



UNITED
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/MED WG.608/7



UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN

28 April 2025
Original: English

Seventeenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points

Istanbul, Türkiye, 20-22 May 2025

Agenda Item 5: Conservation of Species and Habitats

5.3. Updating of the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

Draft updated Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

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.

© 2025

United Nations Environment Programme / Mediterranean Action Plan
(UNEP/MAP)
Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC)
Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat
B.P. 337 - 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia
E-mail: car-asp@spa-rac.org

Note by secretariat

1. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted, an Action Plan for the management of the Monk Seal (AP) in 1988 and the “Regional strategy (RS) for the conservation of Mediterranean monk seal (2014-2019)” in 2013. Considering that such strategy is intended to promote and undertake concerted and effective actions at the local level to reverse the Monk Seal critical status, and to encourage the concerned States to implement a series of joint measures aiming at re-establishing the favourable conservation status of Monk Seal populations and their natural habitat in the region, an updated strategy (2020-2025) was adopted by Barcelona Convention COP 19, 2019 Decision IG.24/7.
2. As was the case for the two earlier versions, this updated RS follows the guidelines detailed in the manual for the construction of Species Conservation Strategies (IUCN/SSC 2008). thus, it is structured as follows:
 - a. a **Vision**, with associated **Goals** and **Goal Targets** that are SMART¹;
 - b. the **Objectives** needed to achieve the Goal Targets within the stated time span, with associated **SMART Objective Targets**.
3. This update considers the findings of the review of the previous version’s implementation. The assessment was based on the responses obtained from an online questionnaire together with a desk review of relevant existing documents through a compilation of resources materials (e.g., grey and published literature, SPA/RAC progress reports, strategic documents, CoPs Decision...), including the Mid-term assessment of the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the conservation of Monk seal in the Mediterranean for the period from 2019 – 2022 (UNEP/MED WG.548/8 Rev.2).
4. This draft is submitted to the 17th meeting of the SPA/BD Focal Points for review and for agreement on its submission as appropriate to the meeting of MAP Focal Points and Barcelona COP 24 for adoption.

¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

Table of contents

1. Introduction and rationale	1
2. The Strategy	7
2.1. Vision	7
2.2. Goals	7
2.3. Goal Targets, Objectives and Objective Targets	7
3. Revision of the Strategy	19
4. References	20
<i>Annex I: Status of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean 2019 – 2025</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Annex II: Questionnaire on the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2020-2025)</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Annex III: Detail from the 25 completed questionnaires on the Assessment of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean</i>	<i>14</i>

List of Acronyms

AP: Action Plan

ISPRA: Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy).

IMAP: Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme

IUCN/SSC: International Union for Conservation of Nature /Species Survival Commission

MSA: The Monk Seal Alliance.

MSAC: Monk Seal Advisory Committee.

MedCEM: Mediterranean Centre for Environmental Monitoring

MOm: Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (Greece).

NECCA: Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (Greece)

UNEP/MED: United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan

RS: Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean

SPA/RAC: Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (Tunisia).

1. Introduction and rationale

1. In 1988, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted an Action Plan for the management of the Monk Seal (AP). This was followed in 2013 by the adoption of the “Regional strategy for the conservation of Mediterranean monk seal (2014-2019)” (RS). A new updated RS (2020-2025) was adopted by the Barcelona Convention COP 19, 2019 Decision IG.24/7.

2. This new draft RS, like those preceding it, produced by the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) in 2013² and 2019³, respectively, differs from the Barcelona Convention’s “Action plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*)” (UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003a) chiefly in terms of its method, considering that the old AP continues to be valid as far as its contents and general principles are concerned⁴.

3. As, it was the case for the two earlier versions, this updated RS follows the guidelines detailed in the manual for the construction of Species Conservation Strategies (IUCN/SSC 2008). Accordingly, it is structured with the following elements:

- c. a **Vision**, with associated **Goals** and **Goal Targets** that are SMART⁵;
- d. the **Objectives** needed to achieve the Goal Targets within the stated time span, with associated **SMART Objective Targets**.

4. The main problem encountered in envisaging a region-wide Strategy derives from the quite diverse conservation status of monk seals in the different portion of the Mediterranean and by consequence the quite different priorities and responsibilities saddled onto the various monk seal Range States.

5. To handle this challenge, Mediterranean countries were assigned to the following three groups (Figure 1 and Table 1):

- A. Countries where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2017⁶;
- B. Countries where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2017;
- C. Countries where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤3) were reported since 2017.

6. With respect to the precedent version, two countries have changed groups:

- Croatia, with practically no monk seal sightings reported in recent years, with the exception of a couple of opportunistic reports in 2022, has been moved to Group C from Group B.
- Syria, where between 2001-2023, Mediterranean monk seals were reported 34 times (17 of them between 2017-2023) in 7 different locations along the northern Syrian coast (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Of those 34 observations, with the exception of two dead individuals (one killed by a gunshot), all individuals were reportedly alive and routinely swimming around. These observations were concentrated in the area extending from Ras Al Bassit to Oum Al Tiur (9 caves) and that extending from Burj Islam to Slaib Al Turkman (7 caves).

² https://www.rac-spa.org/sites/default/files/doc_monackus/monk_seal_strategy.pdf

³ https://www.rac-spa.org/sites/default/files/action_plans/strategie_phoque_en.pdf

⁴ With few exceptions; e.g., concerning knowledge of the species, which is no longer as poor as it was in 1988 (Art. 3), and the fact that scientific opinion is no longer divided concerning conservation strategies (Art. 4).

⁵ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

⁶ Year 2017 was selected as a criterion to separate the present from the country assessments described in the first and second RSs, respectively.

This data should however be interpreted with some caution since only three of those reports were supported with photographic evidence. Hence, Syria has been moved to Group B from Group C.

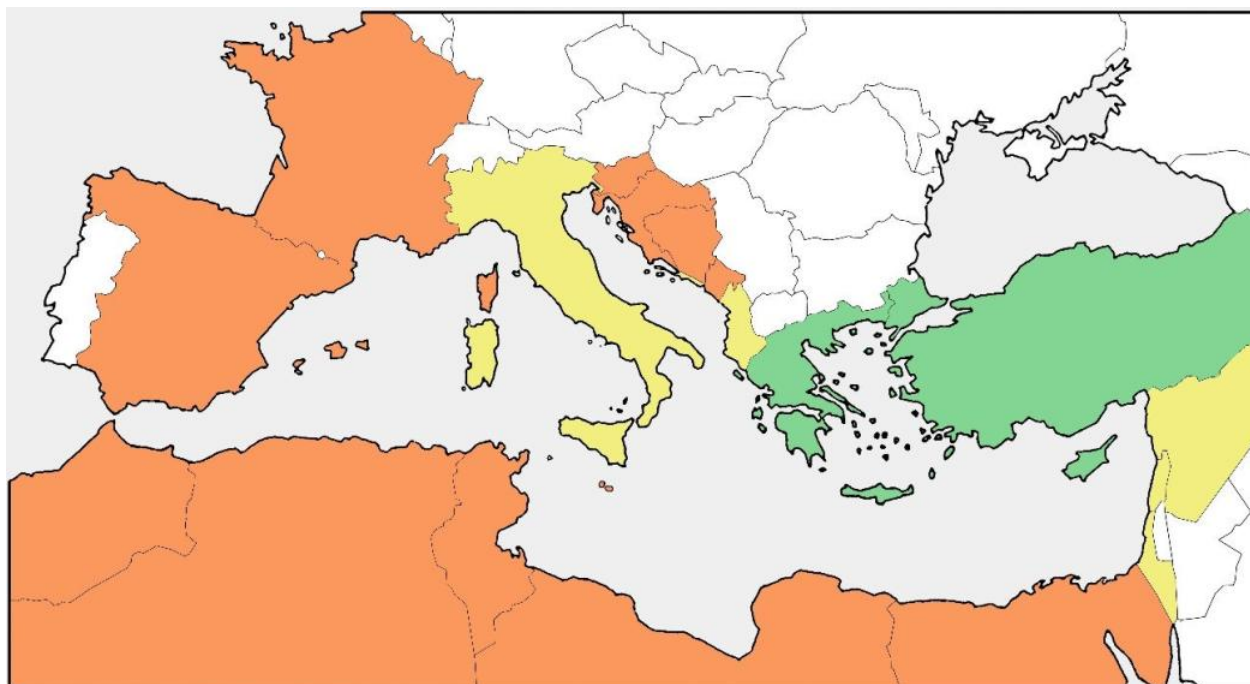


Figure 1. Monk seal conservation status by country (revised for this updated RS). Green: “Group A” countries (where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2017). Yellow: “Group B” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2017). Tan: “Group C” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤ 3) were reported since 2017).

7. We realise that the above are rough indicators (e.g., monk seals can be present in a location even if they are not seen, as sightings depend on the presence of observers and the animals can have very inconspicuous behaviours; breeding may not occur in some countries because of lack of breeding habitat, but there may be a healthy presence of animals in that country; etc.). However, the above indicators are conceived to separate countries into major categories according to their current importance for monk seals, thereby involving different types of actions.

8. Group A countries is where action is most urgent, because at the moment these countries are our best hope for the survival of the species. These countries host monk seal resident breeding populations and the majority of the species population.

9. Group B countries are important, because current monk seal sighting records suggest the potential for the species’ survival and expansion in areas beyond Group A country borders. Group B countries may contain monk seal critical coastal habitat which is likely to be re-colonised, and may lead to resident breeding nuclei, if conditions are favourable (as demonstrated by the frequent appearances of monk seals in many locations).

10. Group C countries are also important because, although they are characterised by rare monk seal occurrence, they contain historical monk seal critical habitat. The reestablishment of monk seal presence will become more likely if actions in nearby Group B countries are successful and if environmental conditions in historical critical habitat become favourable. In the absence of data collection mechanisms for monk seal sightings, some countries, known to host seals and suitable environmental conditions in the recent past, may currently qualify as Group C.

11. To fulfil the Vision, this draft updated Strategy identifies four Goals. The first Goal relates to the creation of a conservation support structure at the international level, whereas the other three Goals relate to each of the three Groups the various countries have been assigned to.

Table 1: Summary of monk seal presence in the different Mediterranean countries. Countries were subdivided as follows: Green: “Group A” countries (where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2017). Yellow: “Group B” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2017). Tan: “Group C” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤ 3) were reported since 2017). “Group C” includes countries where little or no data was collected at least since 2017, implying that monk seals could be occurring there more frequently, but no information is available

Country	Group A	Group B	Group C	References / Data sources	Notes
Albania				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b, UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2005, Anon. 2012; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019, 2021, 2022; Bakiu and Cakalli 2018; Karamanlidis 2024	Sightings of single and 2 individuals reported in the last 15 years and evidence of cave use recorded recently. Birth of a pup in 2019 that survived the first 2 months of its life. The species should now be considered to be effectively re-established, at least from the border of Albania to Greece north to the bay of Vlorë.
Algeria				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2006	The seal pup reported in 2006 was not <i>M. monachus</i> (Bouderbala <i>et al.</i> 2007). No recent confirmed reports
Bosnia Herzego.					No recent reports.
Croatia				Antolovic <i>et al.</i> 2007; Gomercic <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019	2000-2014: 300 individual sightings reported. Only ONE single adult female has been inhabiting area of Kvarner. It appeared in the area in June 2005 and died in August 2014. (data to be taken with caution since these sightings were ascribed to a limited number of animals). Almost monk seal sightings reported in recent years, with the exception of two opportunistic sightings in 2022 confirmed by photograph/video in Croatia (both in July and October 2022).: at Mljet National Park ⁷ , by a Park Ranger, and in Danče by a recreational fisher ⁸ .
Cyprus				Gucu <i>et al.</i> 2009a; UNEP/MAP/RAC/SPA 2011; Karamanlidis 2024; Marcou 2015; Nicolau <i>et al.</i> , 2021 ; Marcou and Nicolaou 2023	Evidence of breeding activities in the northern coast (2006-2007) and in the southern coast (since 2009). During 2009-2024, increasing number of seal sightings and the birth of several pups.
Egypt				Notarbartolo di Sciara and Fouad 2011	Single individual observed in 2011. No recent sightings.
France				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 1994	No recent reports.
France-Corsica				Data stored in Office de l'Environnement de Corse	Single individual sightings reported in 2007 and 2011

⁷ Mediterranean monk seal after 40 years spotted in the waters of NP Mljet!. <https://np-mljet.hr/mediterranean-monk-seal-after-40-years-spotted-in-the-waters-of-np-mljet/?lang=en>

⁸ <https://youtu.be/jehVIh6JWjE?si=nJO-yZj5TRppZDGj>

Greece				Karamanlidis 2024; Notarbartolo di Sciara <i>et al.</i> 2009; Panou 2009; National Action Plan for the Mediterranean Monk Seal (Joint Ministerial Decision ΥΠΕΝ/ΔΤΦΠΒ/95178/2431/5-9-2024 ⁹)	Mediterranean monk seals in Greece are expanding their range and increasing in numbers. Their marine habitat includes almost the entire coastline of the country up to a depth of 200 m. Greece is home to > 50% of the world population for the species.
Israel				Scheinin <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2016; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019; Roditi-Elasar <i>et al.</i> 2021, pers. comm.; Rabou <i>et al.</i> 2023	80+ individual sighting records (2010-2020), 2 different individuals observed in 2010. Monk seal “Yulia”, first spotted as a young adult in Türkiye back in 2007, seen in an open beach in Israel and even the Gaza Strip in May 2023, then spotted again in Israel in May 2024 and north of Beirut, Lebanon, in July 2024.
Italy				ISPRA records of in situ monitoring programs and national sighting database.	Individual validated sightings reported for the years :2010-2012, 2014-2015, 2017-2023. In situ cave use observed through monitoring: 2011-2013, 2016-2017,2020, 2022-2023. One stranded live seal pup but no direct observation of birth, lactation and coastal/cave use of mother-pup pairs observed. The species’ current national Red Listing status is Data Deficient due to the difficulty in establishing an overall national population estimate.
Lebanon				Anon. 2010; Karamanlidis 2024; Khatib 2016; SPA/RAC-UNEP/MAP, 2020 Data stored in Society for Nature Protection Lebanon	Single animal sightings reported: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Dead pregnant seal observed in 2015; 47 monk seal sightings recorded 2003-2020 from Beirut to Tripoli in the north of Lebanon. Recent reports on monk seal presence at Amchit Seal Cave ¹⁰ ; SPA/RAC 2024 by Fatfat; No evidence of successful pupping.
Libya				Hamza <i>et al.</i> 2003, UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA 2003b, UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA 2012; Alfaghi <i>et al.</i> 2013	25 sightings reported by fishermen between 1998-2002 A 60-kg female juvenile Mediterranean monk seal, approximately 6 months old was found in March 2012 entangled in a fishing net near El Elba Island. Another 2 dead individuals reported in 2023.
Malta				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b	One recent report, where <i>Dive Systems Malta</i> captured some footage off the southwest coast of Malta in early July 2024 ¹¹
Monaco					No recent reports. Monk seal habitat no longer present.

