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Seventeenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025

Agenda Item 3: Status of implementation of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)

Implementation Status of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) – quantitative overview

Note:

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) and United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any State, Territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of their frontiers or boundaries.

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Note by the Secretariat

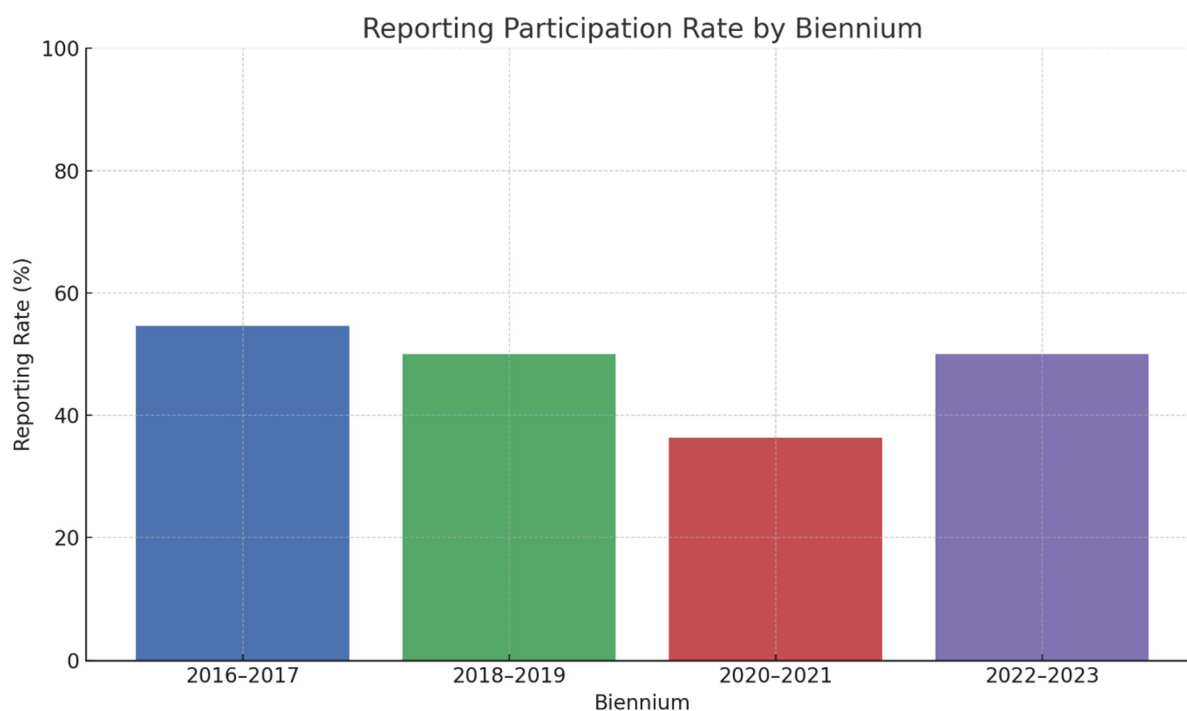
1. In its Decision IG.23/1, the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017): (a) adopted the revised reporting format for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols; (b) urged Contracting Parties to use the revised reporting format when submitting their national implementation reports; and (c) requested the Secretariat to submit to each meeting of the Contracting Parties, on the basis of an analysis of the information contained in the national reports, a report on the general advances made in the region, including at the legal and institutional levels, in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols along with proposals for further measures, as necessary.
2. In response to this request, and in the spirit of the paragraph 2 (ii) of Article 18 of the Barcelona Convention, the Coordinating Unit and the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) invited the Focal Points for SPA/BD to provide a report, for the period running from January 2022 to December 2023, on the application of the Protocol on Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol)
3. Since mid-February 2023, the BCRS online form for the SPA/BD protocol has reflected COP 22 Decision IG.25/12 (Antalya, 7–10 December 2023), which adopted the “Criteria for inclusion of SPAs in the Directory of Mediterranean SPAs” and instructed INFO/RAC to update the system accordingly.
4. At its 19th Meeting (Athens, 4–5 July 2023), the Compliance Committee agreed that the draft COP 23 decision should call upon Parties that had yet to submit their 2018–2019 or 2020–2021 reports to do so by 2 April 2024 (SPA/RAC).
5. COP 23 (Portorož, 5–8 December 2023) further reinforced reporting obligations:
 - Decision IG.26/1 on Compliance and Reporting re-emphasized the need for timely and complete national submissions via BCRS.
 - Decision IG.26/4 adopted amendments to Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol—while primarily updating species lists, these changes also affect the corresponding BCRS tables (SPA/RAC).
6. This document compiles the full set of national responses (tables, figures and narrative comments) for the 2022–2023 biennium.
7. This report is hereby presented to the 17th Focal Points Meeting for information.

Status of Reporting

- Number of Contracting Parties to the 1982 SPA Protocol on the 2022/2023 biennium: 21
- Number of Contracting Parties to the 1995 SPA/BD Protocol on the 2022/2023 biennium: 17
- Number of reporting Contracting Parties on the 2020-2021 biennium: 8
- Number of reporting Contracting Parties on the 2022-2023 biennium: 11

Introduction

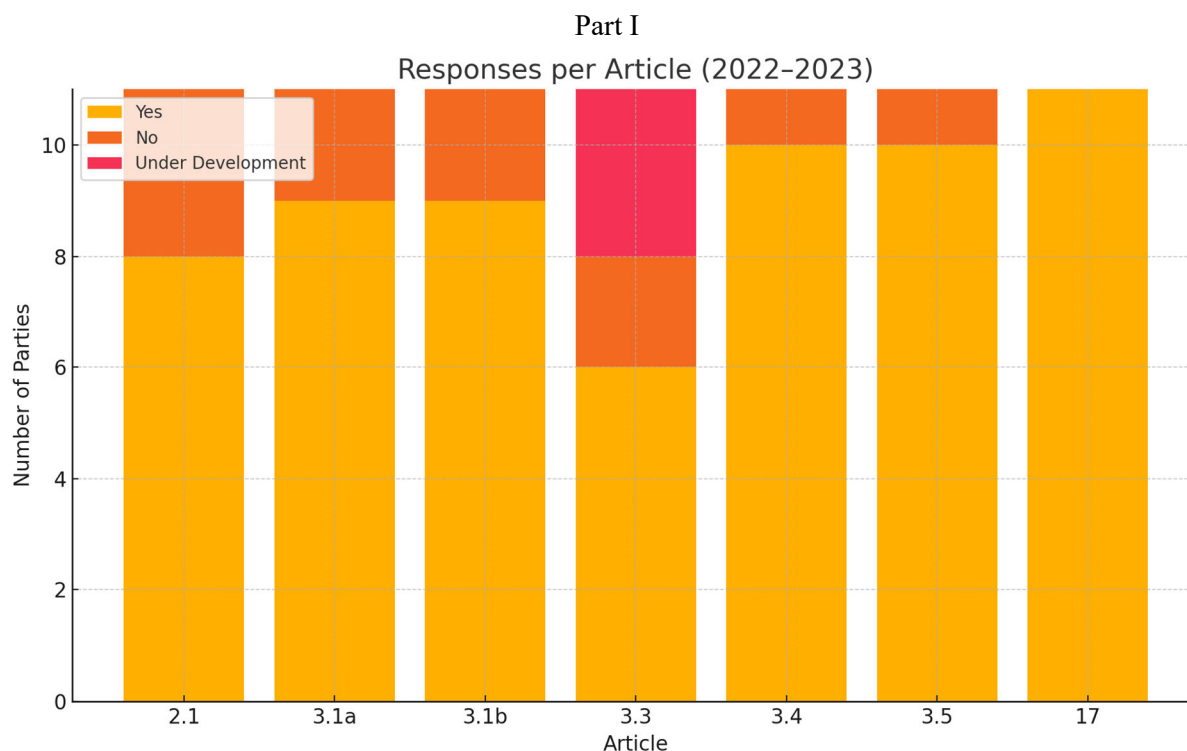
As of 7 March 2025, the official deadline for online submission via the BCRS platform, only eleven national reports had been formally received. Although additional Parties prepared their reports in full, these were not uploaded and validated in the BCRS system by the deadline.



Contracting Parties that submitted their 2022–2023 report on time	Contracting Parties that did not submit their 2022–2023 report on time
<p>Algeria</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina</p> <p>Croatia</p> <p>Cyprus</p> <p>Egypt</p> <p>France</p> <p>Italy</p> <p>Montenegro</p> <p>Slovenia</p> <p>Spain</p> <p>Türkiye</p>	<p>Albania</p> <p>European Community</p> <p>Greece</p> <p>Israel</p> <p>Lebanon</p> <p>Libya</p> <p>Malta</p> <p>Monaco</p> <p>Morocco</p> <p>Syria</p> <p>Tunisia</p>

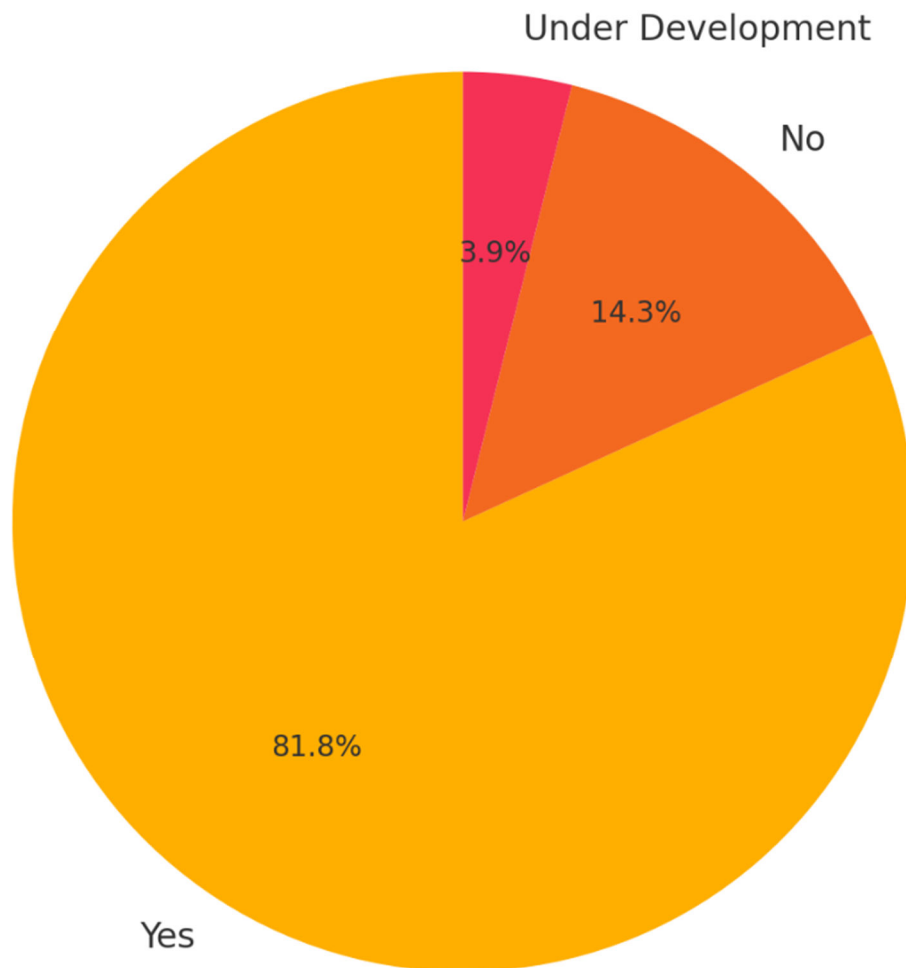
Part I: Legal and Regulatory measures

Question 1: Has the Party, in accordance with Article 14 of the Barcelona Convention, adopted legislation implementing the provisions of the SPA and Biodiversity Protocol listed in Table I below?



