidence-based policymaking in the region.

The third phase of the EcAp MED project continues to deliver benefits to a wide range of stakeholders, including policymakers, national institutions responsible for the implementation of IMAPs, the scientific community, data experts and scientists, and, by boosting the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, all citizens of the Mediterranean.

IMAP-MPA

“Towards achieving the Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and coast through an ecologically representative and efficiently managed and monitored network of Marine Protected Areas”

FACTSHEET



FUNDED BY

The European Union



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

August 2019 – February 2023



BUDGET

EUR 4,000,000



BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia



IMPLEMENTED BY

MAP Components (SPA/RAC, MED POL), in close collaboration with PAP/RAC and INFO/RAC under the coordination of the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit.

The IMAP-MPA project's main thrust is directed towards the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Mediterranean through rigorous monitoring and assessment, including areas under high pressure and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), in a comparative and integrated manner.

In addition to the set-up of mechanisms that ensure the reliable, regionally agreed assessment of MPAs, the project is meant as a contribution to the establishment of a connected, ecologically representative, effectively managed and monitored network of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean.

The IMAP-MPA project also aims to enhance capacity in beneficiary countries to implement IMAP and report reliable data regarding the IMAP common indicators. This will be achieved through harmonized monitoring and assessment including at sub-regional level.

Under the project, the monitoring of IMAP common indicators for biodiversity and non-indigenous species, pollution and marine litter, and hydrography is undertaken both within and in the periphery of MPAs.



Monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* Meadows off the Kuriat islands, Tunisia
© SPA/RAC



Marine turtle nesting site in Kuriat islands, Tunisia
© SPA/RAC



IMAP-MPA ACTIVITIES

- > Assisting Contracting Parties in the Southern Mediterranean to implement the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP), adopted in 2016, as part of the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach Roadmap;
- > Contributing to enhanced MPA management through coordinated implementation of the [MAP Roadmap](#) for a comprehensive coherent network of well-managed mpas to achieve the aichi target 11 in the mediterranean, adopted under the convention on biological diversity. The project will also conduct important ecological and socio-economic studies within three MPAs: Rachgoun Island (Algeria), Tyre Coast (Lebanon) and the Gulf of Sirte (Libya).

AICHI TARGET 11

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

WHEN IT REACHES FULL IMPLEMENTATION, THE PROJECT WILL DELIVER THREE MAIN OUTCOMES:

- > National capacity to implement IMAP and to report reliable data for the IMAP common indicators is enhanced;
- > Enhanced implementation of policies that relate to the MPAs in the Southern Mediterranean is ensured;
- > Effective on-site MPA management mechanisms that ensure MPA sustainability are in place.

Boosting monitoring and data collection systems in a conservation context is an innovative endeavour in the Mediterranean. The IMAP-MPA project can therefore serve as a pilot to be upscaled for wider benefits. By supporting the achievement of the Aichi Target 11 and the Ecosystem Approach implementation, the project illustrates the UNEP/MAP's ability to integrate objectives stemming from the global environment and development framework into the regional endeavour under the Barcelona Convention.

Marine Litter MED II

*Catalyzing national action to stem the tide
of marine litter in the Mediterranean*

FACTSHEET



FUNDED BY

The European Union



IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

September 2020 – August 2023



BUDGET

US\$ 1,140,000, including PSC, with co-financing sources from MTF of US\$ 149,955



BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia



IMPLEMENTED BY

MAP Components (INFO/RAC, MED POL, SCP/RAC, SPA/RAC, REMPEC), under the coordination of the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit.

The second phase of the Marine Litter MED project focuses on strengthening the implementation of the updated [Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean](#), adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in December 2021 (COP 22). The project expands pilot activities related to the reduction and prevention of marine litter, especially in terms of geographical scope and impact.