⁹ The National Action Plan for the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*) was published in September 2024 in the Official Gazette and prepared by the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk seal (MOM). <https://search.et.gr/el/fek/?fekId=770812>

Montenegro				Panou <i>et al.</i> 2017, 2023	A total of 14 single individual sightings Between 1985-2010 throughout the country's coastline may indicate movements of animals from neighbouring countries. >25 suitable caves. A young individual, recorded by MedCEM in August 2023 ¹² . Sightings also reported at Ulcinj and again in September 2024 in Bar (different locations).
Morocco				UNEP-MAPRAC/SPA 2003b, Mo <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019	More than 90 sightings reported by fishermen 2000-2005, 1 sighting 2006 (Chafarinas isl.)
Slovenia				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b	No reports.
Spain				Anon. 2008, Font and Mayol 2009; Karamanlidis 2024.	Individual sighted in 2008. More sightings in 2009. Possibly extinct, detection through eDNA, no recent sightings
Syria				Gucu 2004, Jony and Ibrahim 2006, Mo <i>et al.</i> 2003; Ibrahim <i>et al.</i> 2024	Between 2001-2023, Mediterranean monk seals reported 34 times (only three with photographic evidence) in 9 different locations along the northern Syrian coast. They were concentrated in the area extending from Ras Al Bassit to Oum Al Tiur (9 caves) and that extending from Burj Islam to Slaib Al Turkman (7 caves).
Tunisia				S. Guelloz ,pers. comm.	Single individual sightings reported: 2007, 2011 (La Galite archipelago)
Türkiye				Güçlüsoy <i>et al.</i> 2004; Gucu <i>et al.</i> 2009b; Karamanlidis <i>et al.</i> 2023; Karamanlidis 2024	The number of Mediterranean monk seals in Türkiye has been estimated at 76–140 individuals, including 42–120 mature individuals. As it is the case in neighboring Greece, their marine habitat is considered to include most of the coastline of the country up to a depth of 200 m.

¹⁰ https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBQkDqvMRSk/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuurntREzw0>

¹² <https://medpan.org/en/news/exceptional-filmed-observation-monk-seal-montenegro>

2. The Strategy

2.1. Vision

(As it was stated in the first version of the RS in 2013 and still valid)

12. *Over the next two decades, the ecological recovery of monk seals in the Mediterranean will deem to have occurred, when multiple colonies have become established within all major habitats in their historic range, interacting in ecologically significant ways with the fullest possible set of other species, and inspiring and connecting human cultures.*

2.2. Goals

13. **Goal 1.** Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

14. **Goal 2.** Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate and accidental killings, habitat degradation and human disturbance, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

15. **Goal 3.** Monk seal presence in sites where they are repeatedly seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

16. **Goal 4.** Monk seal presence is reported repeatedly in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

2.3. Goal Targets, Objectives and Objective Targets

Goal 1. Strategy implementation.

17. Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

Goal Target 1.1. A framework for the implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Conservation Strategy is established by the Mediterranean Range States. The framework will include the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC).

18. **Objective 1.1.1.** SPA/RAC establishes a **Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)**¹³. The main objective of the Committee is to support SPA/RAC in the development and implementation of specific conservation actions related to monk seal research and conservation in the framework of the RS and other initiatives/programmes in the region. Tasks of the MSAC will include :

¹³ Detail on draft Terms of Reference for the MSAC can be found at UNEP/MED WG.548/8 Rev.2 Annex I https://www.rac-spa.org/meetings/nfp16/docs/working/rev/WG548-8_ENG_REV_2_.pdf

- provide support to SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Strategy and its review and updating (e.g., by defining the Actions needed to attain the different Objective Targets);
- provide recommendations and advice on issues related to monk seal conservation;
- support SPA/RAC in the creation and maintenance of a forum for monk seal conservation practitioners, where relevant information and experience is shared, exchanges are facilitated, challenges are discussed, cooperative initiatives are enhanced, transparency and openness of procedures are safeguarded.

19. The MSAC is composed by a small number of experts, which should include, not only monk seal experts, but also professional profiles such as: marine conservation ecologists, marine veterinaries, fisheries experts, fisheries practitioners, socio-economists, MPA practitioners, and representatives from relevant intergovernmental regional organisations.

20. The MSAC function is supported by SPA/RAC, and may benefit from relevant bodies within IUCN, the GFCM, and other international organisations.

21. **Objective Target 1.1.1.1.** MSAC established by 2026. The Advisory Committee meets at least once a year to review the status of monk seals in the Mediterranean, and to support the implementation of the Actions foreseen in the Strategy.
22. **Objective Target 1.1.1.2.** First meeting of MSAC in November 2026. The MSAC experts shall elect among them a chairperson that can be re-elected annually. SPA/RAC will act as secretariat and appoint a representative and Coordinator that will follow up on the organisation and work of the committee.
23. **Objective Target 1.1.1.3.** MSAC activities are harmonised, wherever appropriate, with prescriptions of the EU Habitats Directive, and with efforts by UNEP-MAP within the Ecosystem Approach process for the attainment of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean, i.e., to attain Ecological Objective EO1 “Biodiversity” and Operational Objectives 1.1 (“Species distribution is maintained”), 1.2 (“Population size of selected species is maintained”), 1.3 (“Population condition of selected species is maintained”), 1.4 (“Key coastal and marine habitats are not being lost”), as far as monk seals are concerned.
24. **Objective Target 1.1.1.4.** Member States establish a national multiannual program that draws from, their National Action Plan (if any), the Action Plan and the Strategy objectives, that incorporates monitoring, capacity building and conservation measures into relevant existing national programs involving monitoring of marine biodiversity and spatial protection measures that have been formulated for national and international policy implementation (i.e. monitoring as per EcAP/IMAP region-wide programs and Habitats Directive and MSFD for EC Member States, MPA network development and marine Natura 2000 establishment for Mediterranean EC countries). The MSAC reviews the multiannual programs and reports to SPA/RAC, recommending content improvement so as to harmonise conservation efforts at a regional level with common objectives and comparable efforts. The MSAC will provide support to SPA/RAC so national multiannual programs are defined by early 2027.

25. **Objective 1.1.2.** The Parties to the Barcelona Convention ensure that the activities that the MSAC recommends are addressed.

26. **Objective Target 1.1.2.1.** The Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopt resolutions in support of specific MSAC recommendations concerning the implementation of this Strategy.

Goal Target 1.2. Based on this Strategy, the MSAC provides support to SPA/RAC in the development and implementation of specific conservation actions having a regional scope.

27. **Objective 1.2.1.** The first task of the MSAC is to support SPA/RAC on supervising the attainment of Goals 2, 3 and 4.

28. **Objective 1.2.2.** Capacity building and awareness activities are planned by the MSAC, and promoted in monk seal Ranges States by SPA/RAC so that monk seal protection and recovery is effectively embraced at the national level. This will include the preparation of a dedicated website (including links to the relevant existing web pages) and the regular issuing and widely distributed monk seal information newsletter in an adequate number of different languages.

29. **Objective Target 1.2.2.1.** Capacity building: the main groups of stakeholders in monk seal conservation are identified by the MSAC, taking stock of national frameworks pertaining to the relevant sectors, tailored to each different monk seal Range State (with first priority given to “Group A Countries” and second priority given to “Group B Countries”), and training courses are prepared and planned (see Goal Target 2.2.). Preferably, training events will be developed *in situ* at selected locations having special relevance to monk seal conservation, in collaboration with the local groups, and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full and long-lasting advantage derives from the effort.

30. **Objective Target 1.2.2.2.** In order to facilitate collaboration and communication amongst monk seal conservation experts throughout the region, the MSAC provides support to SPA/RAC for organizing periodical workshops on best practices of monk seal monitoring and conservation techniques, preferably taking advantage of other meetings being periodically organised (e.g., CIESM Congresses, ECS Annual meetings). Proceedings are edited and widely diffused (e.g., by pdf through the Internet) in formats that will serve as “best practice guidelines”.

31. **Objective Target 1.2.2.3.** In consultation with MSAC awareness actions are promoted by SPA/RAC, with first priority given to “Group A Countries” and second priority given to “Group B Countries”, in cooperation with **local** groups, targeting special-interest stakeholders such as fishermen and local coastal communities.

32. **Objective Target 1.2.2.4.** Ideally, an electronic monk seal newsletter should be issued yearly by SPA/RAC based on the recommendations from the MSAC and made freely available on-line (e.g., by resuming the *Monachus Guardian*), starting in 2026.

33. **Objective 1.2.3.** Monitoring of monk seal distribution and abundance, as well as advances in knowledge important for monk seal conservation, are promoted and supported by SPA/RAC through training, workshops and the facilitation of research and monitoring programmes. The monitoring process is made to coincide with the similar monitoring requirements within the framework of the Ecosystem Approach-IMAP process by UNEP-MAP, and (where appropriate) with the Marine Framework Strategy Directive and Habitats Directive of the EC.
34. **Objective Target 1.2.3.1.** MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the completion of monk seal breeding site inventories in “Group A Countries” by 2030.
35. **Objective Target 1.2.3.2.** MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the yearly monitoring of monk seal population parameters (e.g., population abundance, trends, pup production) in breeding sites in “Group A Countries”, starting in 2026.
36. **Objective Target 1.2.3.3.** MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the monitoring of monk seal parameters (e.g., species distribution, population abundance, mortality levels and causes) in areas of “Group B countries” with recurrent sightings, habitat availability, and spatial protection measures for the species.
37. **Objective Target 1.2.3.4.** MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the set-up of common databases (e.g., photo-id catalogues). An initiative, in line with this, is being considered at the moment of producing this draft by the Monk Seal Alliance (MSA)¹⁴. Strengthening cross-border cooperation and data-sharing mechanisms among Mediterranean countries would help to enhance the tracking of monk seal movements and improve habitat protection measures.
38. **Objective 1.2.4.** The MSAC will provide support to SPA/RAC in facilitating the definition of a region-wide protocol for rescue and rehabilitation centres and programmes, and will provide support and advice, as required, to such centres and programmes supported by the different Range States.
39. **Objective Target 1.2.4.1.** Region-wide protocol for rescue and rehabilitation centres and programmes defined by the MSAC by 2026, taking stock of the successful initiatives developed during the last 30 years¹⁵.
40. **Objective 1.2.5.** MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the development of contingency plans for disastrous events (e.g., lethal epizootic outbreaks, massive oil spills within monk seal habitat), and for emergency conditions which may derive from catastrophic environmental change. Ideally, this should be done in cooperation with equivalent bodies dealing with the conservation of Mediterranean monk seals in the Atlantic, with the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean (i.e., within the ACCOBAMS framework), and with the appropriate bodies within the “Barcelona System” (e.g., REMPEC). The contingency plan will include the collection and safe storage of Mediterranean monk seal germplasm which may support in the future the recovery of the species, should it become necessary.

¹⁴ <https://www.monksealalliance.org/> The MSA was created in 2019 by five founding members experienced in funding Mediterranean monk seal conservation projects: the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the MAVA Foundation, the Segre Foundation, the Sancta Devota Foundation and the Thalassa Foundation.

¹⁵ The Monk Seal Rehabilitation program in Greece (on-going for well over three decades) offers an obvious choice to contribute to the training of managers from other countries of the Group A. Rescue and rehabilitation protocols have been officially adopted by the Greek state. Currently, the Greek monk seal rehabilitation program supports the Republic of Cyprus in the establishment of a monk seal rehabilitation structure.

41. **Objective Target 1.2.5.1.** Contingency plan coordinated by SPA/RAC with support of MSAC in 2027 and adopted by the subsequent Barcelona Convention CoP.

(Note on MSAC: Once the MSAC is established, a first meeting of MSAC takes place and a chairperson is elected a two-year trial period could be envisaged for the MSAC so as to evaluate its real effectiveness.).

Goal 2. “Group A” countries.

42. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate and accidental killings, habitat degradation and human disturbance, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in Group A countries with special attention to the following locations: a) Zakynthos, Kefalonia, Ithaca and the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago (Meganisi, Arkoudi, Atokos, Kalamos, Kastos, Vromonas and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northwest Evia; c) Northern Sporades; d) Northern Cyclades (including the Natura 2000 site of the Island of Gyaros and its surrounding 3-mile marine area); e) Northern Karpathos - Saria and the Astakida islets; f) Kimolos and Polyaigos; g) Turkish coasts; h) Cyprus. Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate and accidental killings, habitat degradation and human disturbance, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas. (Considering that in both Greece and Turkey monk seal’s marine habitat includes almost the entire coastline of the country up to a depth of 200 m., and that a large portion of it is included in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) identified by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force¹⁶, priority should be paid to the locations listed above, but conservation actions should not be limited exclusively to them. In the case of Greece, the *National Action Plan for the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Greece*, officially adopted by the Greek Government in September 2024 -Official Gazette 5100/B/10-09-2024¹⁷- should provide guidance on future conservation action since it presents the most recent and reliable information on the species at a National level..)

43. **Objective 2.1.1.** Current legislation prohibiting to carry firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels in Greece, Türkiye and Cyprus is enforced, with a special attention in locations listed in Goal Target 2.1. Monitoring and mitigating negative seal–fishery interactions schemes put in place.
44. **Objective Target 2.1.1.1.** Compliance with existing laws concerning firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels in Greece, Türkiye and Cyprus is routinely enforced everywhere, to come into effect with immediate urgency. Appropriate statistics of infringements are kept and publicised. Infringements are prosecuted with penalties appropriate to address the destruction of an endangered, highly species. Enforcement of fishing regulations and eradication of illegal fishing practices.

¹⁶ See <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas/>

¹⁷ <https://search.et.gr/el/fek/?fekId=770812>

45. **Objective 2.1.2.** Locations listed in Goal Target 2.1, and other equally important locations that may be eventually discovered in the future, are geographically delimited and legally protected/managed. The resulting MPA network should be ecologically coherent and effectively managed in order to guarantee favourable conservation status.
46. **Objective Target 2.1.2.1.** A monk seal MPA network encompassing the most important monk seal habitat in the area is formally established in the Greek Ionian islands by 2030. All areas within the Greek NATURA 2000 network and designated of exceptional importance for the breeding of the species should have the necessary institutional protection in order to minimize disturbance from human activities at the breeding sites of the species. A valid example is the islet of Formicula, in the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago¹⁸, where a decision by the Minister of the environment was adopted on 31/12/2024¹⁹, establishing a strict protection regime²⁰ around Formicula.
47. **Objective Target 2.1.2.2.** Implementation and enforcement of specific interaction guidelines²¹ to prevent any adverse effects of recently developed “monk seal tourism” in Lichadonisia islets off the northwestern end of the island of Evia.
48. **Objective Target 2.1.2.3.** Ensure continuity and the future effectiveness of a patrolling system of the National Marine Park of Alonissos Northern Sporades²²
49. **Objective Target 2.1.2.4.** The current Natura 2000 site around the island of Gyaros is formally established. The legislative status of the MPA must be finalized through the issuance of a definitive Presidential Decree by 2026 and a science-based, regularly updated Management Plan.
50. **Objective Target 2.1.2.5.** A monk seal MPA is formally established in Karpathos - Saria by 2026²³.
51. **Objective Target 2.1.2.6.** A monk seal MPA is formally established in Kimolos - Polyaigos by 2026.