- **Article 2.1** : Designation of the terrestrial areas (including wetlands) under their jurisdiction that are included in the area to which the SPA and Biological Diversity Protocol applies
- **Article 3.1.a** : Protection, preservation and management in a sustainable and environmentally sound way of areas of particular natural or cultural value, notably by the establishment of specially protected areas
- **Article 3.1.b** : Protection, preservation and management of endangered or threatened flora and fauna species
- **Article 3.3** : Compilation of an inventory of the components of marine and coastal biodiversity
- **Article 3.4** : Formulation of a national strategy and action plan to protect the components of marine and coastal biodiversity
- **Article 3.5** : Monitoring the components of marine and coastal biodiversity and those processes and categories of activities which have or are likely to have a significant adverse impact on them
- **Article 17** : Taking into consideration, in the planning process leading to decisions on projects and activities that could significantly affect protected areas, species and their habitats, of possible direct or indirect, immediate or long-term, impact, including the cumulative impact of projects and activities on habitats

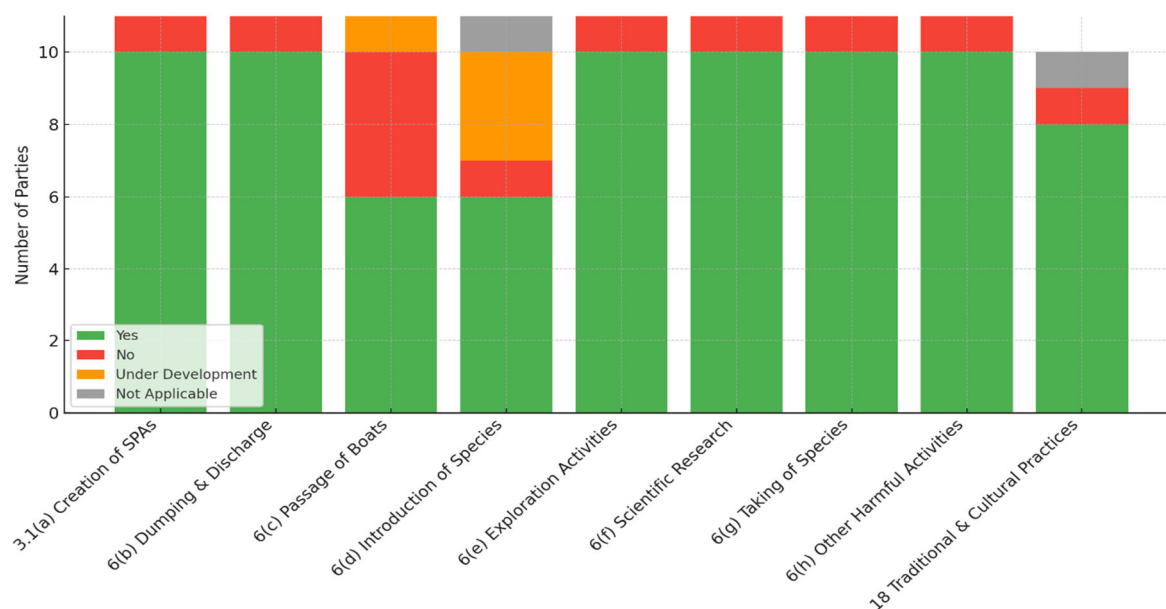
Part I
Implementation Status among 11 Contracting Parties
that Reported through the BCRS (2022–2023)



Part II: Specially protected areas

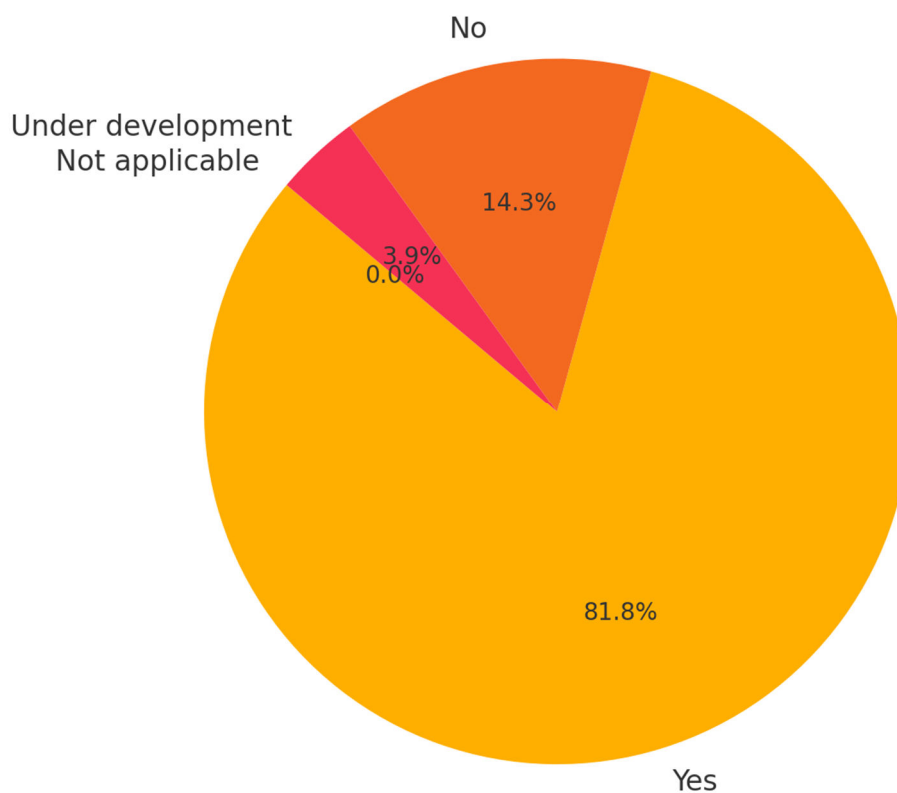
Question 2: Has the Party established specially protected areas and taken necessary measures for their protection and the implementation of their management plans?

Breakdown of responses on the implementation of SPA protection measures – 11 responses (2022–2023)

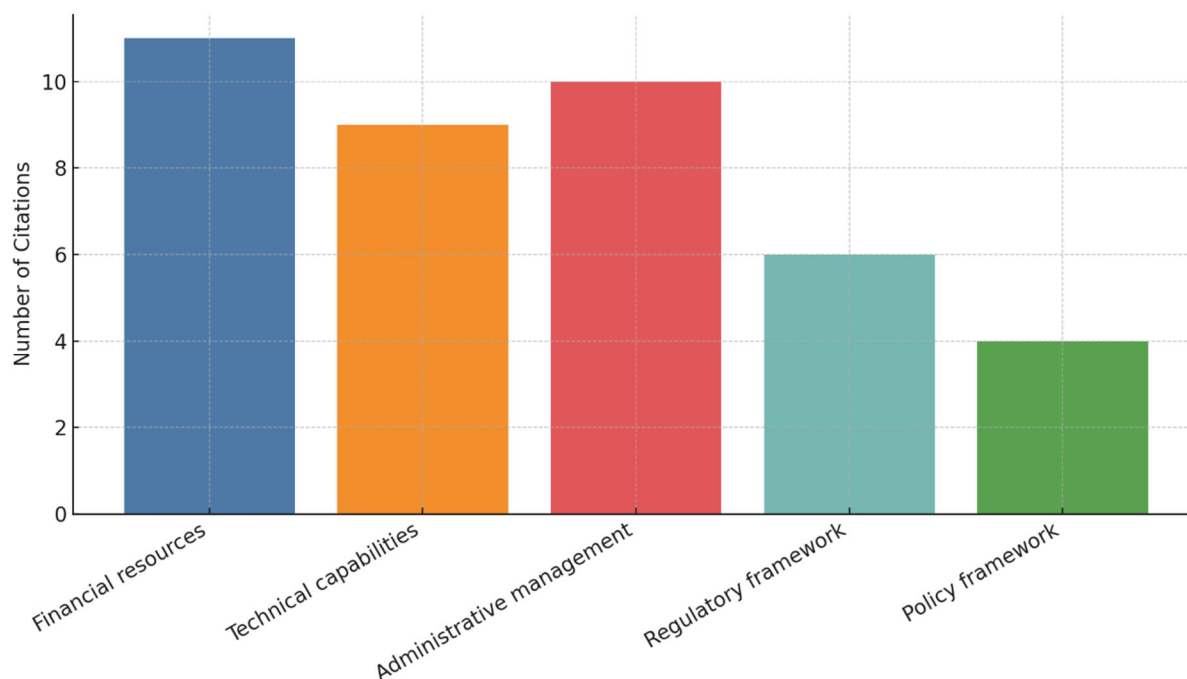


Nearly all reporting Parties (10 out of 11) indicated that they have designated SPAs.

