

**First National FishEBM Med Stakeholder Workshop on
Opportunities and Constraints for Integrating Biodiversity
into a Blue Economy Development Framework:
Summary report**

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a Blue Economy Development Framework:**

Summary Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the outcomes of the First National FishEBM Med Stakeholder Workshop held in Bar, Montenegro, on 26 February 2026, as part of the development of the National Action Plan (NAP+) for integrating biodiversity into the blue economy.

The workshop successfully mobilized key stakeholders and generated critical inputs to inform the NAP+ process. It highlighted major structural challenges, including weak market organization, pollution pressures, and governance gaps, while identifying strong opportunities in sustainable fisheries, blue tourism, and ecosystem-based management.

Key priorities emerging from the workshop include:

- Strengthening pollution control (wastewater, plastics)
- Improving fisheries value chains and market regulation
- Enhancing marine conservation and MPAs
- Developing sustainable blue tourism models
- Reinforcing institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement

These findings provide a solid foundation for the next phases of the NAP+ development, including prioritization of actions and investment planning.

Gender mainstreaming:

The workshop brought together 31 participants, including 20 women and 11 men. Local organizations actively participated, ensuring community perspectives were reflected.

1 INTRODUCTION

The First National FishEBM Med Stakeholder Workshop was held in Bar, Montenegro, on 26 February 2026 with the objective of initiating a structured dialogue among key stakeholders on the integration of biodiversity considerations into a blue economy development framework. The workshop brought together a diverse group of 31 participants, including representatives from national and local institutions, international organizations, research and expert bodies, NGOs as well as fisheries sector stakeholders, to contribute to the development of the National Action Plan (NAP+) under the FishEBM Med project.

Organized as an inception workshop, the event aimed to introduce the objectives and scope of the ongoing study while mobilizing relevant stakeholders and fostering early engagement in the NAP+ process. The event was gender-responsive and particular emphasis was placed on creating an inclusive and participatory environment to capture stakeholders' perspectives, ensure ownership of the process, and lay the groundwork for sustained collaboration.

Within this context, the NAP+ is conceived as a strategic framework to support the integration of biodiversity into national blue economy policies and planning processes, while ensuring alignment with regional commitments under the UNEP/MAP system. The workshop therefore served as a key entry point to present the NAP+ approach, clarify its objectives and expected outcomes, and initiate a collective reflection on priorities for Montenegro.

More specifically, the workshop aimed to:

- present the NAP+ concept, methodology, and expected outputs;
- engage a broad range of stakeholders across sectors including women leaders and representatives of local women and men;
- identify key constraints and opportunities for integrating biodiversity into blue economy development;
- initiate the formulation of a shared vision for sustainable marine and coastal development.

Through a series of presentations and interactive sessions, participants were introduced to the overall process for preparing the NAP+, including its phases, expected benefits, and opportunities for stakeholder contribution. The discussions provided a platform to jointly explore sector-specific challenges and opportunities, particularly in fisheries, aquaculture, and blue tourism, while highlighting the importance of cross-sectoral coordination and ecosystem-based approaches.

2 STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING

A total of 31 participants (20 women, 11 men) attended the workshop, representing a broad range of stakeholders, including public institutions, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and sectoral actors from fisheries, tourism, and environmental management. This diversity provided a solid basis for initiating an inclusive and multi-sectoral dialogue on the development of the NAP+.

The stakeholder mapping exercise built upon an initial list of approximately 50 actors, which had been used for the dissemination of workshop invitations and is considered a living document to be continuously updated throughout the NAP+ process. The exercise aimed both to validate this preliminary mapping and to identify missing stakeholders essential for ensuring a comprehensive and representative engagement.

To support this process, a stakeholder mapping report was presented, followed by an interactive session during which participants were invited to propose additional actors and provide relevant contact information. Contributions were collected through both plenary discussions and participatory tools, allowing for the identification, discussion, and validation of key stakeholders and their respective roles within the blue economy and biodiversity landscape.

The exercise highlighted several gaps in stakeholder representation, particularly concerning scientific and research institutions, market actors involved in processing and distribution, informal and small-scale operators, as well as women and youth engaged in fisheries. In addition, the need to better integrate potential financial actors and funding mechanisms into the process was emphasized.

Furthermore, the discussions revealed structural characteristics of the Montenegrin context, including the limited formal organization of certain stakeholder groups (such as fisheries cooperatives, pesca-tourism operators, and women in fisheries), as well as the fragmented representation of sectors such as the Hotel-Restaurant-Catering sector (HoReCa) and small-scale tourism operators. These elements underline the importance of adopting flexible and adaptive engagement approaches capable of reaching less formalized actors.

Additional stakeholders were identified across several categories, including research and monitoring institutions, NGOs, tourism operators, and education and communication actors. A detailed list of these additional stakeholders is provided in **Annex 2**.

