



Deliverable D2.6

**MEDIUM AND LONG TERM ACTION PLANS FOR
OVERCOMING THE DETECTED GAPS AND
INCONSISTENCIES, AND ENSURE THE COHERENCE
AMONG MEDITERRANEAN MEMBER STATES MSFD
MONITORING PLANS**

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**Action Plans for Integrated Regional Monitoring
Programmes, Coordinated Programmes of
Measures and Addressing Data and Knowledge
Gaps in Mediterranean Sea**

ActionMed

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Coordinator

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the framework of the ActionMed Project Activity 2, the MSFD monitoring proposals submitted by the Mediterranean EU MSs, in relation to Article 11 implementation, were assessed, through the elaboration and analysis of an *ad hoc* database. Thus, a brief list of identified gaps and needs was compiled.

Furthermore, on the basis of the monitoring programmes established in the timeline set out in the MSFD, the Commission Report 2 was published in 2016.

The proposed action plan presented below, is mainly based on the findings of the aforementioned Commission Report, as well as the outcomes of the work carried out in the framework of the ActionMed Activity 2. Gaps that need to be filled through the proposed actions can be clustered into three categories –objectives, as follows:

- Homogenisation of the structure of the national MSFD monitoring plans from a formal point of view;
- Enhanced international coordination of contents, with a particular focus on standardization of methodologies;
- Enhanced coordination/harmonization between MSFD and UNEP-MAP IMAP monitoring.

It must be noted that the assessment of the monitoring programmes within the framework of ActionMed Activity 2, showed that there is already a high level of coherence and overlapping at the level of criteria and indicators. However, it is shown and proposed that efforts should be continued and intensified, in order to further streamline monitoring programmes under the MSFD and the UNEP/MAP – IMAP within the Mediterranean regions/subregions.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 MAIN GAPS RELATED TO MONITORING PROGRAMMES

In the framework of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive¹ (MSFD), the EU Member States were required to establish by 2014 monitoring programmes, in order to monitor and assess the environmental status of EU marine waters, as well as the progress towards Good Environmental Status (GES). It is specifically required by Article 11 of the MSFD that the monitoring programmes are consistent across the same marine region and subregion and take into account relevant transboundary impacts and features. For the elaboration of the current Action Plan, two sources of information were mainly used: the outcomes of the work undertaken in the framework of the ActionMed Activity 2, as well the main findings of the European Commission Report “assessing Member States” monitoring programmes under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive”² (the Commission Report) that will be both described below.

In the framework of the ActionMed Project Activity 2, the MSFD monitoring programme proposals submitted by the Mediterranean EU Member States, in relation to Article 11 implementation, were analysed in deep, through the elaboration and analysis of an *ad hoc* database. Specific tasks under this Activity included the compilation of the proposals on MSFD national monitoring programs and inclusion of relevant information in a georeferenced database (subtask 2.1.1, ActionMed Deliverable D2.1), an assessment on the integration of MSFD national monitoring proposals with the existing monitoring, related to other directives and evaluation of how these national plans match with UNEP/MAP IMAP monitoring plans (subtask 2.1.2 ActionMed Deliverable D2.2) and an analysis of the information included in the database (2.1.3, ActionMed Deliverable D2.2). Based on these studies, a brief list of identified gaps and needs was compiled, targeting mainly three categories of problems: lack of structural homogenisation, weak international coordination of monitoring programmes with regards to their content and the need to continue and strengthen the coordination/harmonization between MSFD and UNEP/MAP IMAP monitoring.

Furthermore, on the basis of the monitoring programmes that were established in the timeline set out in the MSFD, the Commission Report² was published in 2016. The Report covers 6 out of the 8 Mediterranean EU Member States (Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, and Slovenia) and important conclusions can be drawn on gaps and needs.

A key finding of the Commission Report is that there is low to moderate degree of coherence and coordination within the EU Member States of the Mediterranean region, as also identified by the ActionMed Activity 2 results. Moreover, the Commission Report highlights the need to develop more consistent monitoring programmes in the Mediterranean, through regional efforts for a number of descriptors, such as in the case of non-indigenous species (Descriptor 2) and underwater noise (Descriptor 11).