More broadly, Marine Litter MED II project will contribute to a comprehensive assessment of existing knowledge, data gaps, monitoring techniques and methodologies pertaining to riverine inputs (marine litter carried by rivers and water courses) and microplastics deriving from Wastewater Treatment Plants. It will also support the expansion of key reduction and prevention measures tackling both land- and sea-based sources of marine litter.

MARINE LITTER MED II ACTIVITIES:

- > Scaling up and expanding the implementation of pilots related to key reduction and prevention measures presented in the Marine Litter Regional Plan and achieving the reduction targets adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at COP 18 and reaffirmed at COP 21;
- > Supporting the beneficiary countries in enhancing national capacities to implement IMAP EO10 Candidate Indicator 24: "Trends in the amount of litter ingested by or entangling marine organisms focusing on selected mammals, marine birds, and marine turtles";
- > Monitoring and assessing marine litter riverine inputs and the uses and sources of microplastics in wastewater treatments;
- > Fostering UNEP/MAP's cooperation with other European Regional Seas Programmes and Conventions, including the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC) and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM).

WHEN IT REACHES FULL IMPLEMENTATION, THE PROJECT WILL DELIVER THREE MAIN OUTCOMES:

- > Reduction and prevention measures are scaled up, priority single-use plastics addressed, and the level of awareness raised at national and local level in the Mediterranean;
- > National capacities on monitoring and assessing marine litter are enhanced and contribute to the 2023 MED QSR report, a flagship publication also supported by the EcAp MED III project;
- > International cooperation on priority areas, as identified by the [Regional Seas Conventions](#) and Programmes and their respective Marine Litter Regional Action Plans, are boosted.

Marine Litter MED II will generate benefits in the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach and IMAP with the aim of edging closer to a litter-free Mediterranean. The project's delivery is conducted in synergy with the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (EU MSFD) and the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive.

Marine litter, including plastics and microplastics, represents one of the main pressures to the marine and coastal environment in the Mediterranean. Every day a staggering mass of **730 tonnes of plastic** are estimated to reach the Mediterranean Sea each day.

The [Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean](#) provides for legally binding measures and timetables for its implementation. An updated version of the Regional Plan was adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention at [COP 22](#) in December 2021.



Views from the field

*“Egypt welcomes continuing the mutual **regional cooperation** in order to achieve the conservation and sustainability of the marine ecosystems under the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the Barcelona Convention.”*

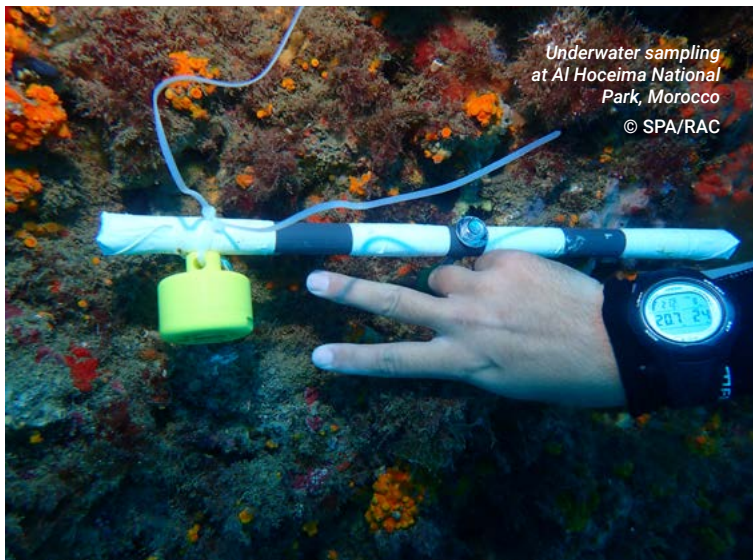
Mr Mohamed Said Abdelwarith,
Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency, Egypt

*“The EU-funded IMAP-MPA project supports the national conservation efforts through monitoring and assessing the status of endemic, threatened species and key habitats that they contain. Tunisia has a variety of rich and unique ecosystems destined to become **Marine and Coastal Protected Areas**”*