Breakdown of responses to Part II – Question 2 on Overall Implementation Status (11 responses)



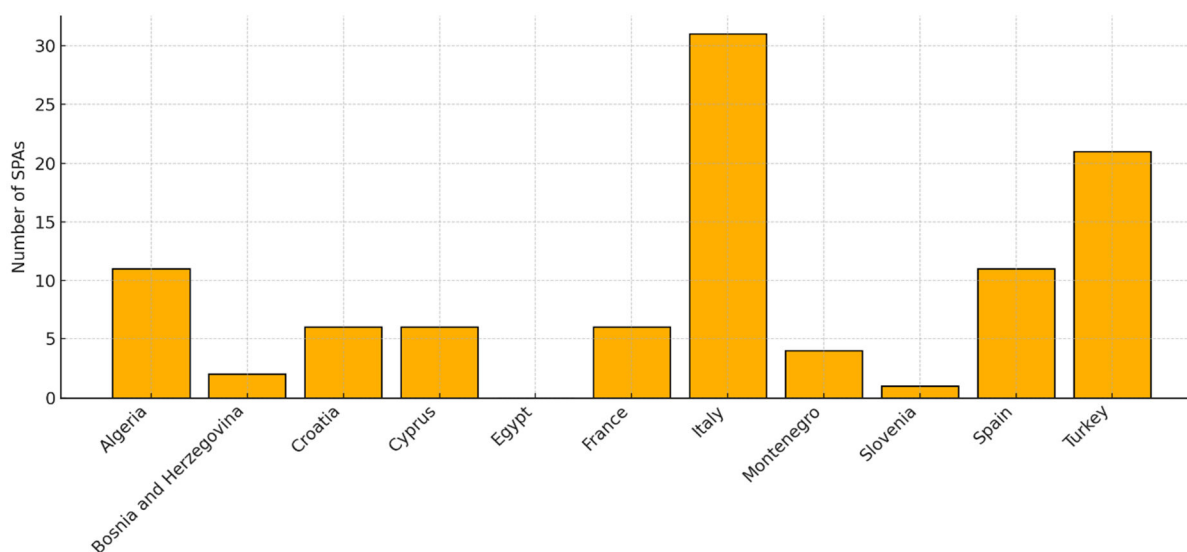
Breakdown of reported difficulties in SPA implementation –
Part II (11 responses)



As for total surface areas reported:

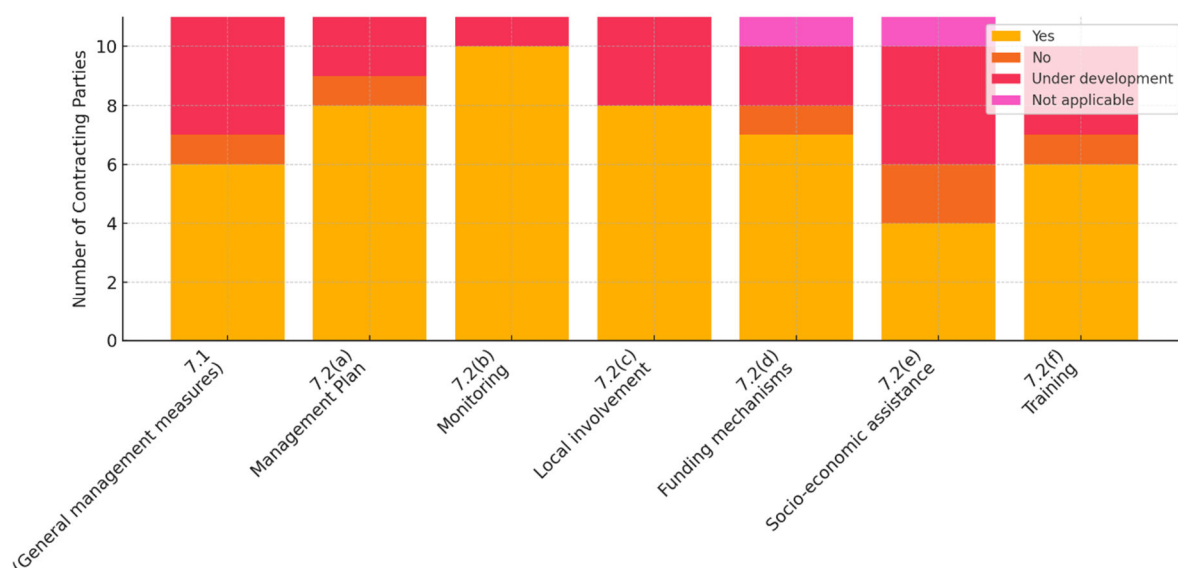
- The reports provided varied formats for surface area (hectares, km²), and not all Parties included totals.

Breakdown of reported SPAs per country – based on BCRS
2022–2023 submissions



Management of SPAs

Breakdown of reported SPA management measures (BCRS
2022–2023, 11 responses)



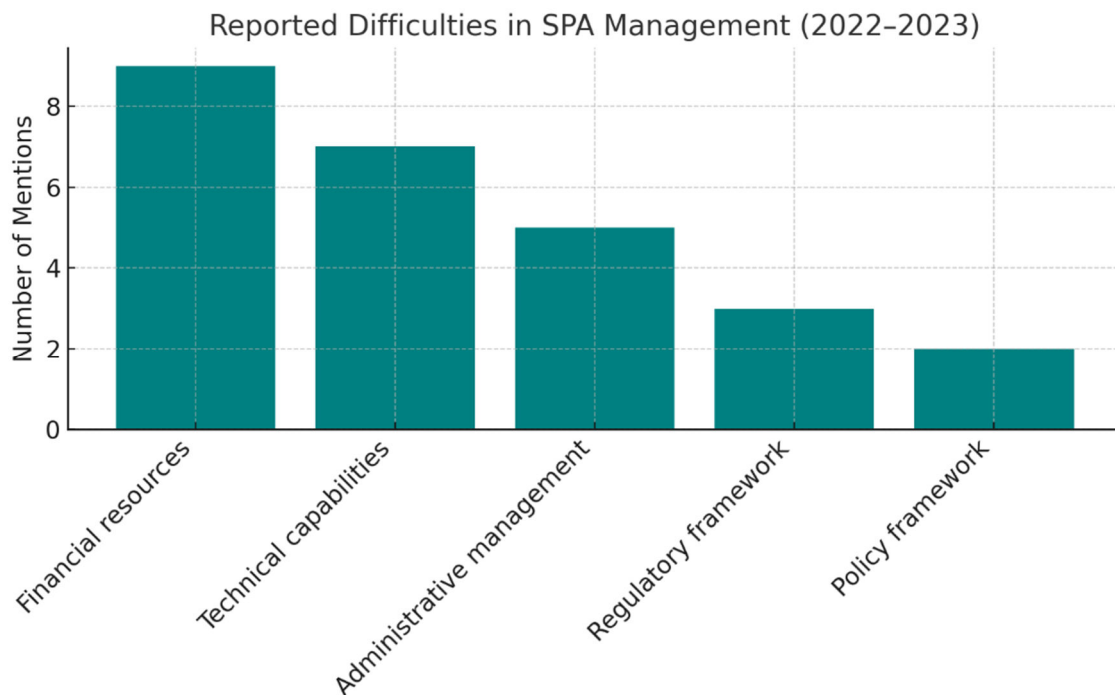
Monitoring Programmes (Art. 7.2.b) were the most consistently implemented, with nearly all Contracting Parties (10 out of 11) having established regular scientific monitoring activities within their SPAs.

Management Plans (Art. 7.2.a) were reported as in place by many Parties (8 out of 11), with an additional 2 Parties indicating they are under development.

Local Involvement (Art. 7.2.c) Many Parties (8) taking measures to involve local stakeholders and communities in SPA management.

Funding Mechanisms (Art. 7.2.d), While reported by many Parties (7), a few Parties lack structured financial planning, and the sustainability of SPA financing often depends on short-term projects or external donor support.

Training Programmes (Art. 7.2.f) Only some Parties (6) have reported providing appropriate training for SPA managers or technical staff.



From the reports, the most frequent challenges in SPA management include:

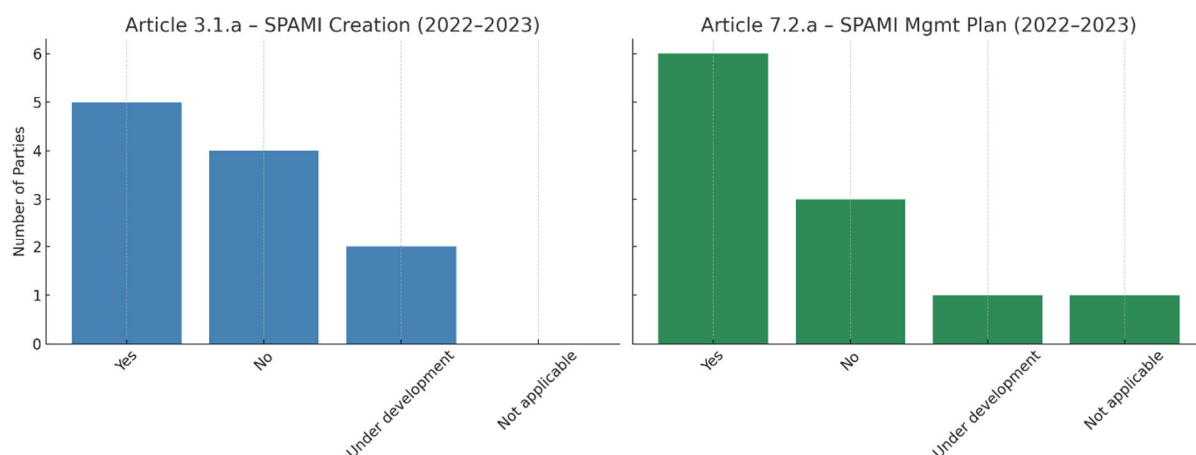
- ◆ **Limited financial resources**, particularly for operationalizing management plans and enforcing regulations;
- ◆ **Insufficient technical and human capacity** at both national and site levels;
- ◆ **Fragmentation of administrative responsibilities**, which sometimes hinders consistent implementation;

Some countries also mentioned **overlapping mandates** and lack of clarity in protected area governance.

PART III: Specially protected areas of mediterranean importance (SPAMIs)

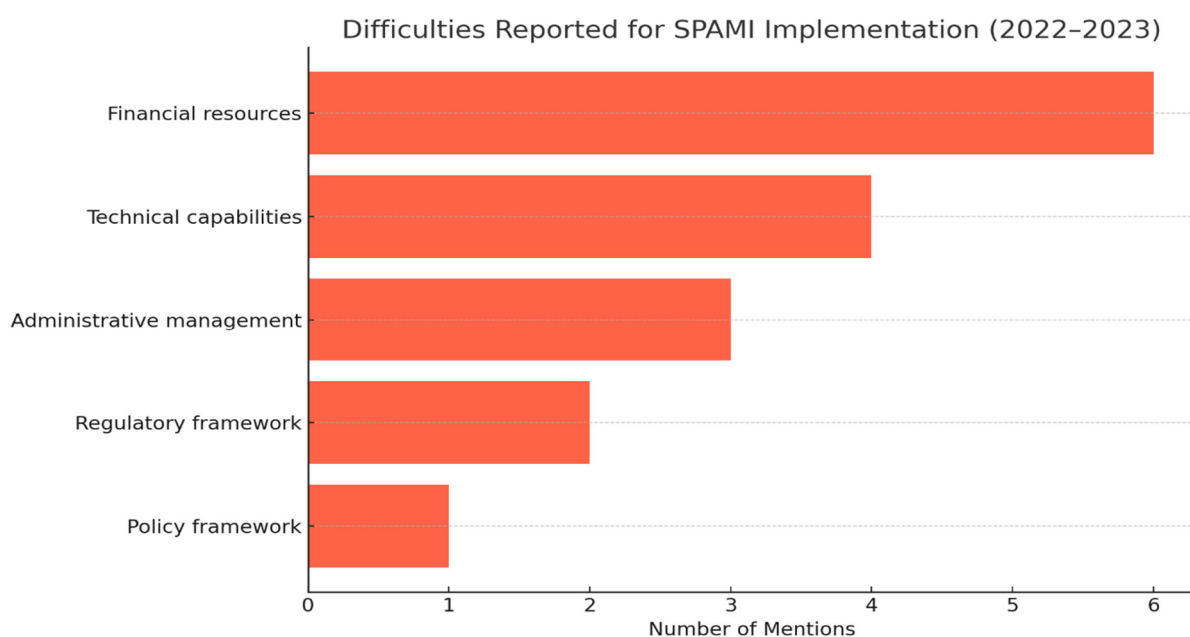
1. Establishment of SPAMIs

Breakdown of responses on SPAMI implementation – Articles
3.1.a and 7.2.a (2022–2023, 11 responses)



The main difficulties reported by Contracting Parties in implementing SPAMI-related obligations (Articles 3.1.a and 7.2.a) during the 2022–2023 biennium are:

- ◆ **Financial resources** were the most commonly cited challenge.
- ◆ **Technical capabilities** and **administrative management** were also reported by several Parties.
- ◆ **Regulatory and policy framework** issues were less frequently mentioned but still present.