¹⁸ https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/?sitecode=GR2220003&views=Sites_View

¹⁹ link to Decision YΠEN/ΔΔΦΠΒ/123711/3066 of 31/12/2024 published in the Hellenic National Gazette, with maps: <https://tinyurl.com/mb5a9kx9>

²⁰ Measures aiming at mitigating tourist disturbance to monk seals include the delimitation of a 200 m-wide no-entry zone along the islet's coast, except for a corridor to allow access to organised tours to a single ad hoc mooring. The fact that fishing is not excluded from the no-entry zone, offers a loophole potentially opening the door to indiscriminate access, undermining the measure's effectiveness. Now the organisations that were actively involved in this process, together with the relevant government agencies, local communities and stakeholders should bring this plan to life.

²¹ <https://ioniandolphinproject.org/mediterranean-monk-seals/monk-seal-watching-guidelines/>

²² The Management Unit of Sporades National Park operates under the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA), Protected Areas Management Directorate (Sector A), based in Alonissos.

<https://necca.gov.gr/en/mdpp/management-unit-of-alonissos-northern-sporades-national-park-and-protected-areas-of-eastern-thessaly/#Actions>

²³ Greece has already established the protected area Management Body in Karpathos in 2007, however the MPA has not been legally declared yet.

52. **Objective Target 2.1.2.7.** Monk seal MPAs are formally established along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Türkiye by 2030, to protect monk seal critical habitat as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee. Continuity is given to both monk seal ongoing projects; a) in the Muğla Province, run in collaboration between MSA and the Ministry of Agriculture, and b) Forestry, and Fethiye and Babadağ Pilot Coastal Zoning and Management Planning supported by UNDP GEF-SGP. Similar initiatives to be developed in other important sites for the species.
53. **Objective Target 2.1.2.8.** Monk seal MPAs are formally established in Cyprus and in any other area where suitable monk seal critical habitat has been identified and established²⁴.
54. **Objective 2.1.3.** Areas in locations listed under Goal Target 2.1 are effectively protected through a) appropriate management actions, and b) the involvement of the local communities, which will both ensure the good conservation status of monk seals found there. A management framework is in place and implemented, defining the spatial, temporal and specific measures needed in the species' critical habitats (e.g., regulating access to caves), thereby affording effective protection to haul out and pupping sites.
55. **Objective Target 2.1.3.1.** Until formal protection of the areas listed under Goal Target 2.1 is established and enforced, patrolling of the most important haul out and pupping locations and caves is organised at least during the summer and breeding season. Patrolling can be done by volunteers, well-trained and possibly local, who could also be performing awareness actions *in situ*, as well as solicit the intervention of law enforcers in case of need. Since this may be counterproductive if not properly executed, it should only happen under expert guidance (e.g., MSAC). In Greece, the competent management body is NECCA, which should coordinate any volunteer patrolling/monitoring scheme while extreme caution is taken to prevent any leaks of sensitive information (e.g., seal pupping cave locations) to the general public or to inadvertently cause an increase of disturbance.
56. **Objective Target 2.1.3.2.** All monk seal MPAs established under Objective 2.1.2, as well as those already created (e.g., National Marine Park of Alonissos – Northern Sporades), are endowed with an operant Management Body and a management plan that is adaptive, ecosystem-based and fully implemented by 2030.
57. **Objective Target 2.1.3.3.** Management in monk seal MPAs established under Objective 2.1.2 is conducted in a participatory fashion, with the full involvement of local relevant stakeholders, as considered necessary in a case-by-case basis (e.g., artisanal fishers, tourism operators, managers and politicians). All proposals and decisions aiming at establishing or modifying conservation and protection measures must be based on sound and indisputable scientific data and evidence. Elements of participatory approach will include awareness campaigns as well as the experimentation/adoption of innovative mechanisms to address opportunity costs, damage mitigation and the generation of alternative sources of income (e.g., ecotourism).

²⁴ In Cyprus, four MPAs were established through Ministerial Decrees (through the Fisheries Law and Regulations) for the protection of the Mediterranean monk seal and its habitats: Halavro MPA; Agios Georgios Alamanou MPA; Ayia Napa Sea Caves; Peyia Sea Caves:

[https://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/dfmr/dfmr.nsf/0/0021828B42D07413C2258B64002DE442/\\$file/Report%20MONACHUS%202020-2023%20-%20eng.pdf](https://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/dfmr/dfmr.nsf/0/0021828B42D07413C2258B64002DE442/$file/Report%20MONACHUS%202020-2023%20-%20eng.pdf)

Goal Target 2.2. Implementation of Goal Target 2.1. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

58. **Objective 2.2.1.** Training sessions are organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 2.1, with the support of the MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1). Training will concentrate, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglements), and will target stakeholders identified by the MSAC (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges). Training will be developed together with the local groups and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort. Lessons learnt from previously executed capacity-building initiatives will be implemented. Follow-up contacts by MSAC with those participating in capacity building activities will be scheduled to secure post-training support and guidance.

Goal 3. “Group B” countries.

59. Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes in areas characterised by sufficient and suitable coastal habitat. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

60. Monk seal presence in “Group B” countries must be verified with appropriate methods so as to define the actual species’ use of the coastal seas and identify the areas in which priority monitoring, awareness and protection actions need to be carried out. Priority areas of usage will be identified thorough sighting collection campaigns, habitat surveys in areas of hotspot sightings, and where the coastal habitat is most pristine (which implies analysis of coastal habitat characteristics and their distribution in each nation), followed by *in situ* monitoring to assess the eventual degree of habitat use by monk seals. Coastal areas with confirmed repeated use must be evaluated in terms of pressures and risks.

61. In areas where the importance for the species has been well established in recent years, even if monitoring and protection actions may be already in place, such actions must be given long-term continuity²⁵.

62. Awareness activities to be carried out in each site will depend on the type of use of the coasts by the species, the degree of the pressures insisting in each site, and the risks involved. Spatial protection measures are established and site-specific management actions are implemented to reduce the pressures on the basis of the monitoring and risk analysis outcomes.

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Albania and specially in southern Albania (between the area bordering with Greece and north to the bay of Vlorë), is permanently established and monk seal breeding resumes.

63. **Objective Target 3.1.1.** A reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence and alert authorities continues to be implemented along the Albanian coastal zone and awareness actions are conducted.

²⁵ The Eastern Adriatic Monk Seal Project²⁵, funded by MSA, with dedicated actions and partners in Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro will be particularly relevant for Goal Targets 3.1, 3.2. and 4.3: <https://www.monksealalliance.org/en/projets/eastern-adriatic-monk-seal-project-phase-ii-00557>

64. **Objective Target 3.1.2.** Monk seal habitat along the coasts of Albania is completely mapped and populations are monitored, paying special attention to Southern Albania (between the area bordering with Greece and north to the bay of Vlorë).

65. **Objective Target 3.1.2.1.** Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies as recommended by the MSAC are applied to caves in appropriate locations.

66. **Objective Target 3.1.2.2.** A programme targeting the local community and visitors, aimed at increasing awareness and fostering species' protection measures is continued and enhanced.

Goal Target 3.2. Monk seal presence in Montenegro is permanently established.

67. **Objective 3.2.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the coastal zone of Montenegro.

68. **Objective 3.2.2.** To take advantage of the Coastal habitat assessment studies conducted in recent years (Mačić et al., 2019) and give continuity, and expand as necessary, the on-going long-term cave monitoring programmes in Montenegro.

Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Italy, in areas with recurrent sightings, habitat availability and proximity to nearby breeding colonies, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

69. **Objective 3.3.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the coastal areas characterised by recurrent sightings and coastal habitat historically used by the species

70. **Objective 3.3.2.** Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands.

71. **Objective Target 3.3.2.1.** Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies, applied to caves in appropriate locations within the Egadi Islands MPA, is continued and enhanced.

72. **Objective Target 3.3.2.2.** A programme targeting the local community and visitors, aimed at increasing awareness and fostering species' protection measures is continued and enhanced.

73. **Objective 3.3.3.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings in Sardinia.

74. **Objective 3.3.4.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago.

75. **Objective 3.3.5.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and recurrent recent sightings in the lesser islands of the Sicily Strait (Pantelleria, Pelagie islands).

76. **Objective 3.3.5.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in Salento (Apulia) in coastal areas containing historical monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings.

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in Lebanon is permanently established.

77. **Objective 3.4.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Lebanese coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.

78. **Objective 3.4.2.** A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted in the areas characterised by recent recurrent monk seal sightings and long-term cave monitoring program is initiated in northern Lebanon; conservation actions are implemented in the Palm Islands nature reserve by 2026²⁶.

Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Israel is permanently established.²⁷

79. **Objective 3.5.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the Israeli coastal zone and awareness actions are conducted in areas characterised by recent sightings or coastal habitat suitability.

80. **Objective 3.5.2.** A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted, and a long-term cave monitoring program is implemented in northern Israel.

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Syria is permanently established.

Objective 3.6.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian coastal zone and awareness actions are conducted in areas characterised by recent sightings or coastal habitat suitability.

Objective 3.6.2. A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted, and a long-term cave monitoring program is implemented in Syria.

Goal Target 3.7. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6 is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

81. **Objective 3.7.1.** Capacity building. Training sessions are organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6, with the support of the MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1). Training will concentrate, at least initially, on national / local groups working on the development of monitoring and awareness programs directed at mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglements). Capacity building activities can also target stakeholders identified by national/local groups with the support of the MSAC (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges). Training will be developed together with the local groups and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.

²⁶ Project *Recolonization of the Monk Seal in Lebanon*, supported by MSA and led by IndyACT, sets up a favorable framework to achieve Goal target 3.4. <https://www.monksealalliance.org/en/projets/recolonization-of-the-monk-seal-in-lebanon-00563>

²⁷ Project *Preparing the ground for the monk seal's return to the Israeli coast*, supported by MSA and led by Delphis, should greatly facilitate Goal target 3.6. <https://www.monksealalliance.org/en/projets/preparing-the-ground-for-the-monk-seal-s-return-to-the-israeli-coast-00565>

82. **Objective 3.7.2.** Streamlining of sighting and cave monitoring results carried out in Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6 above is discussed at sub regional level in order to better assess the population status in the “Group B” countries within a geographic context that goes beyond country borders, and in order to identify priority areas in which spatial protection measures are necessary.

83. **Objective 3.7.3.** Capacity building of MPA managers acting in monk seal distribution areas identified through the implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3. 6, is carried out so as to discuss improved management and mitigation measures to be introduced in existing MPAs.

84. **Objective 3.7.4.** The implementation of Goals 3.1-3.6 is carried out, as much as possible, through the development of international collaboration frameworks, directed at guaranteeing sharing of expertise and monitoring results amongst neighbour countries for the purpose of sub regional status assessments and conservation goal attainment. The latter is particularly important for countries that have limited suitable coastal habitat and recurrent sightings and which border countries with breeding colonies or countries with sightings and extensive and suitable habitat. This may involve cross collaboration initiatives that involve an array mixture of Group A, B and C countries (i.e. Türkiye- Israel -Cyprus; Syria-Lebanon-, Libya-Egypt, Greece-Albania-Italy-Montenegro-Croatia, Italy-Tunisia-Algeria-Morocco).

Goal 4. “Group C” countries.

85. Monk seal presence is again repeatedly reported in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal presence in locations of the Maghreb’s Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

86. **Objective 4.1.1.** A reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence through sightings and to alert authorities is implemented along Maghreb’s Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands characterised by monk seal historical presence and recent sightings. This includes areas such as: northern Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain); awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.

87. **Objective 4.1.2.** Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the Al Hoceima National Park²⁸ and Cap Trois Fourches in order to assess monk seal presence in the Mediterranean Moroccan coastal area.

88. **Objective 4.1.3.** Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the Chafarinas islands in order to assess monk seal presence in the area.

89. **Objective 4.1.4.** Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in previous studies carried out in selected Algerian locations in order to assess monk seal presence in the area.

²⁸ Project Med-Monk seal Project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean, supported by MSA and led by SPA/RAC, sets up a favorable framework to achieve objective 4.1.2.

90. **Objective 4.1.5.** Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the La Galite Archipelago²⁹ (North of Tunisia) in order to assess monk seal presence in the area.

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

91. **Objective 4.2.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented; awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands, Spain.

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence in Croatia is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

92. **Objective 4.3.1.** A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the Croatian coastal areas.

93. **Objective 4.3.2.** Long-term cave monitoring activities are implemented in selected locations identified as suitable habitat for monk seals based on previous observations.

Goal Target 4.4. Monk seal presence in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia repeatedly reported and permanently established.

94. **Objective 4.4.1.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.

Goal Target 4.5. Monk seal presence in Corsica is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

95. **Objective 4.5.1.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica.

Goal Target 4.6. Monk seal presence is reported again from continental France.

96. **Objective 4.6.1.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica and continental France.

Goal Target 4.7. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

97. **Objective 4.7.1.** Monk seal ecology and behaviour is monitored in Libya³⁰ (Cyrenaica) and nearby Egyptian coast³¹ (from the border with Libya, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).

²⁹ Project Med-Monk seal Project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean, supported by MSA and led by SPA/RAC, sets up a favorable framework to achieve objective 4.1.5

³⁰ Project Med-Monk seal Project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean, supported by MSA and led by SPA/RAC, sets up a favorable framework to achieve objective 4.6.1

³¹ Project Med-Monk seal Project: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean, supported by MSA and led by SPA/RAC, sets up a favorable framework to achieve objective 4.6.1

98. **Objective Target 4.7.1.1.** Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Libyan easternmost coast bordering with Egypt is conducted and long-term cave monitoring is established in this area as well as in the caves identified in previous projects.
99. **Objective Target 4.7.1.2.** Awareness actions are conducted in Libya, targeting local residents and most notably fishermen, with the aim of fostering respect and data collection on sightings.
100. **Objective Target 4.7.1.3.** Full survey of monk seal presence through data collection on sightings and awareness actions organised in Egypt (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh) by 2025.
101. **Objective Target 4.7.1.4.** Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Egyptian areas characterised by recurrent sightings and a geomorphologically suitable coast is conducted, and long term cave monitoring is established.

Goal Target 4.8. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.

102. **Objective 4.8.1.** Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta.

Goal Target 4.9. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1 - 4.8. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

103. **Objective 4.9.1.** Capacity building: training courses are organised in locations listed in Goal Targets 4.1-4.8, with the support of the -MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1).
104. **Objective 4.9.2.** The implementation of Goals 4.1-4.8 is carried out, as much as possible, through the development of international collaboration frameworks, directed at guaranteeing sharing of expertise and monitoring results amongst neighbour countries for the purpose of sub regional status assessments and conservation goal attainment (see Objective 3.7.4)

3. Revision of the Strategy

105. The suggested time horizon of this Strategy is six years, to be concluded in 2030, when a comprehensive review of the Strategy's accomplishments and failures, with a consideration for potential actions to be taken beyond 2030, should be conducted. Such timing also coincides with the process requiring EU Member States to report concerning the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, thereby facilitating the implementation of the Strategy's actions by such States.