Key Insight

The effectiveness of the NAP+ process will depend on the establishment of sustained, inclusive, and flexible stakeholder engagement mechanisms that go beyond one-off consultations, ensuring continuous participation and integration of diverse perspectives throughout the process.

3 VISION FOR BIODIVERSITY AND BLUE ECONOMY

As part of the workshop, a dedicated session was conducted to develop a shared vision for integrating biodiversity into Montenegro's blue economy. Participants were guided through an interactive exercise aimed at identifying key challenges, opportunities, and enabling factors, while reflecting on both short-term and long-term perspectives.

Working in pairs, participants were invited to formulate visioning statements and highlight priority themes based on their experience and sectoral perspectives. These contributions were collected through participatory methods and are intended to serve as a preliminary basis for further refinement and validation in subsequent stages of the NAP+ process.

Short-term vision (by 2030)

The short-term vision reflects a strong emphasis on strengthening the foundations for sustainable blue economy development. Participants highlighted the need to enhance protection of marine, coastal, and freshwater ecosystems, while addressing key environmental pressures such as pollution from wastewater, plastics, and microplastics.

Improving fisheries sustainability emerged as a priority, including better regulation of fishing activities, reduction of fishing pressure, and upgrading of infrastructure such as fishing berths. At the same time, participants stressed the importance of investing in ecosystem protection and promoting sustainable tourism as a driver of economic development.

Raising public awareness and strengthening education around biodiversity and protected areas were also identified as critical enabling factors. Overall, the 2030 vision reflects an ambition for Montenegro to position itself as a recognized leader in the Mediterranean in advancing a sustainable and biodiversity-inclusive blue economy.

Long-term vision (by 2050)

The long-term vision is characterized by a more systemic and integrated approach, where biodiversity is fully embedded across all relevant sectors and governance frameworks. Participants emphasized the importance of achieving strong synergies between aquatic ecosystems and broader socio-economic systems, supported by effective coordination between public institutions and economic sectors, particularly fisheries.

Key elements of the 2050 vision include the establishment of comprehensive monitoring and control systems, the complete elimination of plastic pollution from marine activities, and the adoption of more sustainable and potentially innovative technologies in the fisheries sector.

At the same time, participants acknowledged potential long-term risks, including declining fish stocks, highlighting the need for precautionary and adaptive management approaches to ensure the long-term resilience of marine resources.

Strategic Trajectory

Based on the short plenary discussion of the short- and long-term visions, it was concluded that in the short-term Montenegro should focus on strengthening conservation, public awareness, sustainable tourism and fisheries, halting the pressures, reducing pollution, with a particular emphasis on preserving fish stocks. In the long term, attention should focus on stronger synergy between sectors, establishment of a robust monitoring and control system, and the permanent elimination of plastic pollution and other waste threats.

4 ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Participants were divided into two working groups focusing respectively on (i) biodiversity conservation in fisheries and aquaculture, and (ii) biodiversity conservation in blue tourism. Through guided discussions and participatory exercises, participants identified and prioritized key constraints and opportunities. The results presented below reflect the collective inputs of stakeholders, including their prioritization of issues.

4.1 Analysis of Constraints

Fisheries sector

Participants identified a range of structural, economic, and environmental constraints affecting the fisheries sector. High-priority issues include the aging and limited fishing fleet, the lack of an organized domestic fish market, and insufficient infrastructure such as ports and processing facilities.

Market-related challenges were strongly emphasized, including high dependence on fish imports, weak distribution channels, and lack of traceability, with concerns over mislabelling of imported fish as local products. Financial constraints and administrative barriers, particularly related to access to fishing permits in economic zones, were also highlighted.

Environmental pressures were identified as significant constraints, notably marine pollution (plastics, wastewater, microplastics), climate change impacts, and declining or uncertain fish

stocks. Participants also pointed to illegal fishing and broader governance challenges affecting the sector.

Overall, the most critical constraints identified by participants relate to the small size and aging of the fleet, the absence of a structured fish market, and gaps in regulatory framework infrastructure and value chain development.

Blue tourism

In the blue tourism sector, participants highlighted governance and environmental issues as primary constraints. High-priority challenges include illegal construction and weak law enforcement, as well as insufficient wastewater treatment and waste management systems.

Additional pressures include illegal fishing and anchoring, unregulated tourism development, and spatial planning challenges. Participants also pointed to structural issues such as the short tourist season, mass tourism patterns, and declining environmental quality, all of which affect the sustainability of the sector.

4.2 Analysis of opportunities

Fisheries sector

Participants identified several opportunities to strengthen the fisheries sector, particularly through increased governmental support, fishers organization, fleet modernization, and improvements in coastal and port infrastructure.

Medium-priority opportunities include strengthening the domestic fish market through improved regulation and traceability, as well as supporting the development of processing industries to enhance value chains.