2. Table VII – Implementation of management plans (Annex I to the Protocol)

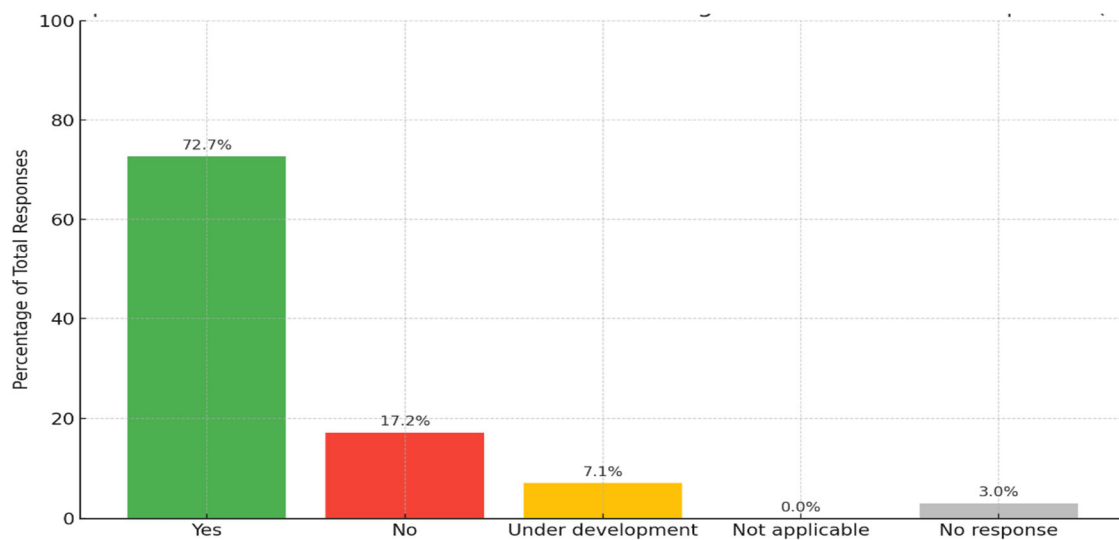
In the 2022–2023 biennium, a total of 31 SPAMIs were reported by Contracting Parties as part of Table VII. Among them, just over half (55%) were indicated as having management plans under implementation.

Approximately 29% of reported SPAMIs had no clear indication of management plan implementation, with reporting Parties leaving the relevant fields blank or providing general comments without specifying concrete implementation actions.

Part IV: Endangered and threatened species

1. Measures to protect endangered and threatened species

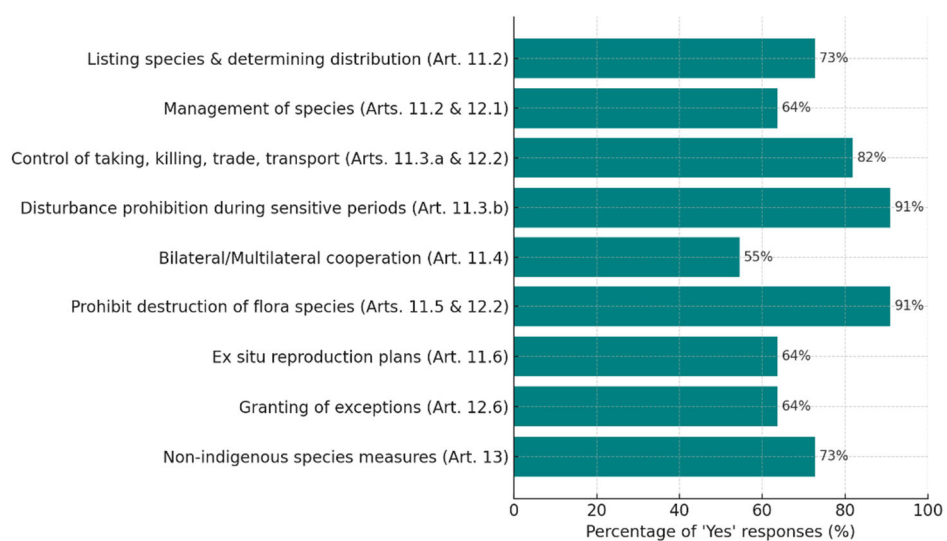
Breakdown of BCRS responses – Measures to Protect
Endangered and Threatened Species (2022–2023)



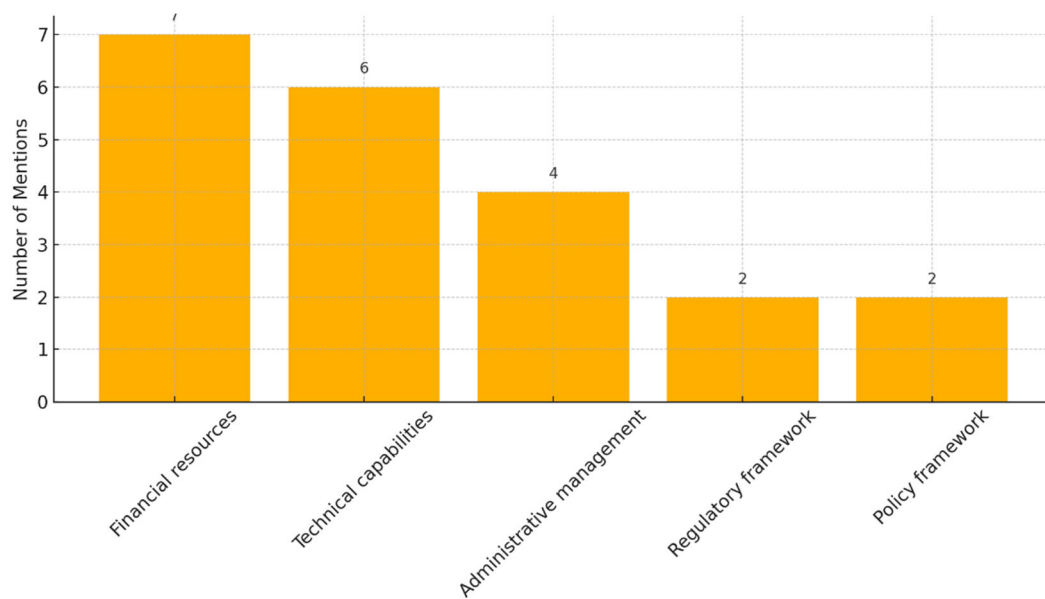
Most reporting Contracting Parties have demonstrated active engagement in implementing measures aimed at the protection and conservation of endangered and threatened species. Based on the aggregated data from Table VIII, **over 70% of responses were affirmative ("Yes")**, suggesting that a large number of the responding Parties have already established relevant legal, regulatory, and management frameworks in line with the requirements of the SPA/BD Protocol.

A closer look at the remaining responses reveals that **"Under Development"** statuses accounted for **around 7%**. Meanwhile, **approximately 17%** of responses were negative ("No").

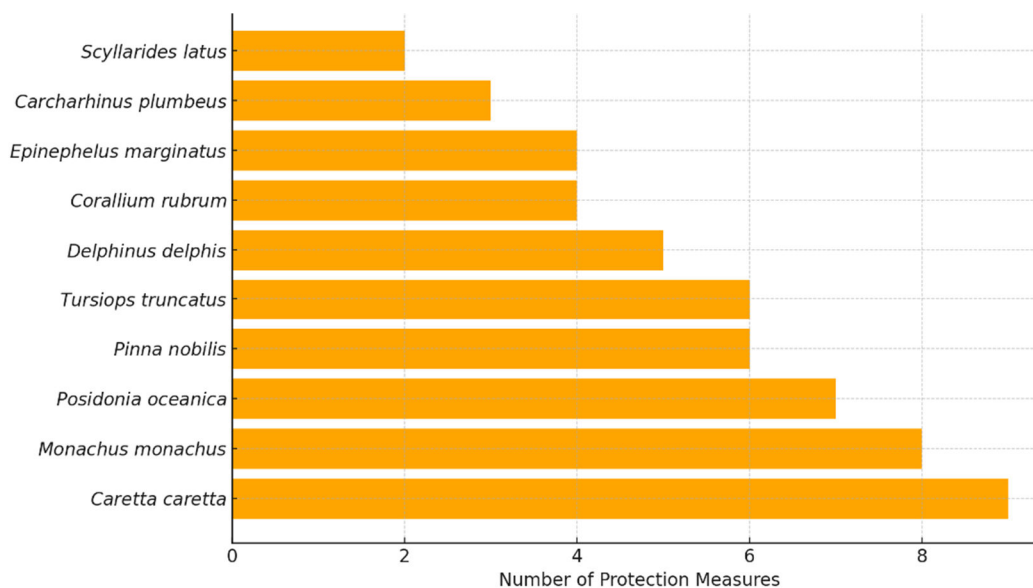
Breakdown of 'Yes' responses – Measures to Protect Endangered and Threatened Species (2022–2023)



Breakdown of Reported Difficulties – Implementation of Measures for Endangered and Threatened Species (2022–2023)