106. A mid-term assessment of the implementation results in 2028 is also recommended, to evaluate up-to-date attainment of Goals and Objectives within the Strategy's timeframe and to identify, if needed, moderate adjustments.

4. References

- Abd Rabou AN, Abd Rabou MA, Abd Rabou OA. 2023. On the arrival of the rare and endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal – Yulia (*Monachus monachus* Hermann, 1779) on the shores of Jaffa, Palestine (May 2023). International Journal of Fauna and Biological Studies 10(3): 19-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/23940522.2023.v10.i3a.962>
- Adamantopoulou, S., Karamanlidis, A. A., Dendrinou, P., & Gimenez, O. (2022). Citizen science indicates significant range recovery and defines new conservation priorities for Earth's most endangered pinniped in Greece. Animal Conservation, 26(1), 115–125.
- Anonymous. 2008. Mediterranean News: Spain. Seal returns after 50-year absence. The Monachus Guardian 11(2).
- Anonymous. 2010. Mediterranean News: Lebanon. Seal sightings in Lebanon. The Monachus Guardian 13(2).
- Anonymous. 2012. <http://www.monachus-guardian.org/wordpress/2012/08/23/monk-seal-sighting-in-albania/>
- Alfaghi I.A., Abed A.S., Dendrinou P., Psaradellis M., Karamanlidis A.A. 2013. First confirmed sighting of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in Libya since 1972. Aquatic Mammals 39(1):81-84. DOI 10.1578/AM.39.1.2013.81
- Antolovic J., Antolovic M., Antolovic N., Furlan B., Adamic-Antolovic Lj., Antolovic R., Cok I. 2007. Monk sea (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in the Croatian part of the Adriatic with a special reference to the population of open-sea islands. The Monachus Guardian 10(1).
- Bakiu R., Cakalli M. 2018. New Mediterranean biodiversity records (December 2017). 5.2 Recent sightings of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in the Albanian Ionian Sea. Mediterranean Marine Science 18:542–544.
- Bouderbala M., Bouras D., Bekrattou D., Doukara K., Abdelghani M.F., Boutiba Z. 2007. First recorded instance of a hooded seal (*Cystophora cristata*) in Algeria. The Monachus Guardian 10(1).
- Bundone L., Panou A., Molinaroli E. 2019. On sightings of (vagrant?) monk seals, *Monachus monachus*, in the Mediterranean Basin and their importance for the conservation of the species. Aquatic Conservation, marine and freshwater ecosystems. Online version 20 February 2019 <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.3005>
- Bundone L, Hernandez-Milian G, Hysolako N, Bakiu R, Mehillaj T, Lazaj L. 2021. Mediterranean monk seal in Albania: historical presence, sightings and habitat availability. AJNTS (Albanian Journal of Natural and Technical Sciences) 53:89–100
- Bundone L, Hernandez-Milian G, Hysolako N, Bakiu R., Mehillaj T, Lazaj L, Deng H, Lusher A, Pojana G. 2022. First documented uses of caves along the coast of Albania by Mediterranean monk seals (*Monachus monachus*, Hermann 1779): ecological and conservation inferences. Animals 12:2620
- Font A., Mayol J. 2009. Mallorca's lone seal: the 2009 follow-up. The Monachus Guardian 12(2).
- Gomerčić T., Huber D., Đuras Gomerčić M., Gomerčić H. 2011. Presence of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in the Croatian part of the Adriatic Sea. Aquatic Mammals 37(3):243-247. DOI 10.1578/AM.37.3.2011.243.

- Güçlüsoy H., Kıraç C.O., Ververi N.O., Savas Y. 2004. Status of the Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779) in the coastal waters of Turkey. E.U. Journal of Fisheries & Aquatic Sciences 21(3-4):201–210.
- Gucu A.C. 2004. Is the broken link between two isolated colonies in the Northeastern Mediterranean re-establishing? The Monachus Guardian 7(2).
- Gucu A.C., Ok M., Sakinan S. 2009a. A survey of the critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779) along the coast of Northern Cyprus. Israel Journal of Ecology & Evolution 55(1):77-82. DOI: 10.1560/IJEE.55.1.77
- Gucu A.C., Sakinan S., Ok M. 2009b. Occurrence of the critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779), at Olympos-Beydagları National Park, Turkey. Zoology in the Middle East 46:3-8.
- Hamza A., Mo G., Tayeb K. 2003. Results of a preliminary mission carried out in Cyrenaica, Libya, to assess monk seal presence and potential coastal habitat. The Monachus Guardian 6(1).
- Ibrahim A., Hussein C., Alshawy F., Ahmad AA. 2024. Distribution and habitats of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*): In the Syrian Coast (Eastern Mediterranean). Species 2024; 25: e2s1624 doi: <https://doi.org/10.54905/disssi.v25i75.e2s1624>
- IUCN/SSC. 2008. Strategic planning for species conservation: a handbook. Version 1.0. IUCN Species Survival Commission, Gland, Switzerland. 104 p.
- Jony M., Ibrahim A. 2006. The first confirmed record for Mediterranean monk seals in Syria. Abstract, p. 54 in: UNEP/MAP, RAC/SPA. 2006. Report of the International Conference on Monk Seal Conservation. Antalya, Turkey, 17-19 September 2006. 69 p.
- Karamanlidis, A. 2024. Current status, biology, threats and conservation priorities of the vulnerable Mediterranean monk seal. Endangered Species Research 53, 341–361. <https://doi.org/10.3354/esr01304>
- Karamanlidis A.A., Dendrinos D., Fernández de Larrinoa P., Kıraç C.O., Nicolaou H., Pires R. 2023. *Monachus monachus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: e.T13653A238637039. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2023-1.RLTS.T13653A238637039.en>
- Khatib B. 2016. Evaluating the status of Monk seal population in Lebanon Date of Report: 25 January 2016. CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT <https://www.ceph.net/sites/default/files/sg71038-final-report.pdf>
- Mačić V., Panou A., Bundone L., Varda D., Pavićević M. 2019. First Inventory of the Semi-Submerged Marine Caves in South Dinarides Karst (Adriatic Coast) and Preliminary List of Species. Turkish Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Science, Vol. 19, No. 9: 765-774. DOI: 10.4194/1303-2712-v19_9_05.
- Marcou, M. 2015. The Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* in Cyprus. The Monachus Guardian. Available at: <http://www.monachus-guardian.org/wordpress/2015/05/21/themediterranean-monk-seal-monachus-monachus-in-cyprus/>. (March 2017).
- Marcou, M., Ioannou G. 2024. Report for the monitoring program of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* in cyprus for the period 2020 – 2023. Department of Fisheries and Marine Research Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment. 28pp.
- Mo G. 2011. Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in Italy (1998-2010) and implications for conservation. Aquatic Mammals 37(3):236-240. DOI 10.1578/AM.37.3.2011.236
- Mo G., Bazairi H., Bayed A., Agnesi S. 2011. Survey on Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in Mediterranean Morocco. Aquatic Mammals 37(3):248-255. DOI 10.1578/AM.37.3.2011.248.

Mo G, Gazo M, Ibrahim A, Ammar I, Ghanem W. 2003. Monk seal presence and habitat assessment: results of a preliminary mission carried out in Syria. *The Monachus Guardian* 6(1).

Nicolaou H, Dendrinis P, Marcou M, Michaelides S, Karamanlidis A. 2021. Re-establishment of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* in Cyprus: priorities for conservation. *Oryx* 55, 526–528. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0030605319000759>

Notarbartolo di Sciara G., Adamantopoulou S., Androukaki E., Dendrinis P., Karamanlidis A.A., Paravas V., Kotomatas S. 2009. National strategy and action plan for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal in Greece, 2009-2015. Report on evaluating the past and structuring the future. Publication prepared as part of the LIFE-Nature Project: MOFI: Monk Seal and Fisheries: mitigating the conflict in Greek Seas. Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Mediterranean monk seal (MOM), Athens. 71 p.

Notarbartolo di Sciara G., Fouad M. 2011. Monk seal sightings in Egypt. *The Monachus Guardian*, online edition. 29 April 2011.

Panou A. 2009. Monk seal sightings in the central Ionian Sea: a network of fishermen for the protection of the marine resources. Archipelagos – Environment and Development, Greece. Presentation at the "Who are our seals?" Workshop, European Cetacean Society Annual Conference, Istanbul, Turkey, 28 February, 2009. 6 p.

Panou A., Varda D., Bundone L. 2017. The Mediterranean monk seal, *Monachus monachus*, in Montenegro. In V. Pešić (Ed.), *The Proceedings of the 7th International Symposium of Ecologists—ISEM7*, Sutomore, Montenegro, 4-7 October 2017 (pp. 94–101). Podgorica, Montenegro: Institute for Biodiversity and Ecology.

Panou A, Giannoulaki M, Varda D, Lazaj L, Pojana G, Bundone L. 2023. Towards a strategy for the recovering of the Mediterranean monk seal in the Adriatic-Ionian Basin. *Frontiers in Marine Science* DOI 10.3389/fmars.2023.1034124

RAC/SPA 2012. http://www.rac-spa.org/monk_seal_death

Roditi-Elasar, M., Bundone, L., Goffman, O., Scheinin, A.P. & Kerem, D.H. (2021). Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in Israel 2009–2020: Extralimital records or signs of population expansion? *Marine Mammal Science*, 37(1), 344–351. DOI: 10.1111/mms.12734

Scheinin A.P., Goffman O., Elasar M., Perelberg A., Kerem D.H. 2011. Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) resighted along the Israeli coastline after more than half a century. *Aquatic Mammals* 37(3):241-242. DOI 10.1578/AM.37.3.2011.241

SPA/RAC-UNEP/MAP, 2020. On the occurrence of the Mediterranean monk seal *Monachus monachus* (Hermann, 1779) in the Lebanese waters (Eastern Mediterranean Sea). By Badreddine, A., Limam, A., & Ben-Nakhla, L. Ed. SPA/RAC. Tunis: pages 12.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA. 1994. Present status and trend of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) populations. Meeting of experts on the evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal, Rabat, Morocco, 7-9 October 1994. UNEP(OCA)/MED WG. 87/3. 44 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA. 2003a. Action Plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*). Reprinted, RAC/SPA, Tunis. 12 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA. 2003b. The conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal: proposal of priority activities to be carried out in the Mediterranean Sea. Sixth Meeting of National Focal Points for SPAs, Marseilles, 17-20 June 2003. UNEP(DEC)/MED WG.232/Inf 6. 45 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA. 2005. Rapid assessment survey of important marine turtle and monk seal habitats in the coastal area of Albania, October – November 2005, By M. White, I., Haxhiu, V. Kouroutos, A., Gace, A., Vaso, S. Beqiraj, A. Plytas and Z. Dedej. 36 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA. 2006. Propositions d'actions concrètes pour la mise en oeuvre d'un plan de conservation et de gestion pour le phoque moine sur le littoral ouest algérien. Par Z. Boutiba. 42 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA, 2011. National action plan for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal in Cyprus. by Demetropoulos A. Contract RAC/SPA: N°20/RAC/SPA_2011. 24 p

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA, 2012. Action Plan for the conservation/management of the Monk seal in low density areas of the Mediterranean. by Gazo M., Mo G. Contract RAC/SPA, MoU n. 34/RAC/SPA_2011. 29 p.

UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2013. Draft regional strategy for the conservation of the monk seals in the Mediterranean, 2014--2020. By G. Notarbartolo di Sciara. Contract RAC/SPA N° 33. 37 p.

Annex I
Status of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the
Mediterranean 2019 – 2025

Framework

1. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan, have a longstanding and commitment towards the conservation of the marine environment and to the components of its biological diversity. This commitment was further elaborated with the adoption in 1995, and subsequent national ratification, of the Barcelona Convention's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) and its annexes,
2. The Protocol defines detailed protection measures to be implemented at national and regional level in order to achieve the conservation of the endangered or threatened species listed in Annex II to the Protocol. Over the years, several initiatives conducted under the framework of the activities managed by the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) Secretariat have led to the elaboration of regional action plans centred on the conservation of the species and habitats of conservation concern for the Protocol's implementation. The regional action plans are effective tools to guide, coordinate and strengthen Mediterranean countries' efforts to safeguard the marine natural heritage of the region.
3. Although they do not have a binding legal character, these action plans were adopted by the Contracting Parties as regional strategies setting priorities and activities to be undertaken. In particular, they call for greater solidarity between the States of the region, and for co-ordination of efforts to protect the species in question. This approach has been proved to be necessary to ensure conservation and sustainable management of the concerned species in every Mediterranean area of their distribution.
4. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopted, an Action Plan for the management of the Monk Seal (AP) in 1988 and the "Regional strategy for the conservation of Mediterranean monk seal (2014-2019)" (RS) in 2013. Considering that such strategy is intended to promote and undertake concerted and effective actions at the local level to reverse the Monk Seal critical status, and to encourage the concerned States to implement a series of joint measures aiming at re-establishing the favourable conservation status of Monk Seal populations and their natural habitat in the region, a new updated strategy (2020-2025) was adopted by Barcelona Convention COP 19, 2019 Decision IG.24/7.
5. Now, this document reports on the status of the implementation of the *Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2020-2024)* produced for the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC) in 2019, as part of the process of producing a new updated for the RS.

Table of Acronyms

ISPRA: Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (Italy).

MSA: The Monk Seal Alliance.

MSAC: Monk Seal Advisory Committee.

MOM: Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk Seal (Greece).

PPNEA: Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania.

UNEP/MED: United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan

RAPA-Valor: Regional Agency for Protected Areas (Valor, Albania).

RS: Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean

SPA/RAC: Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (Tunisia).

SPA/BD Protocol: Barcelona Convention's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean.

Introduction

6. The Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean 2019-2025 is structured in 4 main Goals that support the following vision:

Over the next two decades, the ecological recovery of monk seals in the Mediterranean will deem to have occurred, when multiple colonies have become established within all major habitats in their historic range, interacting in ecologically significant ways with the fullest possible set of other species, and inspiring and connecting human cultures.

These Goals are:

7. Goal 1. Mediterranean Range States implement the Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

8. Goal 2. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

9. Goal 3. Monk seal presence in sites where they are repeatedly seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

10. Goal 4. Monk seal presence is reported repeatedly in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

11. Under each Goal, there are specific and detailed Goal Targets that are set as an indication of the success of achieving each Goal. This document will go through each of the Goals mentioned in the RS and evaluate its implementation.

12. In order to produce this assessment report on the Status on the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean 2019-2025, a questionnaire³² was produced, posted on-line, and disseminated to SPA/BD National Focal Points, regional institutions and Convention’s Secretariats, as well as regional partners and to a network of experts available at SPA/RAC.

