



Pan Adriatic Scope

Adriatic-Ionian cooperation towards MSP

INTRODUCTION

As reported in the UN Environment/MAP Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2021 (MTS), the Contracting Parties, at their Ordinary meeting, COP 18, recommended to strengthen MAP activities in the field of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), in order to contribute to a Good Environmental Status (GES), investigate in more detail connections between land and sea and propose coherent and sustainable land and sea-use planning frameworks relating with key economic sectors and activities that may affect the coastal and marine resources.

Although MSP is not expressly mentioned in the ICZM Protocol, spatial planning of the coastal zone is considered an essential instrument for the implementation of the same Protocol. One of the main objectives of ICZM is to *“facilitate, through the rational planning of activities, the sustainable development of coastal zones by ensuring that the environment and landscapes are taken into account in harmony with economic, social and cultural development”* (Art. 5.).

According to Art. 3, the area to which the Protocol applies (i.e. the coastal zones) is the area between:

- the seaward limit of the coastal zone, which shall be the external limit of the territorial sea of Parties; and
- the landward limit of the coastal zone, which shall be the limit of the competent coastal units as defined by the Parties.

Therefore, since the geographic scope of the Protocol includes both the land and the sea, it follows that planning should be equally applied to both components of the coastal zones. While MSP is a relatively new term within the Barcelona Convention frame, it is clear that planning of the marine space is a concept already taken on board by the Protocol. In this perspective, MSP can be considered the main tool/process for the implementation of ICZM in the marine part of the coastal zone and specifically for its sustainable planning and management.

In addition to the above, MSP is considered as one of the tools to implement the EcAp as a strategic approach towards sustainable development in the region that integrates all of its three components, i.e. environmental, social and economic. MSP should guarantee their balanced implementation.

One of the Mediterranean sub-regions particularly relevant for MSP is the Adriatic one, as also demonstrated by the relevant number of studies and projects developed for this area (e.g. PlanCoast, Shape, Adriplan, Portodimare, Supreme, just to mention some of them). The Adriatic sub-region is in



communication with the Ionian Sea; together they form a unique interconnected marine space which is the geographic scope of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region – EUSAIR.

The Adriatic Sea hosts relevant ecologic, economic, social and cultural values. It is a relevant route for maritime transport and a food and energy source; it is recognised as a site for recreation and destination for coastal and marine tourism; it is a relevant area for nature protection and biodiversity preservation, etc. Moreover, it is an area of well-established cross-border cooperation as well as site for an innovative and cross-border research. However, its coastal and marine areas are experiencing increasing pressures due to growing human activities; these often come into conflict with each other and with needs of habitats, landscapes and cultural heritage protection. Human uses compete each other for vital space and natural resources, threatening some of the most sensitive and precious habitats of the Adriatic Sea. Global challenges as climate change and the related sea level rise could in future strongly affect Adriatic coastal and marine areas, exacerbating current problems with effects often going beyond national or regional boundaries¹.

This strategic importance is also recognised by the EC Maritime Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (EC COM(2012) 713) and the already mentioned overarching EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region – EUSAIR. In addition, it is also recognised by the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention, adopting the UN Environment MAP/PAP-RAC Programme of Work for 2018/2019 that includes activities addressing collaboration between the Adriatic and Ionian countries towards a joint approach in MSP. Particularly relevant for this sub-regional cooperation on MSP is the project “Implementing the Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning” (Adriatic project), funded by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by UN Environment MAP, PAP/RAC and SPA/RAC with the collaboration of national governments of Albania and Montenegro. As a result of these activities *recommendations for a common approach towards sub-regional MSP in the Adriatic* would be prepared.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DOCUMENT

The main objective of this activity and the document itself is to support the implementation of MSP by the Contracting Parties of the Adriatic-Ionian sub-region in a coordinated manner, by integrating provisions set out in the ICZM Protocol, the MSP Conceptual Framework and EU MSP Directive, as appropriate, and promoting, to the fullest possible extent, transboundary cooperation.