2. Measures to protect species

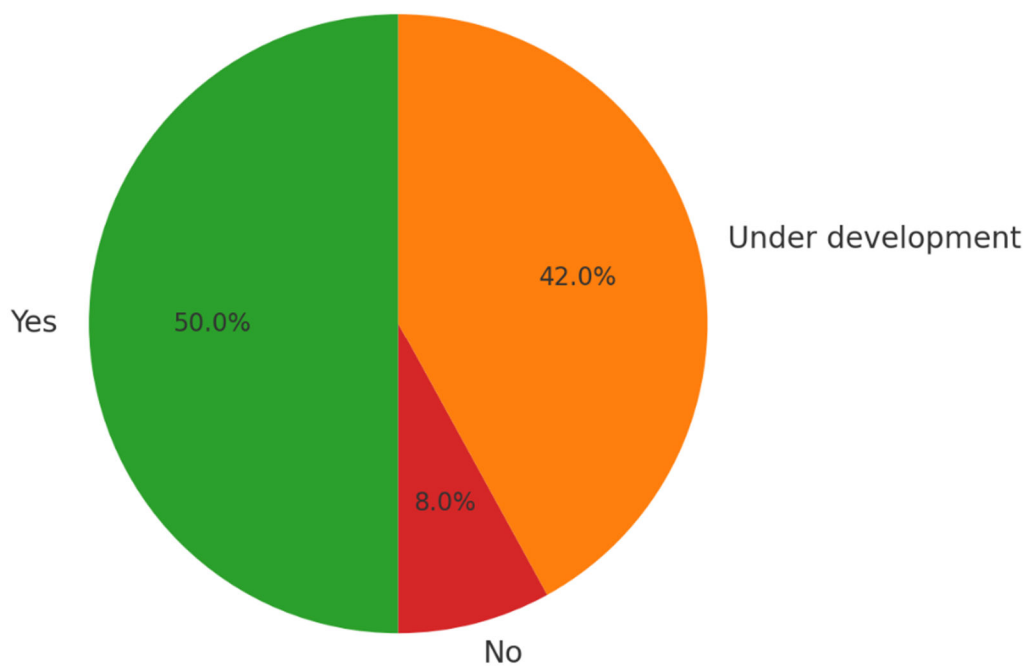


Part V: Monitoring

The implementation of monitoring activities under Table X

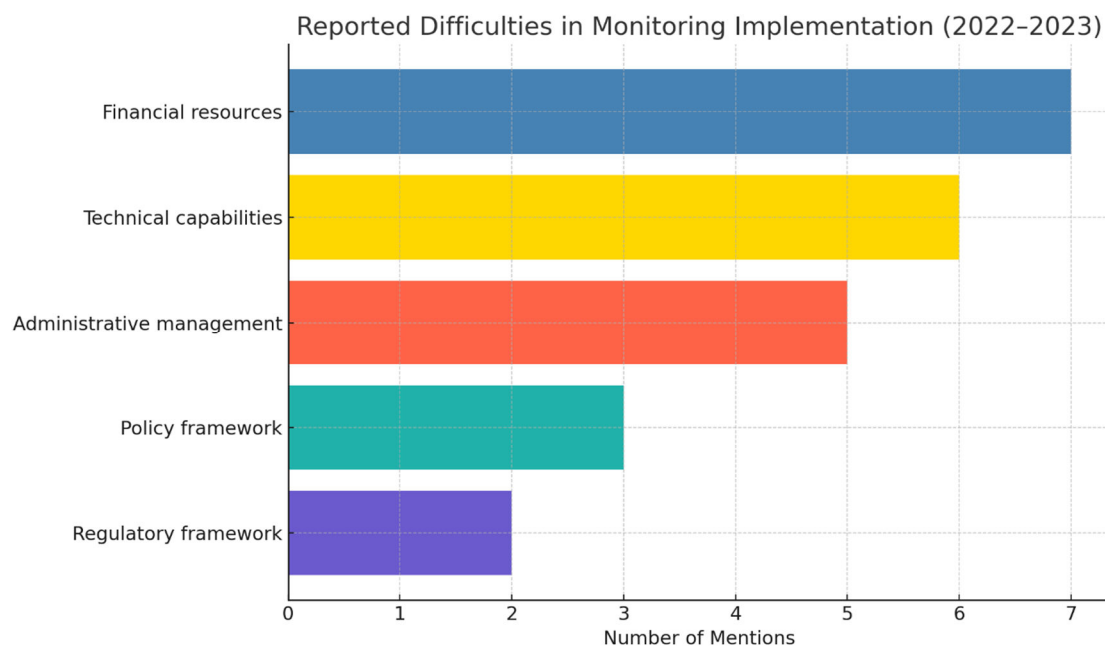
- **50% responded 'Yes'** to at least some Ecological Objectives.
- **42% responses were 'Under development'**, indicating ongoing initiatives.
- **Only 8% of responses were 'No'**.,

Response distribution – 2022-2023 (Table X: Monitoring)



The major mentioned barriers to the Monitoring :

- ◆ **Financial constraints.**
- ◆ **Technical capabilities and administrative limitations.**
- ◆ **Policy and regulatory gaps.**



Part VI: Enforcements measures

The analysis clearly shows:

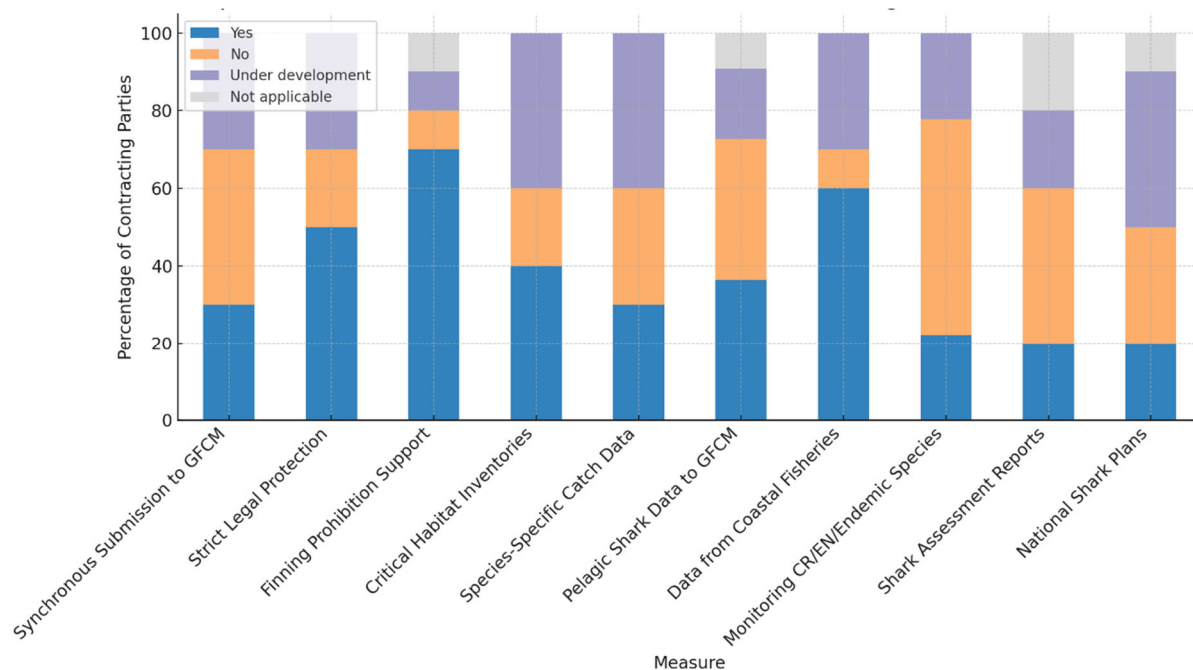
- Most fines fall within the **50,000 to 150,000 EUR** range.
- Some **high fines exceeding 200,000 EUR** were also reported.

PART VII: Implementation of regional actions plans (RAPs)

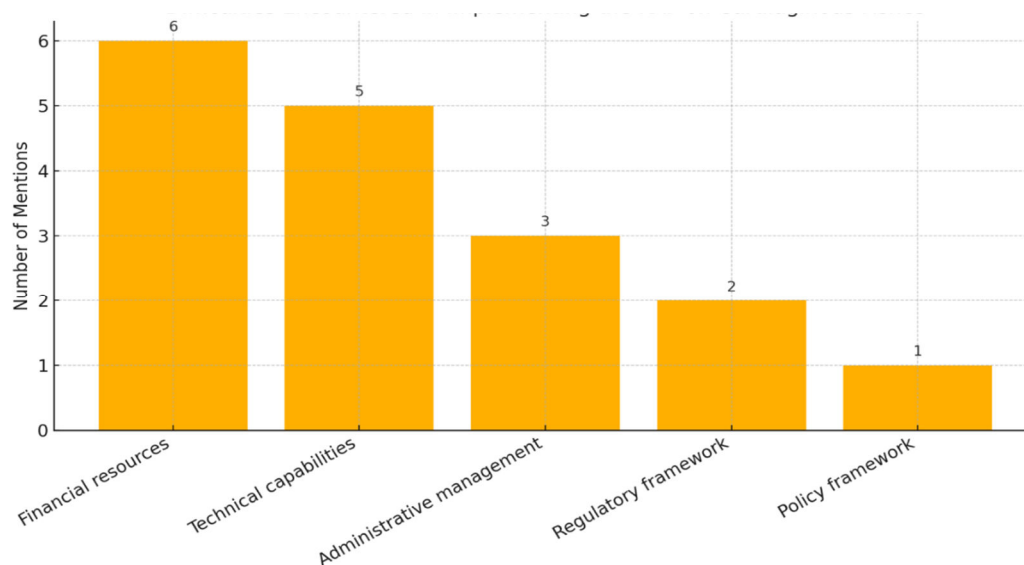
Table XII: Implementation of RAPs

1. RAP for the conservation of Cartilaginous Fishes (Chondrichthyans) (COP Decision IG 21/4)

Breakdown of Responses concerning the implementation of
RAP Measures for Cartilaginous Fishes (2022–2023)

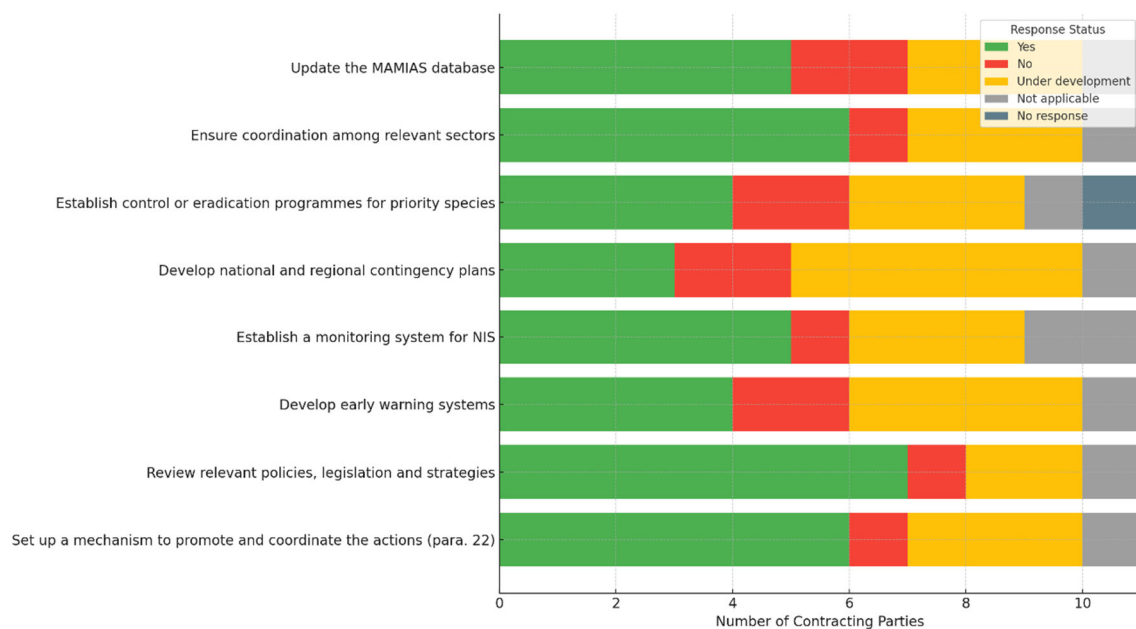


Breakdown of Reported Difficulties in Implementing the RAP
on Cartilaginous Fishes (2022–2023, 10 responses)