13. The present assessment is based on the responses obtained from this questionnaire together with a desk review of relevant existing documents through a compilation of resources materials (e.g., grey and published literature, SPA/RAC progress reports, strategic documents, CoPs Decision...), including the Mid-term assessment of the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the conservation of Monk seal in the Mediterranean for the period from 2019 – 2022 (UNEP/MED WG.548/8 Rev.2)

³² The on-line questionnaire asked for basic information on the profile of the participants, a series of questions following the same structure of goals and targets included in the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2020-2025) and finished with a section dedicated to identify the most relevant actions to update the Strategy (see Annex 1). When asked about the specific actions undertaken in Mediterranean locations different from those in which participants factually work, a large portion of the respondents selected the option “I do not know”, indicating that most experts are familiar with the situation in their own countries or study sites but not necessarily with what goes on elsewhere in the region. Detail on the results obtained from the 25 completed questionnaires duly filled can be found in Annex 2.

Goal 1. Strategy Implementation

Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organizations and civil society.

Goal Target 1.1. A framework for the implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Conservation Strategy is established by the Mediterranean Range States. The framework will include the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC).

14. The framework for the implementation of the Conservation Strategy for the Monk Seal includes the creation of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC), whose main tasks are to provide support to SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Strategy (e.g., by helping in defining the Actions needed to attain the different Objective Targets) and its review and updating. At the moment this MSAC has not been set up. However, SPA/RAC presented the MSAC Terms of Reference at the Sixteenth Meeting of SPA/BD Focal Points (Malta, 22-24 May 2023) for consideration. No comments were received regarding this term of reference.

15. The large majority of respondents to the proposed questionnaire about the implementation of the RS agreed on the importance of the establishment of an MSAC, as well as on the tasks to be assigned to this body and its composition (see Annex2).

16. In line with the targets defined in Goal 1. SPA/RAC, during the World Marine Mammal Conference that took place in Barcelona in December 2019, organised the dedicated workshop “Definition of a road map for the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Monk seal in low density countries”³³, where monk seal researchers from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia participated, contributed to update the information on the species in each region, discussed possible bilateral collaboration between countries, defined requirements of capacity building, funding and equipment. The results of this workshop led to the formulation of the Med Monk Seal Project proposal: Enhancing knowledge and awareness on monk seal in the Mediterranean, funded by the Monk Seal Alliance (hereafter referred to as MSA). The overall objective of the Med-Monk seal Project is to support the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention involved in this project (Algeria, Egypt, Italy, Morocco, Libya, Syria, Tunisia) to implement the Priority Goals stated in the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean Monk Seal.

17. The MSA was created in 2019 by five founding members experienced in funding Mediterranean monk seal conservation projects: the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the MAVA Foundation, the Segre Foundation, the Sancta Devota Foundation and the Thalassa Foundation.

18. The MSA supports conservation projects at local, national and regional levels. Its calls for projects are designed to create incentives for actors to collaborate with others in the field, avoiding duplication and waste of resources and increasing effectiveness by addressing monk seal conservation strategically, holistically and throughout the species’ range. Information on the projects currently supported by the MSA can be found at <https://www.monksealalliance.org/en/projects>.

³³ <https://www.wmmconference.org/workshops/#Definition%20of%20a%20road%20map>

19. Monitoring has taken place in the past few years and is still under-way in Greece and Türkiye, as part of the MSA funded projects and other initiatives³⁴. However, in Cyprus the monitoring activities for the monk seal distribution and abundance is under the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR) National Budget as well as European Structural Funds.

Goal 2. “Group A” countries

Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) identified by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, with special attention to the following locations: a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyaros; d) Kimolos and Polyaigos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus. Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.2. Implementation of Goal Target 2.1. is enabled through appropriate CAPACITY BUILDING activities.

20. Enforcement of existing laws about firearms and explosives is under-way in Greece, Türkiye and Cyprus, as it is reflected also in the responses obtained through the questionnaire. Although the species is considered a conservation priority and is (potentially) protected under several MPAs and Natura 2000 sites, such as those mentioned above, no concrete information was found on the creation of MPAs specifically dedicated to monk seals during the 2019-2024 period.

21. It should be noted that in Cyprus there are currently the following 4 MPAs dedicated for the protection of Monk Seals and their breeding / resting habitats. which are declared through Ministerial Decrees: Halavro, MPA9; Agios Georgios Alamanou, 10; Ayia Napa Sea Caves, 11; Peyia Sea Caves, 12.

22. In the Greek Ionian Islands, for the last three years, the project *Allowing Coexistence of Monk Seals with Tourism in Formicula through Science-Based Management*, which built on activities initiated in the context of the project *Supporting the Conservation of Endangered Marine Mammals in the Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago Special Area of Conservation, Greece (2019-2022)*, both supported by MSA / Fondation Segré (www.fondationsegre.org), has been focussed on defining urgent actions needed in the islet of Formicula (central Ionian Islands) to protect monk seals in their critical habitat and on the engagement of fellow organizations, stakeholders and NGOs. The waters around this islet have become a popular tourist destination in recent years, with the possibility of close encounters with the seals being the main attraction. The Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago SAC draft management plan, currently under consideration, includes special protection regime in Formicula.

³⁴ In Türkiye, a project has been carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry DKMP 4th Regional Directorate and covers various research, awareness/education, and conservation activities within the Muğla Province Seal Species Action Plan Monitoring and Implementation program, which is planned to be conducted for a period of 5 years on all coastal areas of Muğla Province. Fethiye and Babadağ Pilot Coastal Zoning and Management Planning supported by UNDP GEF-SGP includes habitat determination and classification, analyzing human activity densities, threats and seascape mapping.

23. Proposed actions include the delimitation of a 200 m-wide no-entry zone along the islet's coast, except for a corridor to allow access to organised tours to a single ad hoc mooring, under condition of compliance with a code of conduct and time limitation. During the 9th Our Ocean Conference OOC, hosted by the Greek Government in Athens between 15-17 April 2024, the need for the immediate adoption of protection measures was underlined to representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Energy. Moreover, the creation of two National Marine Parks in the Aegean and the Ionian, covering over 32% of the country's territorial waters, which will be among the largest in the Mediterranean, was announced.

24. In Greece, the whole Nat2000 and MPAs network is centrally coordinated from Athens by the Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency NECCA (new.necca.gov.gr). A collaboration between the MSA and NECCA, which began in 2023 through the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding, aiming to catalyse change and address conservation gaps, could represent a significant step forward in the struggle to protect the Mediterranean monk seal and its habitat. Moreover, the recently signed partnership agreements by MSA and The MedFund, and NECCA with the aim to bolster conservation efforts for the Mediterranean monk seal, on the occasion of OOC9, clearly shows that, through joint initiatives and shared objectives, the Monk Seal Alliance and NECCA are committed to making meaningful contributions to the conservation of this conservation flagship species. This collaboration poses an encouraging scenario for the development and implementation of activities for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal in Greece.

25. Moreover, the National Action Plan for the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Greece, produced by the Hellenic Society for the Study and Protection of the Monk seal MOM, was officially adopted by the Greek Government in September 2024 (Official Gazette 5100/B/10-09-2024)³⁵. This document will be very relevant for the upcoming update of the RS.

26. A first cave-monitoring studies were carried out on the southwest coast of Türkiye using camera traps occurred between 2017 and 2021 in five marine caves within Gökova Bay³⁶. Cave use occurred mainly nocturnally, with the seals showing a diurnal activity pattern in the area. A total of 18 individuals were identified using five caves in Gökova Bay. Three of these caves provided suitable characteristics for pupping, and two of them were actually used for pupping.

27. See Annex 2 for detail provided by the on-line questionnaire, on actions implemented, current protection status, and frequency of capacity building activities in the locations listed under Goal Target 2.1

Goal 3. “Group B” countries

Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes in areas characterised by sufficient and suitable coastal habitat. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established.

Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Italy, in areas with recurrent sightings, habitat availability and proximity to nearby breeding colonies, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in Lebanon is permanently established.

Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Israel is permanently established.

³⁵ <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-periballon/kya-upendd-phpb-95178-2431-2024.html> (in Greek)

³⁶ Saydam, E.; Güçlüsoy, H. Revealing the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*)'s Cave Preference in Gökova Bay on the Southwest Coast of Türkiye. Sustainability 2023, 15, 12017. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151512017>

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Montenegro is permanently established.

Goal Target 3.7. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6 is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

28. There are several local networks, mostly established with local communities, fishers and local NGOs, reporting the presence of the species in Albania. These networks are managed by several organisations such as PPNEA, RAPA-Valor with support of MOM and Archipelagos (www.archipelagos-org.eu). However, the existence of centralised or country-wide network for reporting or collecting information on the status of the species is not confirmed.

29. Monitoring activities implemented within the framework of the Eastern Adriatic Monk Seal Project, started in 2017 under the coordination the German organization EuroNatur Foundation and funded by MSA are underway (currently on its phase III). Habitat surveys were conducted in several stages across the entire coast of Albania to identify the suitable areas for the monk seal including possible pupping and resting cave. In this regard, the southern area of the country seemed to be the most relevant to the species especially the National Marine Park of Karaburun-Sazan and Butrinti National Park, as reported in Panou et. al. 2023³⁷, which also provides a good review of the species' status in the Adriatic-Ionian Basin by country except for Slovenia and Bosnia & Herzegovina (see link below for table): https://www.frontiersin.org/files/Articles/1034124/fmars-10-1034124-HTML-r1/image_m/fmars-10-1034124-t001.jpg

30. While monitoring was taking place, capacity building workshops, interviews and questionnaire surveys with local community and public awareness activities were also implemented.

31. Sightings of monk seals have been increasingly reported in Italy during the last couple of decades. In the Adriatic, a habitat survey conducted in Apulia region resulted in 15 caves identified as suitable for the species, although no seal presence could be established³⁸. Moreover, research along the coast of Salento (South Apulia, Italy) to collect data on monk seal presence in the area, using a questionnaire to fishermen, interviews with witnesses of sightings, and a historical review of the species' presence allowed us gather evidence on 11 records of recent sightings (after year 2000) and 30 records of historical encounters (before 2000)³⁹.

32. Moreover, a pup was found in a beach in Brindisi in 2020. Genetic analysis indicated the Ionian Islands as the most probable geographical origin of the pup⁴⁰ (Fioravanti et. al., 2020). Necropsy of this pup revealed co-infection by cetacean morbillivirus (CeMV) and *Toxoplasma gondii*⁴¹. Sightings have also been reported from the Tyrrhenian (the Tuscan archipelago), and the Ionian seas (the Sardinian smaller islands) (Mo, 2011 and pers. comm). Most of these sightings are collected and validated by ISPRA who is also implementing conservation and awareness actions

³⁷ Panou A, Giannoulaki M, Varda D, Lazaj L, Pojana G and Bundone L (2023) Towards a strategy for the recovering of the Mediterranean monk seal in the Adriatic Ionian Basin. *Front. Mar. Sci.* 10:1034124. doi: 10.3389/fmars.2023.1034124

³⁸ Bundone, L., (2016), Piano di valutazione e conservazione della foca monaca (*Monachus monachus*) in aree a bassa densità del mediterraneo (Venice, Italy: Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia).

³⁹ Bundone, L.; Rizzo, L.; Fai, S.; Hernandez-Milian, G.; Guerzoni, S.; Molinaroli, E. Investigating Rare and Endangered Species: When a Single Methodology Is Not Enough—The Mediterranean Monk Seal *Monachus monachus* along the Coast of Salento (South Apulia, Italy). *Diversity* 2023, 15, 740. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d15060740>

⁴⁰ Fioravanti, T.; Splendiani, A.; Righi, T.; Maio, N.; Lo Brutto, S.; Petrella, A.; Caputo Barucchi, V. A Mediterranean Monk Seal Pup on the Apulian Coast (Southern Italy): Sign of an Ongoing Recolonisation? *Diversity* 2020, 12, 258. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d12060258>

⁴¹ Mazzariol S, Centelleghes C, Petrella A, Marcer F, Beverelli M, Francesco CED, Francesco GD, Renzo LD, Guardo GD, Audino T, Tripodi L, Casalone C. 2021. Atypical Toxoplasmosis in a Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*) Pup. *Journal of Comparative Pathology* 184:65–71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcpa.2021.02.005>.

33. A project funded by the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition entrusts ISPRA as the body responsible for coordinating and setting up a national monk seal monitoring program involving the direct participation of staff belonging to institutional bodies dedicated to environmental monitoring and protection. The areas in which the monitoring work will be carried are those indicated as priority in the NS. Together with this, capacity building activities, in the Egadi islands, Tuscan Archipelago and the Apulia region are also taking place. Italy is also involved in the capacity building and awareness activities implemented by the Med-Monk seal Project led by SPA/RAC.

34. Monk seal presence and sightings in Lebanon has increased in the last two decades. Between 2003 and 2020, 47 sightings were recorded mostly between Tripoli and Beirut in northern Lebanon and 2 - 4 individuals seem to be frequently sighted around Palm Island Nature Reserve⁴². In May 2017 an individual was found resting in a cave not very far from Beirut and a pregnant female was also found bycaught in a fishing net in January 2015 at Raouche area. Lebanon has received financial support from the French Voluntary contribution to UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC to implement monitoring programme during 2024. And it is partner in both the Med-Monk seal Project led by SPA/RAC and the Monk seal protection at the Eastern Mediterranean, a Project led by IUCN. These two projects together with a new one launched in 2024, *Recolonization of the Monk Seal in Lebanon*, are all funded by MSA.

35. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Israeli coastal zone. Almost 100 sighting reports were collected by Delphis NGO since 2010, 14 of them photographed, with 3 different animals identified. One of the animals, a female in reproduction age, was identified in 5 different visits (2010, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018), as well as a recent extended visit over a few weeks in May 2023. A good review on Mediterranean monk seal sightings in Israel between 2009–2020 reported a recent increase in documented sightings along the Israeli coast, paralleled by an increase in sighting frequency in the nearby northern countries of Syria and Lebanon⁴³. the MSA is funding the project *Preparing the ground for the monk seal's return to the Israeli coast*, which aims to create protected spaces for the seals, combining habitat restoration—both natural and artificial—with comprehensive educational activities designed to raise awareness and encourage proactive behaviour in seal conservation.

36. See Annex 2 for detail provided by the on-line questionnaire, on actions implemented, current protection status, and frequency of capacity building activities in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.1.

Goal 4. “Group C” countries

Monk seal presence is again reported in the species' historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

⁴² <https://www.ceph.net/sites/default/files/sg71038-final-report.pdf>

⁴³ Roditi-Elasar M, Bundone L, Goffman O, Scheinin AP, Kerem DH. Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in Israel 2009–2020: Extralimital records or signs of population expansion? Mar Mam Sci. 2021;37:344–351. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mms.12734>

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Goal Target 4.4. Monk seal presence in Corsica is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Goal Target 4.5. Monk seal presence is reported again from continental France.

Goal Target 4.6. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Goal Target 4.7. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.

Goal Target 4.8. Monk seal presence in Syria is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Goal Target 4.9. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1-4.8. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

37. In Morocco, previously identified areas of importance to the species include Al Hoceima National Park, Cap Trois Fourches and Cap de l'Eau (MedMPA 2002 and 2004, Bayed and al. 2005, Mo et. al., 2003 and 2011)⁴⁴. A seal sighting was reported in March 2022 in the Province of Driouch which resulted a grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*)⁴⁵. Since Morocco is one of the countries involved in the Med-Monk seal, a monitoring scheme is being applied in Al Hoceima National Park in the 2 identified caves.