This document could be the basis for the future cooperation among the Adriatic and Ionian countries within the Barcelona Convention, EUSAIR, GEF Adriatic project and other relevant sub-regional initiatives.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The Conceptual Framework for MSP (CF MSP) adopted by the 20th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention (Tirana, Albania, December 2017) provides a common general

¹ Ramieri E., E. Andreoli, A. Fanelli, G. Artico and R. Bertaggia, 2014. Methodological handbook on Maritime Spatial Planning in the Adriatic Sea. Final report of Shape Project WP4 “Shipping Towards Maritime Spatial Planning”, issuing date: 10th February 2014. printed by Veneto Region



context for the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Mediterranean. The document identifies common principles and components of the MSP process, and provides a simplified step-by-step methodology for its implementation. When zooming into a more detailed scale (sub-regional level), there is the need to better focus and specify the elements proposed by the CF MSP, along the issues illustrated below.

General points for discussion:

- *Are the components of the MSP process indicated below relevant for the Adriatic sub-regional level?*
- *When specifying for the Adriatic the elements identified by the CF MSP, should we consider all the components indicated below, or should we concentrate only on some of them?*
- *Are there other relevant components to be considered?*

1. ECAP AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR MSP

The Ecosystem Approach (EcAp) is the guiding principle of all policy implementation and development undertaken under the auspices of the UN Environment/MAP Barcelona Convention. It is further operationalised through the implementation of the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP), with its ecological objectives and related indicators, with the aim to achieve the Good Environmental Status (GES). Application of the Ecosystem Based Approach (EBA) is also envisaged by the EU MSP Directive. EcAp is particularly important for the management of coasts and seas, where the nature of water keeps systems and functions highly connected. As EcAp extends beyond national borders, its application relies on transboundary cooperation.

The Adriatic Sea is a well-studied area from the point of view of the physical environment and oceanographic features, including marine ecosystems. This knowledge represents a fundamental asset the Adriatic countries can start from and rely on to implement EcAp approach in MSP. This can include:

- Supporting further development and implementation of the sub-regional monitoring and assessment through IMAP indicators and other socioeconomic-related indicators addressing drivers, with the view to ensuring that the MSP fully meets environmental objectives to achieve and/or maintain GES; and
- Promoting cross-cutting tools related to cumulative impact assessment, and alike, which can support the contribution of the environmental pillar to the implementation of MSP.

Points for discussion and possible development:

- *Do you agree on the proposed approach to this component?*
- *Do you agree on the opportunity to develop the following points? Would you suggest other topics to be developed under this component?*



- *How MSP can contribute to achieving the Good Environmental Status (GES) in the Adriatic: synergies between MSP and MSFD/EcAp processes;*
- *Preparation of a compendium of approaches and methods to apply EcAp within the MSP process, including also tools for EcAp implementation within MSP (cumulative impact assessment, ecosystem service mapping and evaluation, EcAp-based vulnerability assessment), based on the wide experience already gained in the Adriatic as well as in other contexts (e.g. Baltic Sea).*

2. MULTI-SCALAR APPROACH TO MSP

Scales do matter for MSP and the adoption of a multi-scalar approach, combining “top-down” and “bottom-up” perspectives, is recommended by the CF for MSP, as follows:

- Mediterranean scale addressing the entire sea basin through cooperation among CPs in the frame of the Barcelona Convention to approach the strategic level of MSP (common vision, strategic objectives, areas and challenges to be approached at a transboundary level, etc.);
- Sub-regional scale, approaching transboundary MSP elements (common vision, strategic objectives, priority areas and challenges) at the sub-regional level (i.e. the Adriatic Sea);
- National scale, fully and formally implementing the MSP process – according to common principles and coherently with the Mediterranean and sub-regional approaches – in marine areas falling within national jurisdiction;
- Sub-national and local scales, focusing MSP on hot-spot areas: highly vulnerable areas, areas with major conflicts among uses, areas with high potential for synergies among uses and multi-use opportunities, areas with strong land-sea interactions.

The multi-scalar approach requires promoting dialogue among relevant MSP actors, thus ensuring vertical integration and links between MSP processes at different scales. Alignment and integration of scales primary occurs in terms of mutual exchange of information and can be framed (preferably) within existing regional and sub-regional governance platforms and processes, such as the Barcelona Convention and the European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian macroregion (EUSAIR).