Additional opportunities highlighted include awareness-raising initiatives to promote local fish consumption, increased involvement of youth, regional cooperation and knowledge exchange, and the strengthening of conservation measures, including marine protected areas and protection of vulnerable species.

Blue tourism

In the tourism sector, participants identified a wide range of opportunities to support the transition toward more sustainable models. High-value opportunities include the development of gastronomic and seafood festivals, integration of blue infrastructure into tourism offers, and strengthening of marine protected areas, including the installation of mooring systems.

Participants also highlighted the potential of certification schemes and eco-labels, to communicate better and promote the added value of sustainable tourism, the development

of niche tourism activities (such as diving, snorkelling, and nature observation), and the promotion of sustainable practices through awareness and education. These activities were mentioned as related to MPA development and enforcement, highlighting the need to support these conservation tools.

Additional opportunities include linking tourism to conservation initiatives, developing value chains around local products, promoting the use of invasive species, and strengthening monitoring, enforcement, and cooperation with international partners.

4.3 Key Takeaways

The analysis highlights a strong convergence among stakeholders around a set of structural challenges and opportunities. Key constraints relate to governance gaps, weak market organization, infrastructure limitations, and environmental pressures. At the same time, significant opportunities exist to enhance value chains, strengthen conservation efforts, and develop sustainable blue tourism models.

The prioritization exercise highlighted that stakeholders consistently emphasized issues related to market organization (particularly in fisheries), environmental management (including pollution and monitoring), and infrastructure gaps as key areas of concern to be considered within the NAP+ process.

5 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The workshop marked an important milestone in initiating the NAP+ process in Montenegro, providing a structured and participatory platform to engage stakeholders and generate interest, a shared understanding of key challenges and opportunities at the interface between biodiversity and the blue economy.

Beyond the diversity of sectoral perspectives, the discussions revealed a strong convergence around a limited number of systemic issues. In particular, stakeholders consistently highlighted the need to improve environmental management (notably pollution control), strengthen market organization, especially in the fisheries sector, and address structural gaps in governance and coordination. These elements constitute critical enabling conditions for advancing a sustainable and biodiversity-inclusive blue economy.

The outcomes of the workshop also underline that the transition toward such a model requires not only sector-specific interventions, but also cross-cutting approaches that integrate environmental, economic, and social dimensions. In this regard, strengthening institutional coordination, improving access to knowledge and data, and fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement will be essential to ensure the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the NAP+.

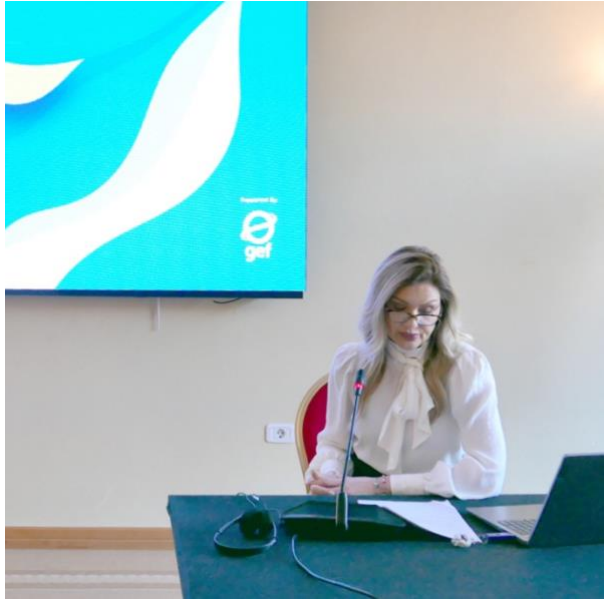
Building on these findings, the next phase of the process will focus on translating stakeholder inputs into a coherent and actionable NAP+ framework. This will include the prioritization of measures, with particular attention to short-term, feasible actions that can generate tangible results and build momentum.

Key next steps include:

- **Further stakeholder engagement:** expanding and consolidating the stakeholder platform to ensure continuous and inclusive participation throughout the NAP+ development process;
- **Prioritization of measures:** refining and ranking proposed actions based on feasibility, impact, and alignment with national and regional priorities;
- **Development of targeted interventions:** focusing on practical and scalable measures, including pollution mitigation, market regulation and traceability, support to small-scale fisheries, and pilot initiatives linking conservation and tourism;
- **Strengthening governance and knowledge systems:** improving coordination mechanisms, data availability, and monitoring frameworks to support evidence-based decision-making;
- **Preparation of the NAP+ framework and investment pathways:** structuring the action plan and identifying potential areas for future investment, particularly for larger-scale interventions beyond the immediate scope of the current phase.
- **Gender mainstreaming:** Ongoing and future initiatives will be addressed using a gender-sensitive approach. A gender action plan will be developed for implementation.