¹ Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive)

² Brussels, 16.1.2017 COM(2017) 3 final

Therefore, the Commission Report recommends that the EU Member States “*seek further coherence at regional or sub-regional level through further coordination of monitoring programmes, notably through Regional Sea Conventions, including common approaches to data collection and assessment methods*”.

It is therefore concluded that the Commission Report and the findings of the work under the ActionMed Activity 2 highlight the need for enhanced homogenisation of the monitoring programmes, as well as strengthened coordination at regional level, and therefore, the present Action Plan is mainly addressing those issues and needs.

1.2 REGIONAL COORDINATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In the Mediterranean, regional coordination in areas related to marine and coastal environmental protection is ensured by the UNEP/MAP - Barcelona Convention. The implementation of the Ecosystem Approach on basin level has resulted in the adoption by the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP19) of an Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP), Decision IG.22/7.

IMAP has established a region-wide integrated monitoring and assessment programme, based on common indicators, regionally agreed targets and GES descriptions, with a clear timeline for the monitoring and assessment of the status of Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, covering biodiversity, non-indigenous species, fisheries, pollution and marine litter and coast and hydrography.

During the initial phase of IMAP, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are requested to update their national monitoring programmes, based on agreed common indicators covering all the IMAP Ecological Objectives. In their implementation, the Contracting Parties are guided by the Draft Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Guidance³, and by the Common Indicator Fact Sheets, noting that the latter are developed in cooperation with the Contracting Parties during 2016-2017, and as such provide a basis for further refinement of GES description, targets and monitoring methods.

As such, IMAP and the Ecosystem Approach process of UNEP/MAP-Barcelona Convention, through the meetings of the country monitoring experts by cluster, the so-called Correspondence Groups on Monitoring (CORMONs), provide a mechanism through which all Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, including those which are EU Member States, can further collaborate and ensure coherence and coordination in their monitoring programmes.

It should be further noted that, in the framework of IMAP, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention are encouraged to undertake, when appropriate, joint monitoring initiatives on a pilot basis, with the aim to exchange best practices, use harmonized methodologies, and ensure cost efficiency.

³ UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.22/Inf.7

2 ACTION PLAN

The following action plan is mainly based on the findings of the aforementioned Commission Report, as well as the outcomes of the work carried out in the framework of the ActionMed Activity 2. Gaps that need to be filled through the proposed actions can be clustered into three categories –objectives, as follows:

- **Homogenisation of the structure of the national MSFD monitoring plans from a formal point of view.**

The work carried out in the framework of the ActionMed Activity 2 revealed some specific gaps and needs with regards to the structure of monitoring programmes, established by the Mediterranean EU Member States under the MSFD, which should be further homogenized as a pre-requisite to make them fully comparable.

- **Enhanced international coordination of contents, with a particular focus on standardization of methodologies**

Work under the Activity 2, has revealed a low level of coordination and involvement of the scientists/specialists directly in charge of elaborating the national monitoring program or subprograms.

- **Enhanced coordination/harmonization between MSFD and UNEP-MAP IMAP monitoring**

The study conducted by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) in the framework of ActionMed Activity 2, showed that there is already a high level of coherence and overlapping at the level of criteria and indicators. However it suggests that efforts should be continued and intensified in order to further streamline monitoring programmes under the MSFD and the UNEP/MAP – IMAP.

In the Table below, the Medium and Long term Action Plans regarding the monitoring programmes on MSFD implementation are presented.

	Objectives	Gaps	Actions	Timeline*	Level **	Stakeholders
MSFD national monitoring plans	Homogenisation of the structure of MSFD national monitoring plans from a formal point of view	Not all countries have followed the Directive's instructions on reporting of the national plans	All the countries to present both the text-based reports in pdf and html files using the standard templates (MSFD obligation)	Medium term	National	EU MSs experts in charge of elaborating the national monitoring plans
			Further ensure that the level of details of the plans is similar, following the same criteria	Medium term	National	EU MSs experts in charge of elaborating the national monitoring plans
		Lack of homogenous criteria for defining subprograms and related indicators	Organization of a high level workshop, with participation of all the stakeholders responsible for the national monitoring plans, in order to agree on common criteria	Medium term	Regional	UNEP/MAP EcAp Coordination Group CORMONs MAP Components' Focal Points/ experts National policy-makers and scientific experts
		Heterogeneity in the level of detail of the indicators. In most cases they are not reported at algorithm level, which is the required level to analyse if there is an effective methodological standardisation.	Agreement upon standardized descriptions of indicators	Medium term	Regional	UNEP/MAP EcAp Coordination Group CORMONs MAP Components' Focal Points/experts National experts in charge of developing the monitoring plans
		Diverse types of errors detected in the reported documents on monitoring plans, i.e.	Errors corrected through a revision of monitoring plans to be made at country level	Medium term (In line with the revision of the	National	EU MSs experts in charge of elaborating the