A multi-scalar approach to MSP calls for specific tools to engage with stakeholders at different levels. Engaging stakeholders at the national level generally requires a more formal approach, while stakeholders at the local level normally required more direct and informal methods. Sub-regional level stakeholder forum might be either informal or formal depending on the specific scope; the more the scope moves from cooperation to consultation the more it needs formalization. Stakeholders involved in MSP at diverse scales might have different values, motivations, ambitions and interests, which translate into different objectives.

Points for discussion and possible development:

- *Which scales are relevant for MSP and MSP cooperation in the Adriatic?*



- *What are the links of the sub-regional scale (Adriatic) to the upper regional level (Mediterranean)?*
- *What are the links of the sub-regional scale to the national MSP processes? (who is informing/framing who)?*
- *Is stakeholder engagement at the sub-regional scale (Adriatic) needed?*
- *If yes, how the sub-regional stakeholder engagement shall be framed? What are the links between national and sub-national stakeholder engagement initiatives in case activated?*

3. TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

Although MSP is essentially a national process, cross-border cooperation is needed to ensure the MSP plans are coherent and coordinated across national borders, as well as the MSP processes are timely coordinated. Cooperation is needed at the methodological (common methods, data and information sharing, tools sharing, MSP practice exchange, capacity building), strategic (common vision, shared principles and possible common objectives) and planning levels. Moreover, it is well-known that a relevant number of problems and challenges have a transboundary dimension and call for the adoption of a common approach. Finally, cross-border cooperation is needed to plan and manage the areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The existence of EUSAIR makes even stronger the need for the Adriatic countries to develop transboundary cooperation on MSP and, in a broader perspective, on marine and coastal areas development and management.

Points for discussion and possible development:

- *Do you agree on the opportunity to develop the following points? Would you suggest other topics to be developed under this component?*
 - *What are the added values/dimensions that need to be considered during the MSP process across borders?*
 - *What elements could be addressed in the transnational cooperation and what elements need to remain exclusively under the national MSP processes?*
 - *Review of most relevant cross-border MSP challenges in the Adriatic area: shipping operation and safety, habitat and biodiversity protection including MPAs, sustainable management of fish stock, cables and pipelines, green-blue corridors, etc.*
 - *Identification of most critical areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) where cross-border MSP is needed (e.g. Pomo or Jabuka Pit, Gulf of Trieste).*

4. LAND-SEA INTERACTIONS



Understanding and addressing land-sea interactions (LSI) is crucial to ensure sustainable management and development of coastal areas and coherent planning of land and sea-based activities. Being a densely populated, semi-closed sea the relevance of LSI process in the Adriatic Sea is high and the sea planning is very much related to the coastal and territorial planning (and management).

Points of discussion and possible development:

- *Do you agree on the opportunity to develop the following points? Would you suggest other topics to be developed under this component?*
 - *Key LSI in the Adriatic: ports connecting sea- and land-borne transportation, coastal erosion and flooding, protection of land-sea transition system, links between marine and coastal planning and river basin planning, etc.;*
 - *Areas with high LSI intensity in the Adriatic;*
 - *Tools and approaches for LSI analysis.*

5. ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO MSP

The adaptive approach is an interactive and systematic process for continually improving policies, plans and management practices by learning from the outcome of previous steps and cycles. Such approach is an essential characteristic of MSP which is a continuing iterative process that has to adapt over time. This component of MSP is cross-cutting, in the sense that it is relevant in the context of the other components indicated in this document. Specificities related to the Adriatic context can be identified and analysed with reference to the following elements.

Points for discussion and possible development:

- *Would you agree on analysing how to adopt an adaptive approach in the context of the MSP process, through, for example, the following points:*
 - *Identification of concrete elements to be considered to apply an adaptive approach in MSP: MRE (monitoring, reviewing and evaluating) scheme, proactive adaptive management, etc.;*
 - *Adapting MSP plans to temporal (season and inter-annual) variation of spatial needs, e.g. future evolution of specific sectors of the Blue Growth (e.g. shipping and offshore energy production in the Adriatic);*
 - *Possibility and need to leave some sea space free in the Adriatic to deal with future needs;*
 - *Need to deal with the consequences of climate change (e.g. changes in fishing grounds, bottom ecosystems) and climate change adaptation of MSP plans.*