Specific focus groups will be organized in the next phase to review and consolidate the proposed priorities and ensure alignment among stakeholders before elaboration of the NAP+

Photos of the event













Annex 1. List of Additional Stakeholders Identified During the Workshop

During the stakeholder mapping exercise, participants identified additional stakeholders to complement the existing list used for the workshop. These stakeholders reflect important actors across governance, research, private sector, civil society, and education, and will contribute to strengthening the inclusiveness of the NAP+ process.

1. Public Institutions and Management Bodies

- Managers of marine protected areas (MPAs), including the Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management “Morsko dobro” (already included in the stakeholder list)
- Port authorities, including Kalimanj (Tivat), Zelenika (Herceg Novi), Budva, Bar, and Kotor (main offices already included in the stakeholder list)

2. Research and Scientific Institutions

- Centre for Ecotoxicological Research (CETI), identified as a key actor for pollution research and environmental monitoring
- Biota Group Montenegro, highlighted as a potential expert organisation, particularly in biodiversity-related topics

3. Civil Society and NGOs

- NGO Marine Research Organization (DMAD).
- NGO Med Centre for Environment.

4. Private Sector and Economic Actors

- Association of tourist boat operators (to be further verified, as formal structure and contacts remain unclear, and association potentially non-existing).
- Fish markets (role recognized as important, though representation remains unclear due to management by municipal entities, and as fish specialized potentially non-existent)
- HoReCa sector (Hotels, Restaurants, and Cafés), currently not organized into a unified structure; potential engagement through individual actors or smaller associations
- Fishing tourism operators, mostly informal and not well structured
- Pesca-tourism operators (similar to the above, and currently not present in Montenegro)

5. Fisheries and Community-Based Actors

- Women in fisheries (not formally organized; direct engagement to be explored)

- Fisheries cooperatives (currently not established in Montenegro; representation mainly through existing associations)

6. Education and Awareness Actors

- Maritime faculties, including the University of Montenegro and University “Adriatik” Bar (already included in the stakeholder list)
- Student associations (relevance to be further assessed)
- Primary schools (potential involvement subject to further evaluation and administrative considerations constrains)
- Journalists covering environmental protection, fisheries, and related topics (partially identified; additional contacts needed)

7. Financial and Supporting Actors

- Philanthropic organizations (identified as potential funding partners, though not yet specified)

Note

Several of the stakeholders identified are not formally organized or lack clear representation structures. Their effective engagement in the NAP+ process will require flexible and adaptive approaches.

Annex 2. Workshop Agenda

First National FishEBM Med Stakeholder Workshop on Opportunities and Constraints for Integrating Biodiversity into a Blue Economy Development Framework

26 February 2026 | Bar, Montenegro

AGENDA

- 09:00 – 09:30 Registration and welcome coffee
- 09:30 – 09:40 Opening session
Welcoming remarks from representatives of the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Resources
- 09:40 – 09:50 Objectives of the workshop and expected outcomes
- 09:50 – 10:00 Introduction on FishEBM Med Project
- 10:00 – 10:35 Setting the scene:
Introduction to the NAP+ concept: what it is and what it is not
Overview of the planned NAP+ preparation process and the next steps under the FishEBM Med Blue Economy
- 10:35 – 11:00 Stakeholder Mapping
- 11:00 – 11:20 Coffee Break
- 11:20 – 11:30 Stakeholder Mapping
- 11:30 – 11:50 Towards a shared vision
- 11:50 – 13:00 Work in Groups - Fisheries and Aquacultures&Blue Tourism
- 13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00 – 14:30 Work in Groups - Fisheries and Aquacultures&Blue Tourism
- 14:30 – 15:00 Closing session – way forward and closing remarks

Annex 3. List of Participants

MONTENEGRO

Milica Rudic

Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development

Tamara Brajovic

Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development

Katarina Burzanovic

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Deniz Frljuckic

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Igor Vujovic

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management

Olivera Blagojevic

Ministry of Tourism

Ivana Mitrovic

Environmental Protection Agency

Nina Bulatovic

Environmental Protection Agency

Darinka Joksimovic

Maritime Safety and Ports Management Administration

Ana Katnic

National Expert FishEBM Project

Marija Tripunovic

National Coordinator FishEBM Project

Bojana Rakocevic

UNDP (BioFin project)

Marija Andric

Tourism Organisation of Budva

Milun Andjic

Udruzenje plivarica (Association of purse seine fishermen)

Milos Dukic

Udruzenje plivarica (Association of purse seine fishermen)

Jovana Djokic

Montenegrin Ecologist Society

Milica Babic

JPMDCG

Sladjana Radoman

JPMDCG

Luka Markovic

JPMDCG

Dusan Vukcevic

Diving Federation of Montenegro

MOROCCO

Mohamed Malouli Idrissi

INRH

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