38. In the case of Algeria and Tunisia, no data or information can be found on recent sightings of the species. Both countries are involved in the Med-Monk seal project. With this context, Field work for habitat survey has been carried out in la GALITE island in October 2024, new data and results should be available by the end of 2024.

39. No recent sightings reported for the Balearic Islands since 2008 and 2009, which might be referring to the same individual and never reported again subsequently⁴⁶. No information available on establishing a reporting scheme or any relevant awareness activities.

40. No data or information can be found on sightings of the species during the 2019-2024 period, nor information on any relevant activities such as habitat surveys, monitoring, awareness campaigns or capacity building, in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia, Corsica, or continental France.

41. Following the monitoring programme that was implemented in 2009 in eastern Libya, Habitat surveys and, awareness actions have been implemented within the framework of the MEDMonk seal Project. A recent report coming from Malta (September 2024)⁴⁷, sheds light on three (possibly four), sightings of individual seals in Maltese waters in the past 26 years, of which at least two were made in the past three years. Following the most recent confirmed sightings (July 2024), Malta has begun raising public awareness⁴⁸. Noting that records of monk seals in Maltese waters were primarily historical, Malta's involvement in monk seal conservation has been limited in recent years. However, monitoring is undertaken for marine mammals in Maltese waters. No monk seals were sighted during such monitoring and there was no requirement for contribution to regional assessments.

⁴⁴ Bayed A., Bazairi H. & Cebrian D. (2005). The coastal habitat of *Monachus monachus* on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. 19th Conference of the European Cetacean Society, 2-7 April, La Rochelle (France).

Mo G., Gazo M., Ibrahim A., Ammar I., Ghanem W., (2003), Monk seal presence and habitat assessment: results of a preliminary mission carried out in Syria, The Monachus Guardian 6(1).

Mo G., Bazairi H., Bayed A., Agnesi S., (2011), Survey on Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) sightings in Mediterranean Morocco, Aquatic Mammals 37(3):248- 255.

⁴⁵ Cah. Biol. Mar. (2023) 64 : 125 - 128 DOI: 10.21411/CBM.A.3DB9598F

⁴⁶ Bundone L, Panou A, Molinaroli E (2019) On sightings of (vagrant?) monk seals, *Monachus monachus*, in the Mediterranean Basin and their importance for the conservation of the species. Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems 88:255. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.3005>

⁴⁷ Daryl Agius & Patrick Joseph Schembri (September 2024) Historical and recent records of the Monk Seal *Monachus monachus* from Maltese waters DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.19246.52809

⁴⁸ <https://era.org.mt/press-releases/first-sighting-for-the-21st-century-of-the-mediterranean-monk-seal-from-malta/>

42. Apart from the previously documented sightings of monk seal reported by Mr Amir Ibrahim (2013), Jony & Ibrahim (2006) in the last 10 years, no other confirmed sightings have been reported in recent years. Researchers from Syria participated in the WMMC workshop referred above. See Annex 2 for detail provided by the on-line questionnaire, on actions implemented, current protection status, and frequency of capacity building activities in Group C Countries.

Towards an updated Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

43. When asked about their perception on the overall implementation of the RS the majority of respondents to the questionnaire (17 out of 22) were at best moderately satisfied. It is noteworthy that nobody was extremely satisfied with its implementation and only one said to be very satisfied; which can be easily interpreted as not being very positive feedback from those who participated in the questionnaire. In addition, it is also relevant to say that only about half of those invited to participate in this survey (roughly 44 people) actually did it.

44. Actions considered more relevant by the respondents when updating the RS, listed in decreasing order of importance, were:

- Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites
- Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence
- Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process
- Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others
- Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals
- Capacity building and awareness courses
- Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)
- Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g., UAVs)
- Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000
- Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000

45. Additional comments / suggestions that were provided at the end of the questionnaire and were considered important by respondents for updating the RS, are included as they were provided at the end of Annex 2.

46. The first draft update of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Mediterranean monk seal presented in the main document has been shared with National Focal Points, and the regional institutions, who has provided comments and amendments with their local knowledge.

47. Moreover, it is obvious that the MSA has significantly influenced the initiatives developed for the conservation of the Mediterranean monk seal since its launching in 2019. Through its MSA funded projects they are largely contributing to the achievement of the Goals, objectives and targets of the RS.

Annex II
Questionnaire on the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk
Seals in the Mediterranean (2020-2025)

PERSONAL INFO

*Optional

1 Before being invited to participate in this survey, were you familiar with the [Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean](#) (2020-2025)?

Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
-----------	------	------------	----------	------------

2. First Name*:

3. Surname*:

4. Nationality:

5. Country/es in which you primarily work:

6. Position:

Choose the category that applies best to your position/affiliation.

National Focal Point SPA/RAC	Independent expert / Freelancer	Professor /Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	Staff of International intergovernmental organization
MPA/Park manager	MPA/Park staff (other than manager)	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	Student / PhD student	Other (Please specify) ...

7. Years of experience in this position

8. In which way are you involved/related to Mediterranean monk seal conservation?

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 1.

Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

Goal Target 1.1. A framework for the implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Conservation Strategy is established by the Mediterranean Range States. The framework will include the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC).

9. The establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC) by SPA/RAC is necessary

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	----------------------------	----------	-------------------

10. Please clarify your response regarding the TASKS assigned to the MSAC and its COMPOSITION

(MSCA tasks)

10.1 Provide support to SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Strategy and its review and updating (e.g., by defining the Actions needed to attain the different Objective Targets);

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

10.2 Provide recommendations and advice on issues related to monk seal conservation;

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

10.3 Support SPA/RAC in the creation and maintenance of a forum for monk seal conservation practitioners, where relevant information and experience is shared, exchanges are facilitated, challenges are discussed, cooperative initiatives are enhanced, transparency and openness of procedures are safeguarded.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

(MSCA composition and functioning)

10.4 The MSAC should be composed of geographically representative members of the region and membership to the committee should rotate within a specific timeframe to allow for adequate share of advisory roles by different experts. .

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

10.5 The MSAC functioning is supported by SPA/RAC, and may benefit from relevant bodies within IUCN, the GFCM and other international organizations

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

IN CASE OF ANY DISAGREEMENT, you are encouraged to use section 86, at the end of this questionnaire, to tell us why and provide detail.

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 2 "GROUP A" COUNTRIES

Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in "Group A" countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) identified by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force, with special attention to the following locations: a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyros; d) Kimolos and Polyaigos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus. Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

11. Mark with an X the actions that, to the best of your knowledge, have been implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 2.1

LOCATIONS	<i>Current legislation prohibiting carrying firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels is enforced</i>	<i>Geographically delimited and legally protected/managed and resulting MPA network ecologically coherent and effectively managed</i>	<i>Effectively protected through a) appropriate management actions, and b) the keen involvement of the local communities</i>	<i>No action</i>	<i>Not familiar with this location</i>
Greek Ionian islands					
Northern Sporades					
Gyaros					
Kimolos and Polyaigos					
Karpathos-Saria					
Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts					
Cyprus					
*					
*					
*					
*					

**Please, use these extra lines to indicate any other special locations in GROUP A countries that should be included in the list and what actions have been implemented*

12. Tell us about the current protection status of locations listed in Goal Target 2.1 of the Strategy by answering to the statements below:

12.1	<i>Monk seal MPA (or MPA network) established in the Greek Ionian islands</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
12.2	<i>Island of Gyaros Natura 2000 established as a Monk seal MPA</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
12.3	<i>Monk seal MPA established in Kimolos - Polyaigos</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
12.4	<i>Monk seal MPA established in Karpathos - Saria</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
12.5	<i>Monk seal MPAs designated along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Turkey as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>

12. 6	Monk seal MPA designated in Cyprus where Monk seal critical habitat was identified	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
*				
*				
*				
*				

**Please, use these extra lines to indicate any other monk seal MPA established in other locations of Group A countries*

Goal Target 2.2. Implementation of Goal Target 2.1. is enabled through appropriate CAPACITY BUILDING activities.

13. Were training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 2.1?

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

14. Please, if you know of any training conducted since 2020, provide Location (Country of the training) e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)

15. Title of the training course

16. Duration of the training course (Days)

17. Name of organization (s) who conducted the training

18. Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))

19. Training detail:

14. 7	Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
14. 8	Training concentrated, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglement), and targeted stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers)	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
	Training was developed together with the local groups and followed by a constant "advice service" or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about any additional training/s on points 14-19 using space below:

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 3 "GROUP B" COUNTRIES

Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in "Group B" countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes in areas characterised by sufficient and suitable coastal habitat. "Group B" countries are upgraded to "Group A".

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in **Albania** is confirmed and permanently established.

20. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

21. *Awareness actions are conducted in Albania in the concerned areas.*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

22. *Long-term cave monitoring is established in the caves identified in previous studies in the Karaburun Peninsula and nearby locations*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in **Italy**, in areas with recurrent sightings, habitat availability and proximity to nearby breeding colonies, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

23. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the coastal areas characterised by recurrent sightings and coastal habitat historically used by the species*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

24. *Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

25. *Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in Sardinia.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

26. *Awareness actions are conducted in Sardinia.*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

27. *Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

28. *Awareness actions are conducted in the Tuscan Archipelago.*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

29. *Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and recurrent recent sightings in the lesser islands of the Sicily Strait (Pantelleria, Pelagie islands)*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

30. Awareness actions are conducted in the lesser islands of the Sicily Strait (Pantelleria, Pelagie islands)

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

31. monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in Salento (Apulia) in coastal areas containing historical monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings.

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

32. Awareness actions are conducted in in Salento (Apulia)

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related to **Goal Target 3.3.**

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in **Lebanon** is permanently established.

33. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Lebanese coastal zone

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

34. Awareness actions are conducted along the Lebanese coastal zone

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

35. A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted in the areas characterised by recent recurrent monk seal sightings and long-term cave monitoring program is initiated in northern Lebanon.

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 3.4.**

Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in **Israel** is permanently established.

36. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Israeli coastal zone

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

37. Awareness actions are conducted along the Israeli coastal zone

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

38. A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted, and a long-term cave monitoring program is implemented in northern Israel

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 3.5.**

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Montenegro is permanently established.

39. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the coastal zone of Montenegro.

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

40. Awareness actions are conducted along the coastal zone of Montenegro.

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

41. Coastal habitat assessment studies are completed, and long-term cave monitoring programmes are implemented in Montenegro.

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 3.6.**

Goal Target 3.7. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6 is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

42. Capacity building. Were training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 3.1-3.6

Albania	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Italy	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Lebanon	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Israel	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Montenegro	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know

43. Please, if you know of any training conducted since 2020, provide Location (Country of the training) e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)

44. Title of the training course

45. Duration of the training course (Days)

46. Name of organization (s) who conducted the training

47. Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))

48. Training detail:

48. 1	Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
48. 2	Awareness programs directed at mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglements), and targetting stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges)	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
48. 3	Training was developed together with the local groups, and followed by a constant "advice service" or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW

If you are aware of more than one training course (same Location or different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about training/s on points 43-48:

49. Streamlining of sighting and cave monitoring results carried out in Goal Objectives 3.1 - 3.6 above is discussed at sub regional level in order to better assess the population status in the "Group B" countries within a geographic context that goes beyond country borders, and in order to identify priority areas in which spatial protection measures are necessary.

Albania	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Italy	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Lebanon	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Israel	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Montenegro	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know

50. Capacity building of MPA managers. Training sessions were organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 3.1-3.6

Albania	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Italy	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Lebanon	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Israel	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Montenegro	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know

51. Please, if you know of any training conducted to MPA managers since 2020, provide Location (Country of the training)

e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)

52. Title of the training course

53. Duration of the training course (Days)

54. Name of organization (s) who conducted the training

55. Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))

56. Training was concentrated in discussing improved management and mitigation measures to be introduced in existing MPAs

Yes	No	I do not know
-----	----	---------------

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about any additional training/s on points 51-56 using space below:

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 4.

Monk seal presence is again reported in the species' historical habitat in "Group C" countries, and these "Group C" countries are upgraded to "Group B". Once all "Group C" countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

57. *(From the table below mark with an X the answer you consider most adequate) Is a reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence and alert authorities implemented in the following locations?,*

<i>Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Morocco</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Chafarinas Islands (Spain)</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>

58. *(From the table below mark with an X the answer you consider most adequate) Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the following locations?*

<i>Al Hoceima National Park and Cap Trois Fourches (Morocco)</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Chafarinas Islands (Spain)</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>La Galite Archipelago (Tunisia)</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>I do not know</i>

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 4.1.**

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence in the **Balearic Islands, Spain**, is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

59. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented*

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partially</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
------------	-----------	------------------	----------------------

60. *Awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands, Spain.*

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
------------------	--------------	---------------------	---------------	--------------	----------------------

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia repeatedly reported and permanently established.

61. *Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

62. *Awareness actions are conducted in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Goal Target 4.4. Monk seal presence in **Corsica** is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

63. *Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

64. *Awareness actions are conducted in Corsica*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Goal Target 4.5. Monk seal presence is reported again from continental **France**.

65. *Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in continental France*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

66. *Awareness actions are conducted in continental France*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Goal Target 4.6. Monk seal presence in **Libya** and nearby western Egypt is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

67. *Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Libyan easternmost coast bordering with Egypt conducted and long-term cave monitoring established in this area as well as in the caves identified in previous projects.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

68. *Awareness actions are conducted in Libya, targeting local residents and most notably fishers*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

69. *Full survey of monk seal presence in Egypt through data collection on sightings (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh) by 2025.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

70. *Awareness actions organised in Egypt*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

71. *Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Egyptian areas characterised by recurrent sightings and a geomorphologically suitable coast conducted, and long-term cave monitoring established.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 4.6.**

Goal Target 4.7. Monk seal presence is reported from **Malta**.

72. *Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta.*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

73. *Awareness actions are conducted Malta*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 4.7.**

Goal Target 4.8. Monk seal presence in **Syria** is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

74. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian coastal zone*

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

75. *Awareness actions are conducted in Syria*

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
-----------	-------	--------------	--------	-------	---------------

Please, use section 86 to give any further information or details related **Goal Target 4.8.**

Goal Target 4.9. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1-4.8. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

76. *Capacity building. Were training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 4.1-4.8.*

<i>Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain)</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Balearic Islands, Spain</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Corsica</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Continental France</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Libya</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Malta</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Syria</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>

77. *Please, if you know of any training conducted since 2020, provide Location (Country of the training) e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)*

78. Title of the training course

79. Duration of the training course (Days)

80. Name of organization (s) who conducted the training

81. Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))

82. Training detail:

82.1	Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
82.2	Training concentrated, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglement), and targeted stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges)	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
82.3	Training was developed together with the local groups, and followed by a constant "advice service" or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about training/s on points 77-82:

83. The implementation of Goal Targets 4.1-4.8 is carried out, as much as possible, through the development of international collaboration frameworks, directed at guaranteeing sharing of expertise and monitoring results amongst neighbour countries for the purpose of sub regional status assessments and conservation goal attainment

Yes	No	Partially	I do not know
-----	----	-----------	---------------

If Yes/Partially, PLEASE, (briefly) provide detail

Towards an **UPDATED** Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

84. Considering all the questions you have gone through until now. Could you tell us how satisfied are you in regards to the overall implementation of the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (2020-2025) to date?

Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
-----------	------	------------	----------	------------

85. How relevant you consider the following actions when UPDATING the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean for its future implementation and success?

85.1	Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.2	Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.3	Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.4	Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.5	Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.6	Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.7	Capacity building and awareness courses	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.8	Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g. UAVs)	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.9	Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know
85.10	Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others	Extremel y	Very	Moderate ly	Slightl y	Not at all	I do not know

IF YOU ANSWERED “NOT AT ALL” OR “SLIGHTLY” TO ANY OF THE ACTIONS LISTED ABOVE; PLEASE TELL US...

what would you modify specifically in the respective structural components (objectives and objective targets) listed under this theme in the actual strategy?

86. PLEASE provide us with any **comments** / **suggestions** that you may consider important for updating the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean (Maximum 100 words)

Annex III

**Detail from the 25 completed questionnaires on the Assessment of the Implementation of the
Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean**

Detail from the 25 completed questionnaires on the Assessment of the Implementation of the *Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean*

1. Personal profile of interviewees

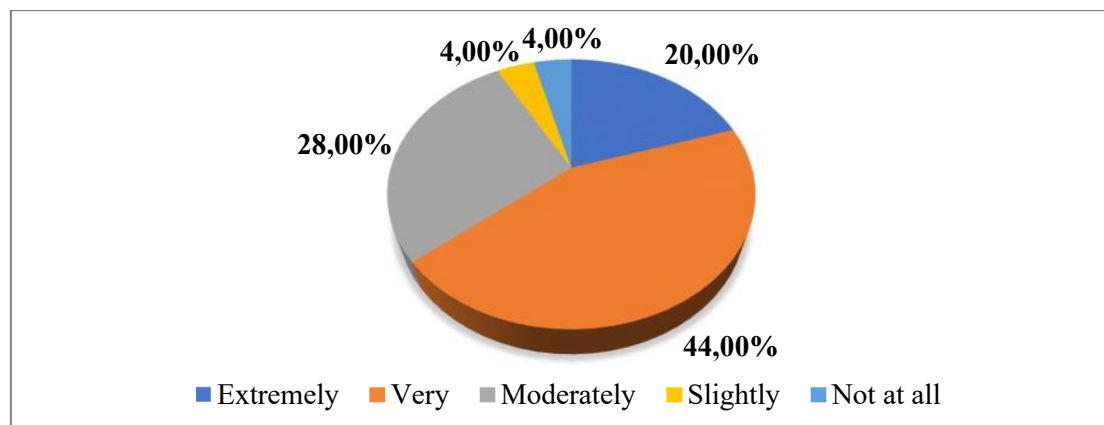


Figure 1. Familiarity with the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2020-2025)

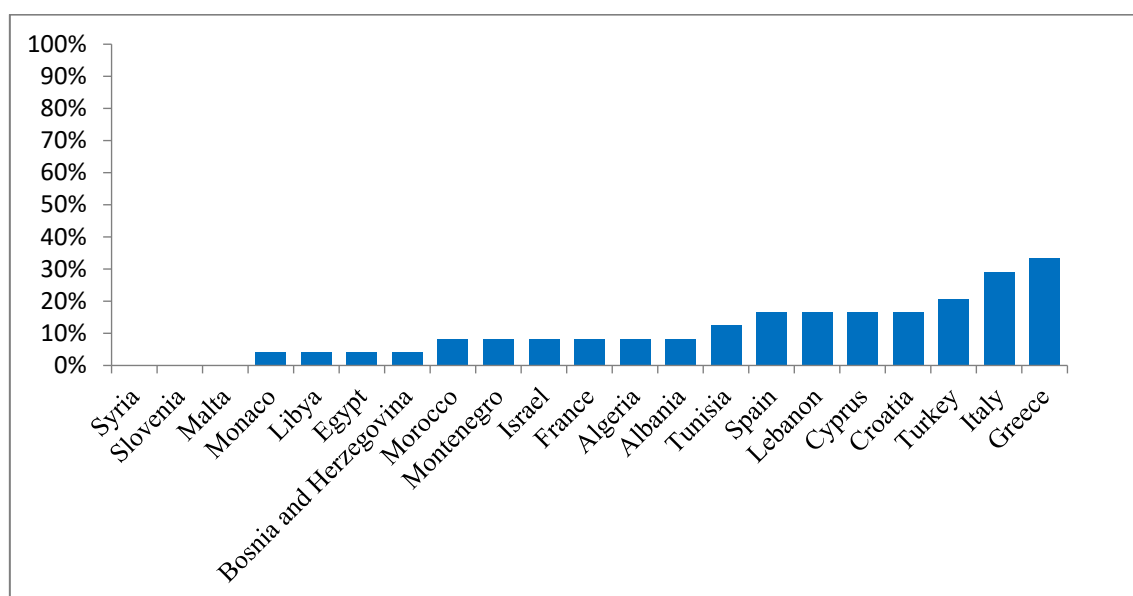


Figure 2. Countries where interviewees primary work

Table 1. Respondents' position/affiliation

Position (category that applies best to position/affiliation)	
Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of non-governmental organization	8
National Focal Point SPA/RAC	4
Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	3
Independent expert / Freelancer	3
Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	2
Staff of International intergovernmental organization	1
Student / PhD Student	1
Total responses	22

2. Goal 1. Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

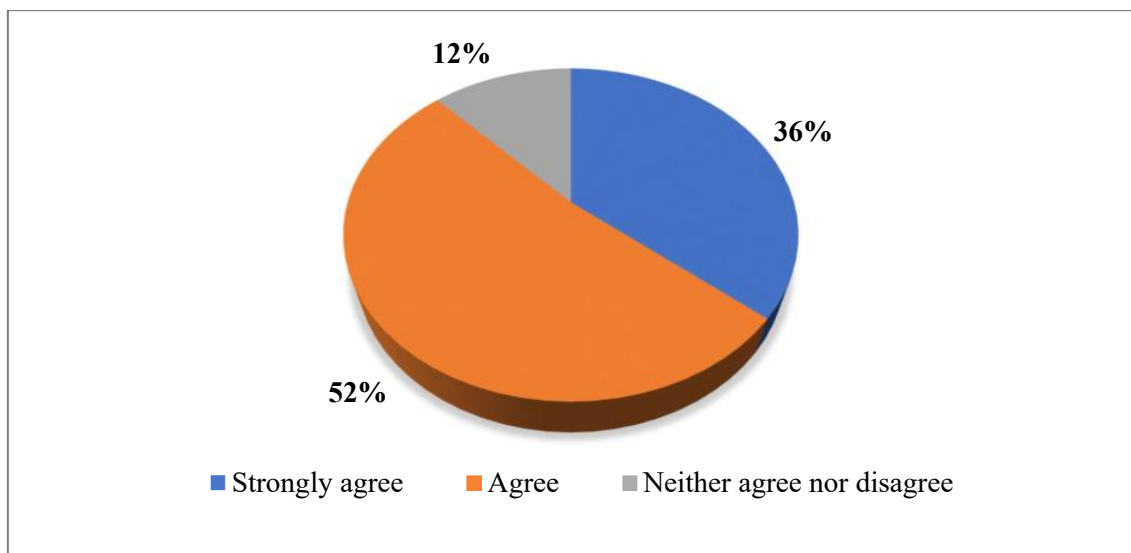


Figure 3. Agreement with the need for the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)

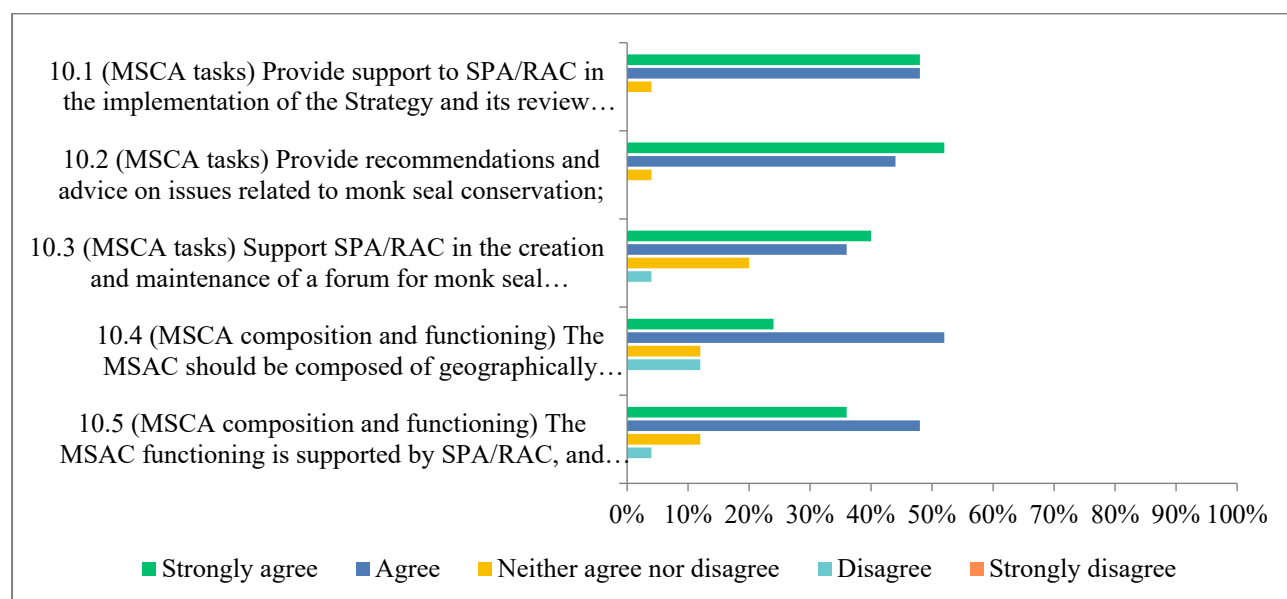


Figure 4. TASKS to be assigned to the MSAC and its COMPOSITION

3. Goal 2. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites in-crease and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Table 2. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 2.1 (percentages followed by number of responses in bold).

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in important monk seal locations	Current legislation prohibiting carrying firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels is enforced	Geographi- cally delimited and legally protected/ managed; mpa effectively managed	Appropriate management actions and involvement of the local communities	No action	Not familiar with this location
Greek Ionian islands	26.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 4	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	26.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 4	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	46.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 7
Northern Sporades	26.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 4	33.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	20.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 3	6.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	53.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 8
Gyaros	20.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 3	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	6.67% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	60.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 9
Kimolos and Polyaigos	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	0.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 0	0.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 0	13.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	73.33% ^{[1][1][1]} 11
Karpathos-Saria	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	0.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 0	7.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	71.43% ^{[1][1][1]} 10
Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts	29.41% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	29.41% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	29.41% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	5.88% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	58.82% ^{[1][1][1]} 10
Cyprus	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	21.43% ^{[1][1][1]} 3	7.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	7.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	64.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 9

Notice that one respondent decided to respond ‘No action’ to all of them to show disagreement in the locations listed.

Table 3. Current protection status of locations listed in Objective 2.1. (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Current protection status	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
Monk seal MPA (or MPA network) established in the Greek Ionian islands	35.71% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	21.43% ^{[1][1][1]} 3	42.86% ^{[1][1][1]} 6
Island of Gyaros Natura 2000 established as a Monk seal MPA	42.86% ^{[1][1][1]} 6	7.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	50.00% ^{[1][1][1]} 7
Monk seal MPA established in Kimolos - Polyaigos	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	71.43% ^{[1][1][1]} 10
Monk seal MPA established in Karpathos - Saria	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	14.29% ^{[1][1][1]} 2	71.43% ^{[1][1][1]} 10
Monk seal MPAs designated along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Turkey as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee	37.50% ^{[1][1][1]} 6	6.25% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	56.25% ^{[1][1][1]} 9
Monk seal MPA designated in Cyprus where monk seal critical habitat was identified	35.71% ^{[1][1][1]} 5	7.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 1	57.14% ^{[1][1][1]} 8

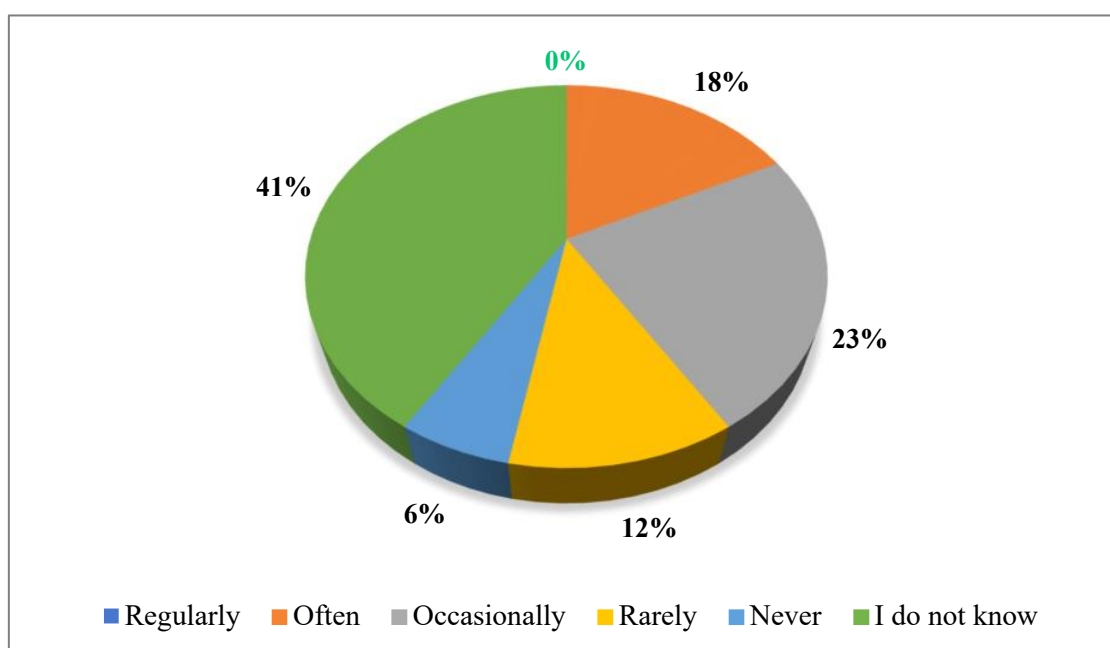


Figure 5. Frequency of capacity-building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target

4. Goal 3. Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

Table 4. Actions implemented in Albania under Goal Target 3.1 (percentages followed by number of responses in bold).