		subprograms assigned to wrong indicators, errors in the codification of subprograms, confusions between the concept of monitored elements and parameters measured etc.		national plans, according to the revised Decision 477)		national monitoring plans
International coordination and standardization of methodologies	<p>Low level of coordination mainly achieved through indirect ways, i.e. participation of specialists in charge of the elaboration of specific subprogrammes in the groups that elaborated the reference documents for development of MSFD descriptors, or the use of common methodological guidelines. And</p> <p>Weak involvement of scientists directly in charge of elaborating each national monitoring programme or subprogramme in regional/subregional coordination meetings</p>	<p>Organization of international regional/subregional workshops by descriptors or groups of similar descriptors involving the specialists in charge of the design and /or implementation of the related monitoring plans, to discuss technical aspects of their implementation.</p> <p>Participation in the workshops of representatives from Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention that are not EU Member States, as well as of representatives from other Regional Sea Conventions (at least as observers)</p>	<p>Medium term (In line with the revision of the national plans, according to the revised Decision 477)</p>	Regional	<p>UNEP/MAP EU MSs specialists directly in charge of elaborating the national monitoring plans</p>	
		<p>Monitoring strategies and methodologies for the next monitoring cycle to be homogenised to the maximum possible extent</p>	<p>Medium term</p>	Regional	<p>UNEP/MAP CORMONs EcAp Coordination Group MAP Components' Focal Points/experts</p>	
		<p>Explore opportunities for and implementation of joint monitoring programmes</p>	<p>Long term</p>	Regional	<p>UNEP/MAP BC Contracting Parties</p>	

MSFD – IMAP monitoring plans	Enhanced coordination between MSFD and UNEP/MAP IMAP monitoring	Coordination at regional and subregional levels is already achieved at a high level through existing UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention mechanisms and structures especially through the implementation of IMAP. However there is area for further coordination and harmonisation between MSFD and IMAP	Undertake an overall analysis of the actual level of streamlining between MSFD and IMAP, based on the work (excel document) prepared by IEO, to be presented to the CORMONs and EcAp coordination groups	Medium term	Regional	UNEP/MAP EcAp
			Strengthen coordination between MSFD, EcAp Coordination Group and CORMON Focal Points/experts	Medium - Long term	Regional	UNEP/MAP BC Contracting Parties EcAp Coordination Group CORMONs MAP Components' Focal Points/experts
			Establishment of a mechanism for MSFD assessments and reports to be accessible in one of the UNEP/MAP Official languages	Long term		UNEP/MAP EU EEA
			Building on the achievements of the Project entitled “Mediterranean implementation of the Ecosystem Approach, in coherence with the EU MSFD” (EcAp-MEDII Project), provide further support to Southern Mediterranean countries, as appropriate, in view of supporting them to elaborate and fully implement IMAP requirements, including undertaking joint monitoring programmes; - Undertake further capacity	Medium – Long term	Regional	UNEP/MAP BC Contracting Parties EcAp Coordination Group CORMONs MAP Components' Focal Points/experts

			<p>building actions for IMAP implementation and for addressing similarities between IMAP and MSFD implementation challenges, including sharing and support of best practices;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support participation of specialists from southern Mediterranean countries in MSFD coordination workshops 			
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* Mid term: by 2018, Long term: beyond 2018

**When action is recommended at regional level, the existing UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention mechanisms should be used, including the CORMONs, online expert groups and specific Focal Point Meetings, as well as the EcAp Coordination Group meetings.