Samia Boufares,
APAL Coastal Protection and Planning Agency,
Tunisia



Marine turtle monitoring
in Lebanon (March 2016)
© SPA/RAC



Underwater sampling
at Al Hoceima National
Park, Morocco
© SPA/RAC

*“The researchers of the National Centre for Marine Sciences succeeded in preparing the IMAP for Lebanon, implementing the monitoring programme for 2019, and uploading the obtained data onto the IMAP Info System. The collaboration with UNEP/MAP proved successful, especially with the preparation of the National IMAP Monitoring Programme for Pollution and Marine Litter cluster as part of the **EcAp MED project** and the generation of new data sets aligned with the IMAP requirements.”*

Dr. Milad Fakhri,
National Centre for Marine Sciences/CNRS-L, Lebanon

*“We are excited about the opportunity that the IMAP-MPA project provides to improve the monitoring in our region, so that we can all improve the conservation and protection of the **Mediterranean Sea** that we all love.”*

Dr. Simon Nemptzov,
Israel Nature and Parks Authority, Israel

*“Libya has a rich, diverse and unique marine biodiversity, and has still pristine habitats. The EU-funded **IMAP-MPA** project will contribute to monitoring and assessing the status of threatened species and important habitats containing these species, making them highly qualified as marine and coastal protected areas”.*

Mr. Ali Elkekli,
Ministry of Environment, Libya

*“The two pilot activities “Adopt-a-Beach” and “Fishing for litter” of the **Marine Litter MED** project were able to involve the territorial actors, NGOs, fishers and local volunteers in cleaning, communication and awareness campaigns for a good management of marine litter at the various sites of these activities”.*

Mohammed El Bouch:
MEDPOL Focal Point, Morocco

A word from the UNEP/MAP Coordinator

The UNEP/MAP partnership with the EU, one of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, has expanded and taken multiple forms. From [joint assessments conducted with the European Environment Agency](#) to launching projects that deploy targeted capacity-building and channel the required expertise to better address compounded issues such as marine litter.

UNEP/MAP and the EU have made synergy an in-built feature of the EcAp MED, Marine Litter MED and IMAP-MPA projects.

The IMAP-MPA project builds on the achievements and outputs of the previous EcAp MED II (2015-2019) and MedMPA Network (2016-2018) projects, both funded by the EU.

While the EcAp MED III project seeks to render the national IMAPs (applications of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme) fully operational, the IMAP-MPA focuses on testing the implementation of joint monitoring in MPAs and high-pressure sites.

Together, IMAP-MPA and EcAp MED III provide consolidated support to national teams that will build capacity

in the monitoring of IMAP Clusters on biodiversity and non-indigenous species (EO1, EO2); pollution and marine litter (EO5, EO9, EO10); and coast and hydrography (EO7, EO8).

Building on the outcomes of its first phase (2016-2019), Marine Litter MED II contributes to enhancing national capacities to implement the provisions of the Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, a key instrument under the Barcelona Convention. The project also stimulates inter-basin cooperation through collaborations with the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (BSC), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and other regional partners within the framework of the G7 and G20 Marine Litter Action Plans.

Taken together, the EU-funded projects constitute a coordinated, action-oriented push for the implementation of several key decisions adopted by the Contracting Parties regarding the Ecosystem Approach and IMAP. The projects are also bolstering national capabilities to monitor several SDG indicators, including those pertaining to Goal 14: "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable

development", as well as Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.

This UNEP/MAP-EU partnership brings benefits to a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers at local and national levels, national institutions responsible for the implementation of IMAP, the scientific community, experts and scientists, as well as the citizens of the Mediterranean who have a stake in healthy and productive marine and coastal ecosystems that underpin sustainable development in the Mediterranean.



Tatjana Hema,
*Coordinator of the Mediterranean
Action Plan/Barcelona
Convention Secretariat*

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