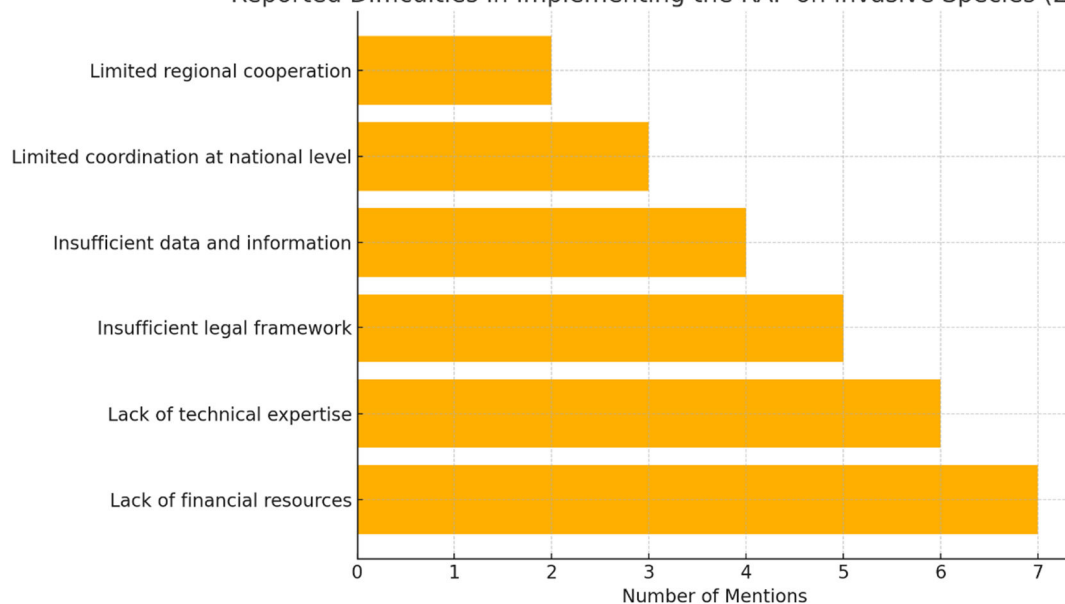


2. RAP concerning Species Introductions and Invasive Species (COP Decision IG 22/12)

Breakdown of Responses regarding the implementation Status of the Regional Action Plan on Invasive Species (2022–2023)



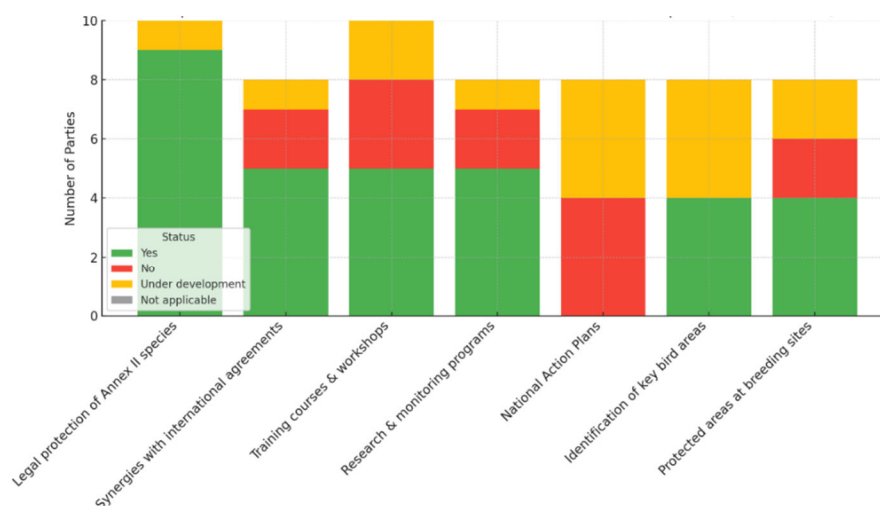
Reported Difficulties in Implementing the RAP on Invasive Species (2022–2023)



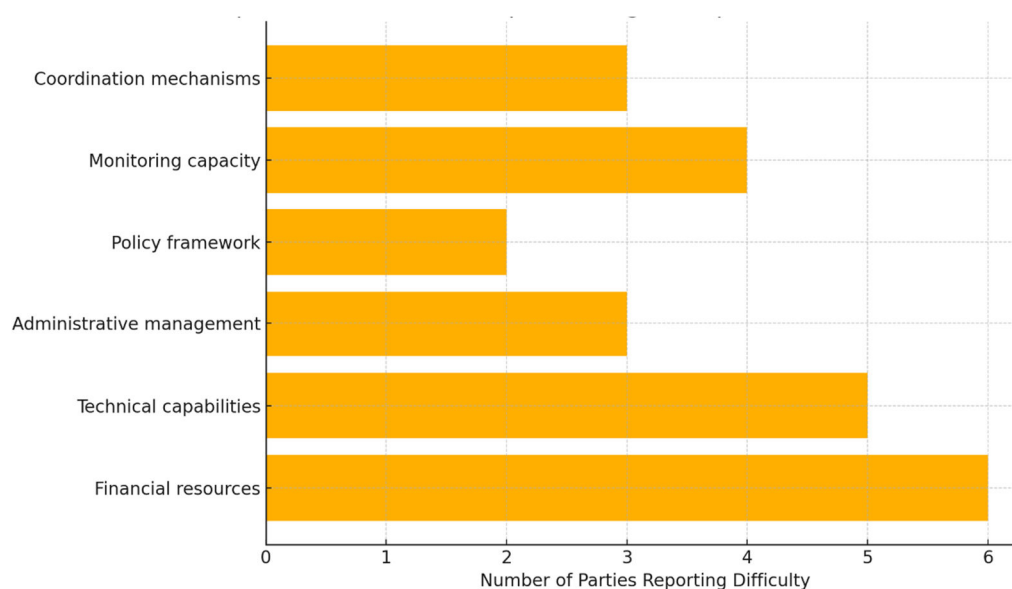
3. RAP for the conservation of Bird Species (COP Decision IG 21/4)

Nearly all reporting Parties (9 out of 10) affirmed that bird species listed in Annex II to the SPA/BD Protocol benefit from national legal protection frameworks. These frameworks often align with broader biodiversity legislation or specific avifauna regulations and frequently incorporate obligations under international agreements such as the **EU Birds Directive** and **AEWA**.

Breakdown of Responses concerning the implementation Status of the Regional Action Plan for Bird Species Conservation (2022–2023, 10 responses)

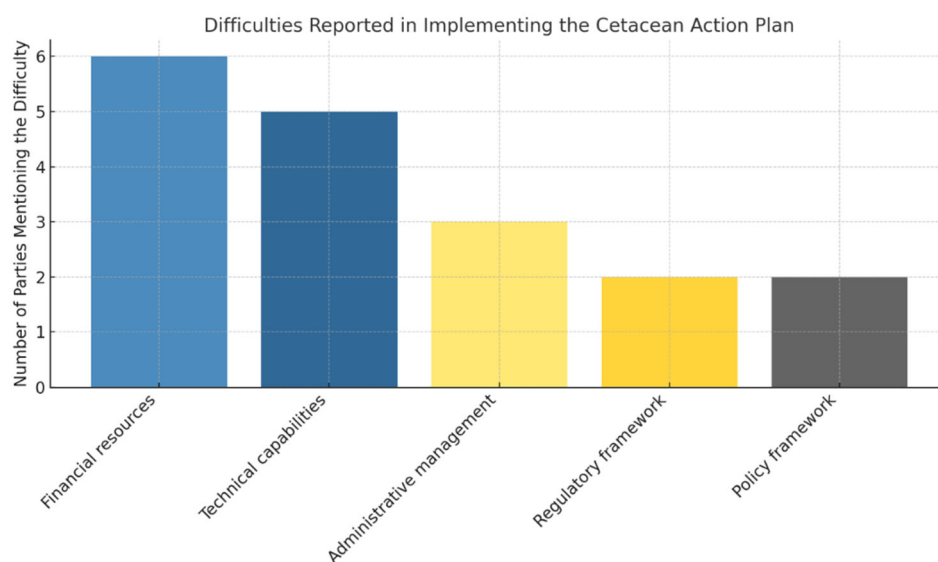
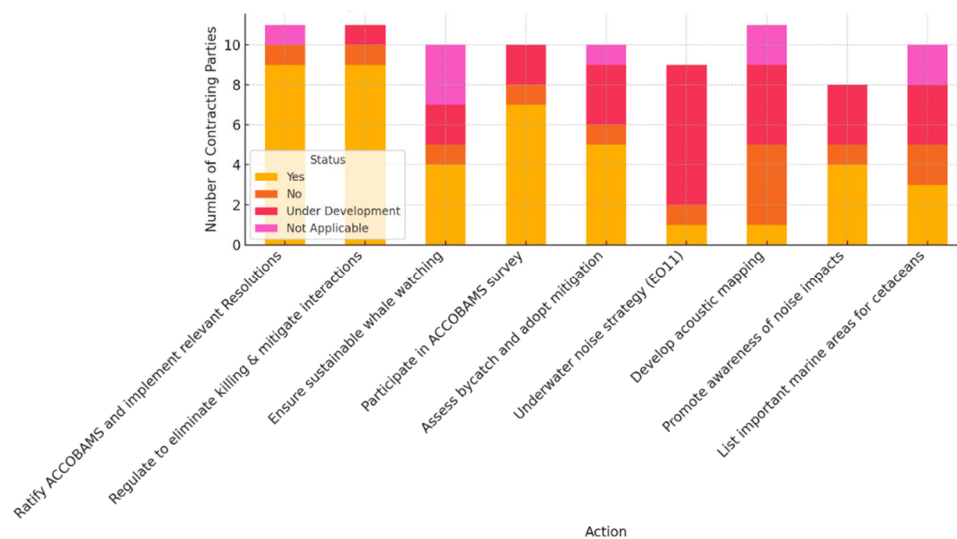


Breakdown of Reported Difficulties in Implementing the Bird Species Action Plan (2022–2023)