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone	12.50% 2	6.25% 1	12.50% 2	68.75% 11		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted in Albania in the concerned areas.	-	-	21.43% 3	-	-	78.57% 11

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Long-term cave monitoring is established in the caves identified in previous studies in the Karaburun Peninsula and nearby locations	23.53% 4	5.88% 1	11.76% 2	58.82% 10

Table 7. Monitoring actions implemented in Italy under Goal Target 3.3 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Italy, in areas with recurrent sightings, habitat availability and proximity to nearby breeding colonies, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence in Italy and alert authorities is enhanced along the coastal areas characterised by recurrent sightings and coastal habitat historically used by the species	38.89% 7	5.56% 1	16.67% 3	38.89% 7
Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands	5.88% 1	-	29.41% 5	64.71% 11
Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in Sardinia .	5.88% 1	17.65% 3	17.65% 3	58.82% 10
Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago .	23.53% 4	5.88% 1	17.65% 3	52.94% 9
Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and recurrent recent sightings in the lesser islands of the Sicily Strait (Pantelleria, Pelagie islands)	5.88% 1	17.65% 3	11.76% 2	64.71% 11
Monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in Salento (Apulia) in coastal areas containing historical monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings.	.	5.88% 1	11.76% 2	82.35% 14

Table 8. Actions implemented in Lebanon under Goal Target 3.4 (percentages followed by number of responses in bold).

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in Lebanon is permanently established.						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Lebanese coastal zone	12.50% 2	-	25.00% 4	62.50% 10		
A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted in the areas characterised by recent recurrent monk seal sightings and long-term cave monitoring program is initiated in northern Lebanon.	5.88% 1	-	-	68.75% 11		
	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Awareness actions are conducted along the Lebanese coastal zone	-	-	26.67% 4	-	-	73.33% 11

Table 9. Actions implemented in Israel under Goal Target 3.5 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Israel is permanently established.				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Israeli coastal zone	40.00% 6	-	-	60.00% 9
A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted, and a long-term cave monitoring program is implemented in northern Israel	20.00% 3	-	-	80.00% 12

	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Awareness actions are conducted along the Israeli coastal zone	-	16.67% 2	8.33% 1	-	-	75.00% 9

Table 10. Actions implemented in Montenegro under Goal Target 3.6 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Montenegro is permanently established.						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the coastal zone of Montenegro	13.33% 2	6.67% 1	20.00% 3	60.00% 9		
A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted, and a long-term cave monitoring programmes are implemented in Montenegro	20.00% 3	13.33% 2	-	66.67% 10		
	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Awareness actions are conducted along the Montenegro coastal zone	-	-	23.08% 3	-	-	76.92% 10

Table 11. Frequency of capacity building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 3.1-3.6 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

CAPACITY BUILDING. Training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 3.1-3.6.							
	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Courses reported
Albania	-	-	20.00% 3	13.33% 2	-	66.67% 10	Training for veterinarians for monk seal emergency cases, from Albania, Croatia and Montenegro.

Italy	-	-	25.00% 4	-	-	75.00% 12	Egadi Islands. Capacity building course on monk seal cave monitoring activities within the framework of the MASE-ISPRA program for monitoring of marine Habitats Directive species
Lebanon	-	-	-	13.33% 2	13.33% 2	73.33% 11	In Sami, Kefalonia island, Greece (researchers from Lebanon and Italy participated) in a <i>Regional workshop on Mediterranean monk seal and its habitats monitoring methodologies</i>
Israel	-	-	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	-	87.71% 12	
Montenegro	-	-	20.00% 3	20.00% 3	-	60.00% 9	

5. Goal 4. Monk seal presence is again reported in the species' historical habitat in "Group C" countries, and these "Group C" countries are upgraded to "Group B". Once all "Group C" countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Table 12. Frequency reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence and alert authorities (percentages followed by number of responses in bold).

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is repeatedly reported and permanently established.						
A reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence and alert authorities implemented in the following locations	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands	0.00% ^[1] 0	7.69% 1	7.69% 1	0.00% ^[1] 0	0.00% 0	84.62% 11
Tunisia	0.00% ^[1] 0	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	0.00% ^[1] 0	0.00% ^[1] 0	78.57% 11
Algeria	0.00% ^[1] 0	6.67% 1	13.33% 2	6.67% 1	0.00% ^[1] 0	73.33% 11

Morocco	7.14% ^[1] 1	7.14% ^[1] 1	0.00% 0	0.00% ^[1] 0	7.14% 1	78.57% 11
Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	7.14% ^[1] 1	7.14% ^[1] 1	7.14% 1	0.00% ^[1] 0	7.14% 1	71.43% 10

Table 13. Actions implemented in Balearic Islands under Goal Target 4.2 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is repeatedly reported and permanently established						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented in the Balearic Islands	14.29% 2	14.29% 2	7.14% 1	64.29% 9		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands	-	-	8.33% 1	8.33% 1	8.33% 1	75.00% 9

Table 14. Actions implemented in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia under Goal Target 4.3 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia repeatedly reported and permanently established						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia .	-	16.67% 2	8.33% 1	75.00% 9		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted in Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia	-	-	10.00% 1	-	10.00% 1	80.00% 8

Table 15. Actions implemented in Corsica under Goal Target 4.4 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.4. Monk seal presence in Corsica is repeatedly reported and permanently established						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica .	15.38% 2	7.69% 1	-	76.92% 10		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted in Corsica	-	-	9.09% 1	-	-	90.91% 10

Table 16. Actions implemented in Continental France under Goal Target 4.5 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.5. Monk seal presence is reported again from continental France.						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Continental France .	-	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	85.71% 12		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted in Continental France	-	-	10.00% 1	-	-	90.00% 9

Table 17. Actions implemented in Libya and nearby western Egypt under Goal Target 4.6 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.6. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is repeatedly reported and permanently established.						
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>		
Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Libyan easternmost coast bordering with Egypt conducted and long-term cave monitoring established in this area as well as in the caves identified in previous projects.	-	7.14% 1	7.14% 1	85.71% 12		
Full survey of monk seal presence in Egypt through data collection on sightings (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh)	-	14.29% 2	-	85.71% 12		
Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Egyptian areas characterised by recurrent sightings and a geomorphologically suitable coast conducted, and long-term cave monitoring established.	-	7.14% 1	-	92.86% 13		
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Awareness actions are conducted in Libya , targeting local residents and most notably fishers	-	-	-	-	8.33% 1	91.67% 11
Awareness actions are organised in Egypt	-	-	-	-	8.33% 1	91.67% 11

Table 18. Actions implemented in Malta under Goal Target 4.7 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.7. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta	-	15.38% 1	7.69% 1	76.92% 10
Awareness actions are conducted in Malta	-	7.14% 1	-	92.86% 13

Table 19. Actions implemented in Syria under Goal Target 4.8 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

Goal Target 4.8. Monk seal presence in Syria is repeatedly reported and permanently established				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Partially</u>	<u>I do not know</u>
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian coastal zone	-	7.69% 1	7.69% 1	84.62% 11
Awareness actions are conducted in Syria	-	7.14% 1	-	92.86% 13

Table 20. Frequency of capacity building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 4.1-4.8 (percentages followed by number of responses in **bold**).

CAPACITY BUILDING. Training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 4.1-4.8.							
	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know	Courses reported
Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	-	-	7.69% 1	7.69% 1	7.69% 1	76.92% 10	In Sami, Kefalonia island, Greece (researchers from Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt participated) in a <i>Regional workshop on Mediterranean monk seal and its habitats monitoring methodologies</i>
Balearic Islands, Spain	-	-	-	15.38% 2	15.38% 2	69.23% 9	
Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia	-	-	-	-	18.18% 2	81.82% 9	
Corsica	-	-	-	-	9.09% 1	90.91% 10	
Continental France	-	-	-	-	18.18% 2	81.82% 9	
Libya	-	-	-	-	9.09% 1	90.91% 10	In Sami, Kefalonia island, Greece (researchers from Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt participated) in a <i>Regional workshop on Mediterranean monk seal and its habitats monitoring methodologies</i>
Malta	-	-	-	-	9.09% 1	90.91% 10	
Syria	-	-	-	9.09% 1	9.09% 1	81.82% 9	

6. Towards an *updated* Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

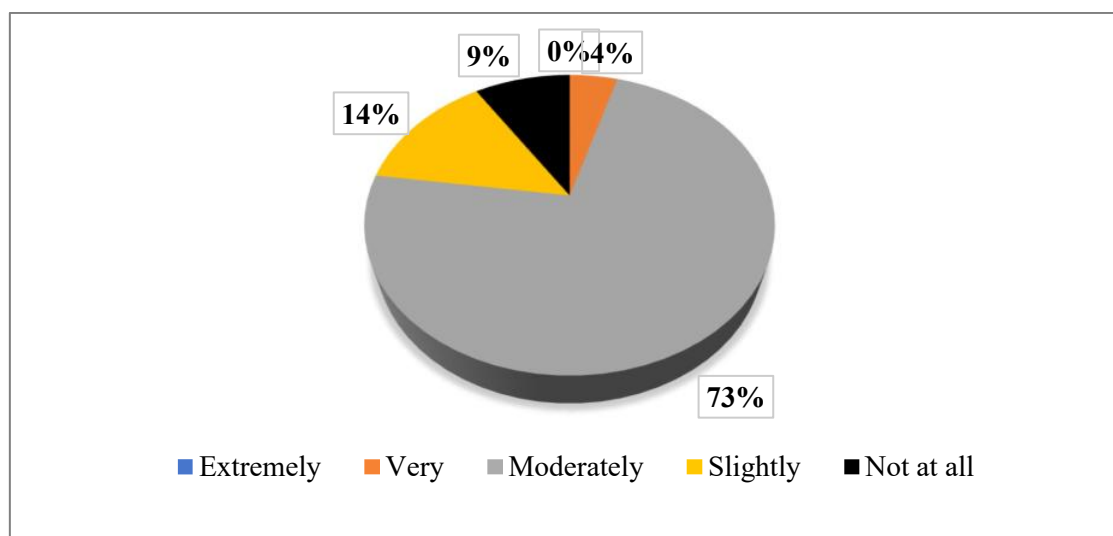


Figure 6. Degree of satisfaction of respondents on the implementation of the regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (2020-2025) to date.

Table 21. Degree of importance for actions to be considered when updating the regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

How relevant you consider the following actions when UPDATING the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean for its future implementation and success?					
	Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all
Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)	25.00% 6	45.83% 11	20.83% 5	8.33% 2	0.00% 0
Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites	62.50% 15	33.33% 8	4.17% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence	54.55% 12	40.91% 9	4.55% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000	12.50% 3	33.33% 8	41.67% 10	12.50% 3	0.00% 0

Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals	29.17% 7	54.17% 13	16.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000	20.83% 5	25.00% 6	33.33% 8	20.83% 5	0.00% 0
Capacity building and awareness courses	50.00% 12	33.33% 8	12.50% 3	4.17% 1	0.00% 0
Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g. UAVs)	33.33% 8	29.17% 7	20.83% 5	12.50% 3	4.17% 1
Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process	50.00% 12	41.67% 10	4.17% 1	4.17% 1	0.00% 0
Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others	56.52% 13	34.78% 8	4.35% 1	4.35% 1	0.00% 0

Comments / suggestions considered important by respondents for updating the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (as provided)

- I understand that the strategy is country specific. But the monk seal does not understand about borders. Some countries act like buffer zones and are part of the species home range. So even if there isn't permanent presence in a specific nearby country of a breeding-permanent monk seal site, they should be treated as part of the home range of that population and therefore some similar actions of A countries should be performed.
- The mandate and work program of the MSAC should be developed because at present it is not clear how the structure will operate and guarantee that it will be functional. As it stands it represents a mechanism for governance support to SPA RAC for the Strategy implementation. A trial run of a few years of an initial MSAC could be conducted and based on the problematics faced and solutions found a more refined mandate and working terms could be defined before making any definite decisions on its final structure.
- This list of areas for A countries (a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyros; d) Kimolos and Polyaigos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus) is very problematic and has nothing to do with the current status of the species. Important actions for the management of the species in A Countries that proved to be extremely useful and were foreseen in previous Action Plans have been omitted and should be included in the updated version of the Plan (National Information Networks, and Rescue and Rehabilitation Program). I strongly advise the authors of the new Regional Action Plan to study carefully the National Action Plan for the species in Greece
- The MSAC's mandate and work program should be defined in a concrete and detailed manner. At present, it is proposed as an entity to support the SPA/RAC to further the implementation of the Strategy. A two-year trial period could be envisaged for the MSAC so as to evaluate its real effectiveness.
- Suggestion to first make a deep analysis of changes in the status, population size and distribution changes of monk seal in the last 25 years, taking into account the impact of climate change on the possibility for monk seal population expansion. Define clear and SMART goals including revision of the criteria for determining presence/absence of monk seal.

- Seals-fisheries interaction including deliberate killings and accidental deaths is totally missing here.
- There is a need for SPA/RAC to closely coordinate strategy and efforts with other regional bodies/fora (i.e. IUCN Med, Monk Seal Alliance) that have already been developed to support the conservation of the monk seal.
- Monitoring and training activities are essential for the conservation of this species. Some Interreg/ADRION projects target the species but unfortunately are not considered in the Mediterranean Regional Strategy. Moreover, the role of veterinarians in assessing population health is extremely important for the future of the species and is often an underestimated aspect.
- To the best of my knowledge, ways should be found to move from the realm of good intentions to that of actions. The species is giving signs of recovery in places, so actions in areas where it is still rare/occasional should take place with renewed energy
- Working together with MSA as well as Madeira and south Morocco/Mauritania where are very big colonies of the species in danger due to caves degradation. Spanish organization in Madrid in charge of this topic.
- An ethical or code of conduct document should be developed and adopted by the broad MMS community or at least among the MMS experts for the conservation and research of this endangered and sensitive species in the Mediterranean.
- Despite there has not been any observation of monk seal in Spanish waters since 2008 (island of Mallorca in Balearic Islands), the Spanish authorities (Ministry and regional governments) are working intensively in the implementation of the action plan for the monk seal in east Atlantic and the Memorandum of understanding for the species in the Convention for the conservation of migratory species (CMS). We are actively cooperating with the Mauritanian and Portuguese authorities for the recovery of native populations and assessing the development of new reintroduction activities of the species in the former range of Spain. The scientific analyses are being currently performed both in Atlantic waters (already available) and even in Mediterranean coasts (to be developed).
- Strengthening cross-border cooperation and data-sharing mechanisms among Mediterranean countries. This would help to enhance the tracking of monk seal movements and improve habitat protection measures. Additionally, more emphasis should be placed on mitigating human-seal interactions, particularly by engaging coastal communities and fishers in conservation efforts. Expanding capacity-building programs to underserved regions and involving local stakeholders in management plans will further ensure the strategy's success. Finally, setting up periodic evaluations of conservation outcomes will allow for adaptive management.
- There should be a closer collaboration with the people involved in the management / monitoring of the species in a regional level. We have noticed that through the Monk Seal Alliance, key players like the national monitoring team of the monk seal in Cyprus is not invited to participate. A focus on the key players for the protection, conservation and monitoring will help on the achievement of the targets of the Regional Strategy. Also, there is a need to update National Action Plans for the Monk Seal in order to incorporate updated data and to align them with the targets of the regional action plan.