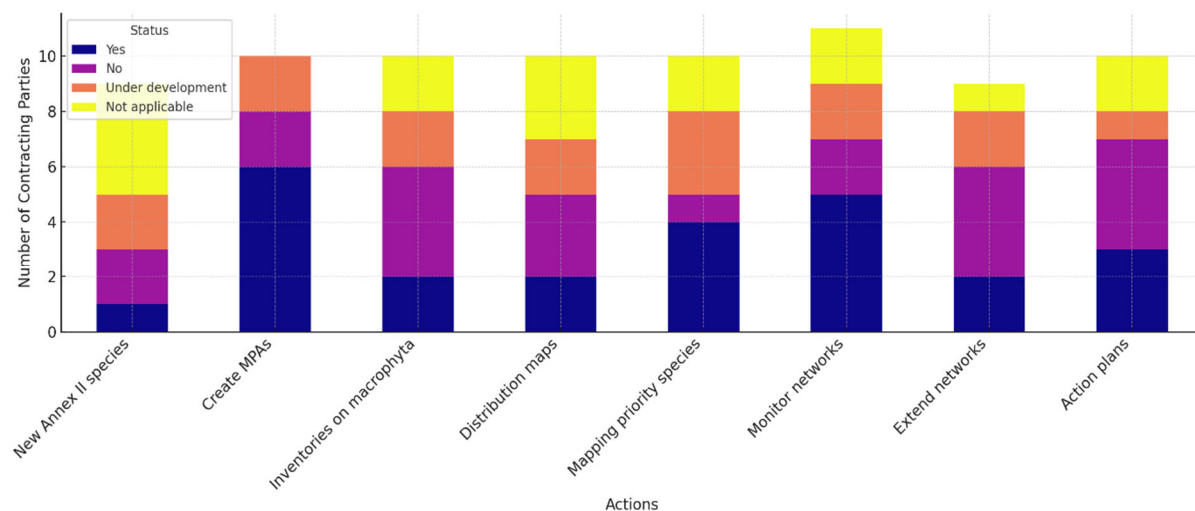
4. RAP for the conservation of Cetaceans (COP Decision IG 22/12)

Breakdown of Responses concerning the implementation Status for the
Cetaceans Regional Action Plan (2022–2023)

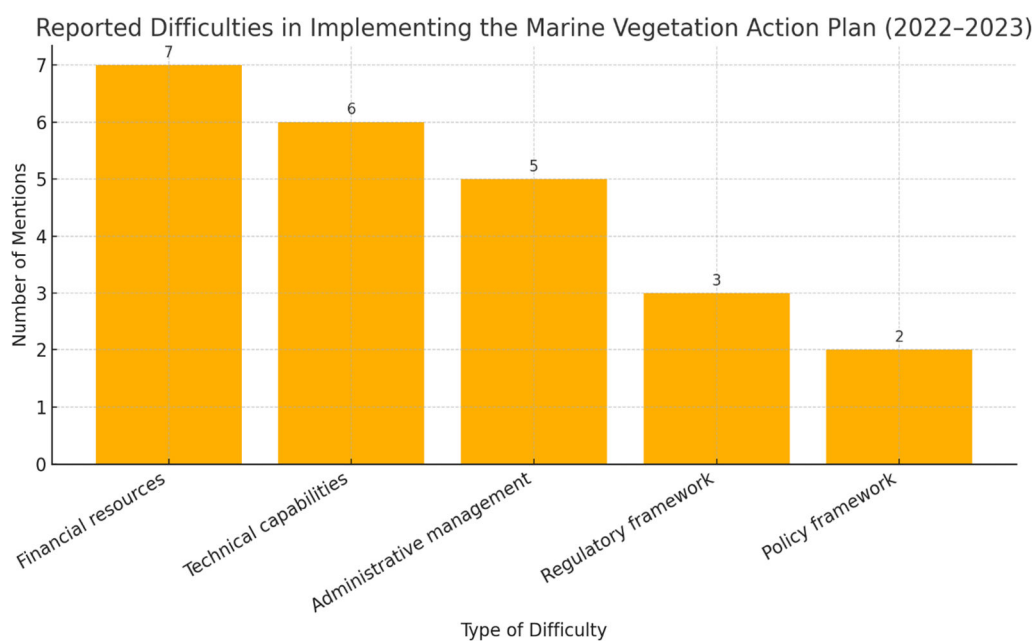


RAP for the conservation of Marine Vegetation (COP Decision IG 20/6)

Breakdown of Responses concerning the implementation Status for the Marine Vegetation Regional Action Plan (2022–2023)

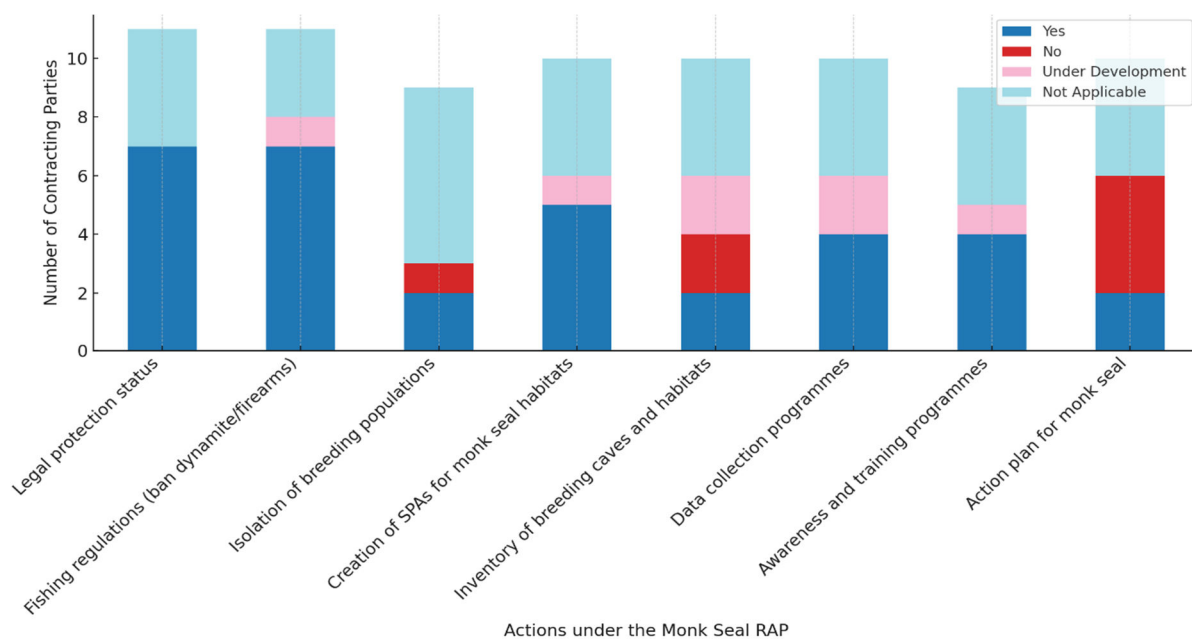


Original Action Title	Shortened Version
Take new vegetation species in Annex II into account	New Annex II species
Create MPAs to conserve marine vegetation	Create MPAs
Make national inventories on macrophyta species	Inventories on macrophyta
Make probable distribution maps for main plant assemblages	Distribution maps
Targeted mapping and inventorying (Annex II species, priority sites)	Mapping priority species
Monitoring networks for main marine plant assemblages	Monitor networks
Extend national networks for follow-up of plants	Extend networks
Develop action plans by priorities	Action plans

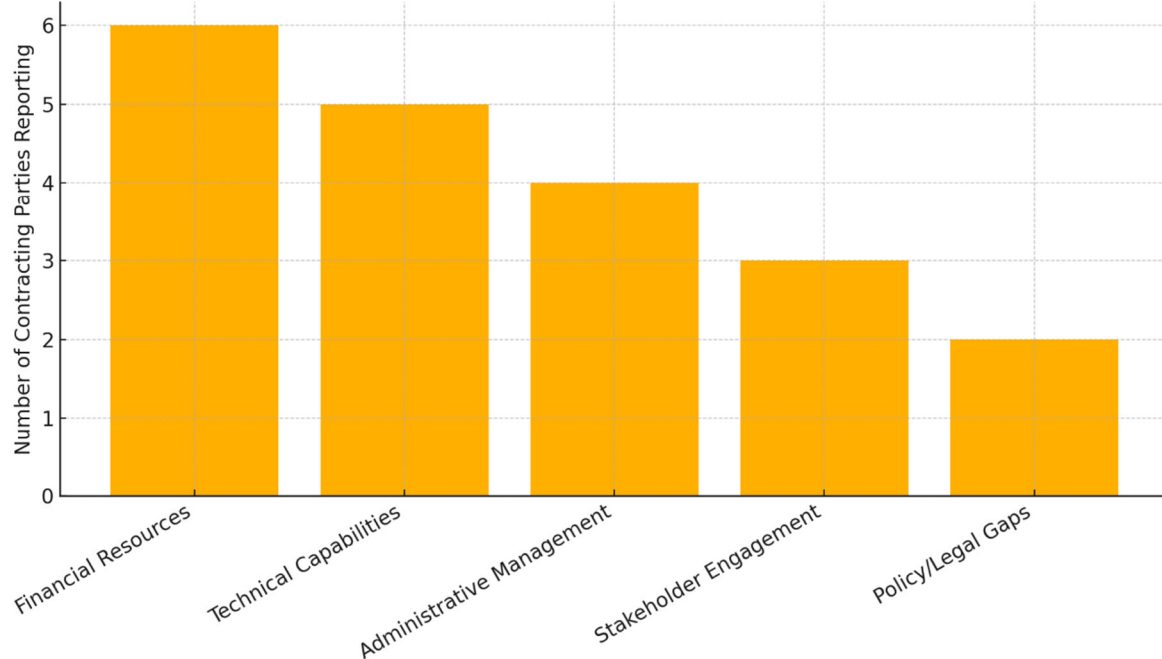


5. RAP for the conservation of the Monk Seal (1985 COP Decision)

Breakdown of Responses regarding the implementation Status
for Monk Seal RAP Measures (2022–2023)

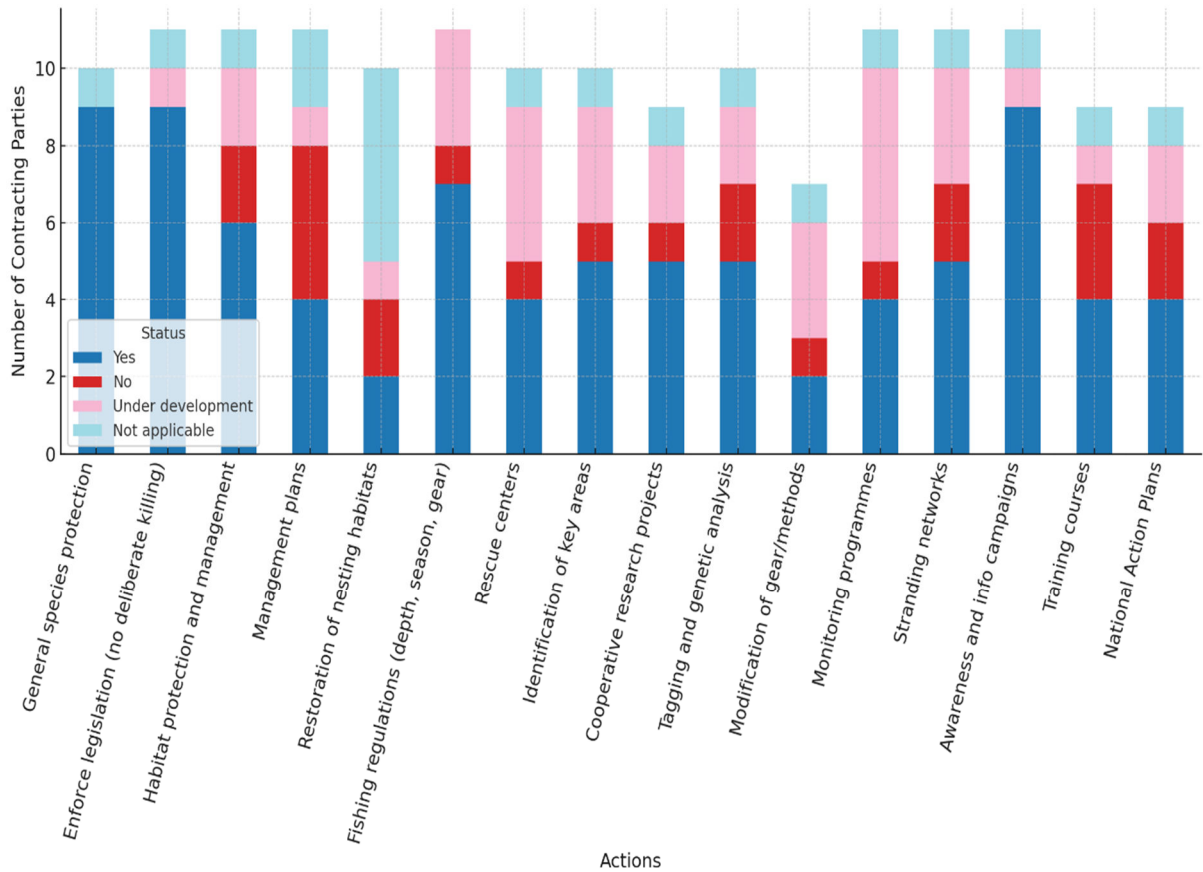


Reported Difficulties in Implementing the Monk Seal Regional Action Plan (2022–2023)

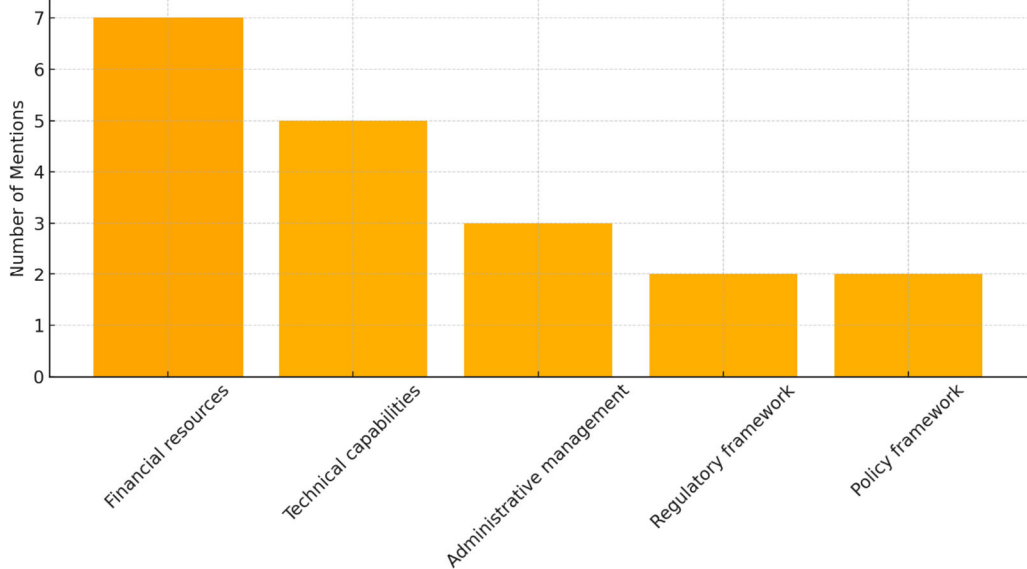


6. **RAP for the conservation of Mediterranean Marine Turtles (COP Decision IG 21/4)**

Breakdown of responses regarding the implementation status of the Regional Action Plan for Marine Turtles (2022–2023)

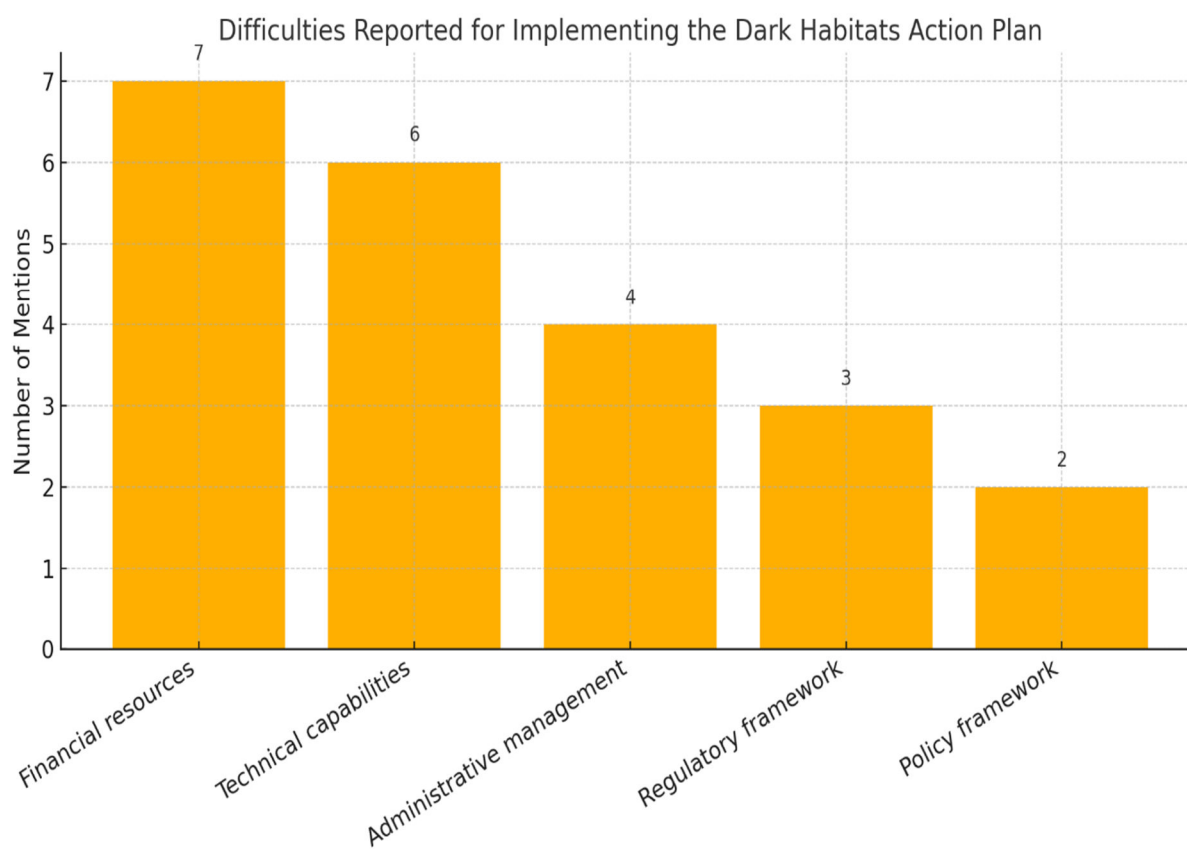
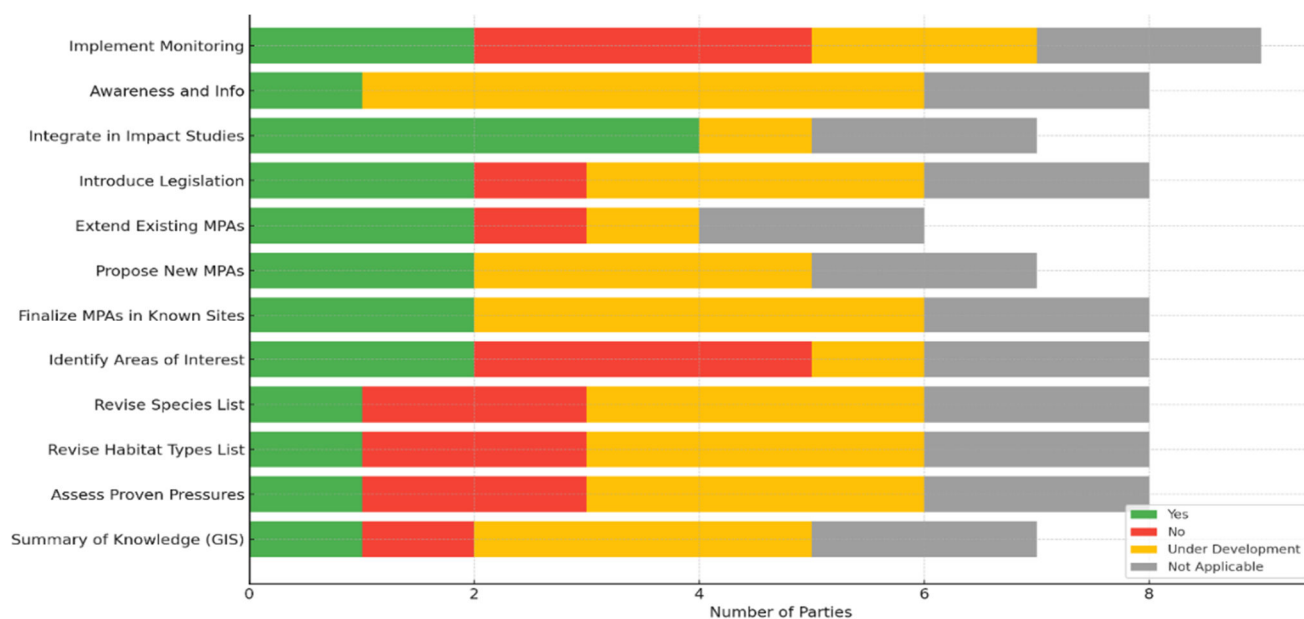


Reported Difficulties for Implementation of the Marine Turtle Action Plan (2022–2023)



7. Dark Habitats Action Plan (COP Decision IG 21/4)

Breakdown of responses regarding the the implementation status of the Regional Action Plan for Dark Habitats (2022–2023)



8. RAP for the conservation of Coralligenous and Other Calcareous Bio-concretions (COP Decision IG 22/12)

Breakdown of responses regarding the implementation of
Coralligenous Action Plan measures (2022–2023) 9 reports
received

