



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by
the European Union

Legal Study

**on the relations between legislative instruments
and spatial governance processes at different
levels that influence the implementation of
policies for nature and biodiversity in the
Mediterranean area**

D4N ACTIVITY 3.2

June 2025

A project labelled by the UfM



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Authors: Daniela Addis, Law Firm Addis “Environment&Sea”, with the contribution of Martina Bocci (paragraphs 1.4, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1 and chapter 7) and Valentina Giannini (chapter 7).

Study prepared in the framework of the Dialogue4Nature project- Activity 3.2 coordinated by: Emanuela Manca, Luisa Mulas, Silvia Serra, Giovanna Chessa, Marcella Sodde, Filippo Arras - Autonomous Region of Sardinia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was produced in collaboration with the Dialogue4Nature (D4N) partners, under the coordination of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia and the support of the Mission4Nature partners. Funding for this Study was provided by the Euro-MED Programme.



DISCLAIMER

This document constitutes an independent expert draft study. The content presented herein is subject to further revisions, which will be undertaken following further consultations.

List of Abbreviations / Acronyms

BBNJ Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction

BC Barcelona Convention

BDS2030 Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CFP Common Fishery Policy

COP Conference of the Contracting Parties

EA Environmental Assessment

EEA European Environment Agency

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

EMFAF European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund

EU European Union

HD Habitats Directive

ICZM Integrated Coastal Zone Management

MAP Mediterranean Action Plan

MCPA Marine and Coastal Protected Area

MPA Marine Protected Area

MSFD Marine Strategy Framework Directive

NbS Nature-based Solutions

NGO Non-governmental Organisation

NRP National restoration Plan

PAP/RAC Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre

SEA Strategic Environmental Assessment

SPA/BD Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity

SPAMI Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance

UNCLOS United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNEP MAP Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

WFD Water Framework Directive



Table of Content

List of Abbreviations / Acronyms	2
Table of Content	4
Introduction	6
Mandate and aims	6
Content	6
1. Methodological framework and reference context	7
1.1 Main aspects analyzed	8
1.2 Geographical scope and focuses	9
1.3 Definitions	10
1.4 Political context	13
1.5 Legal context	23
2. Problem Definition of Legislative Instruments: obstacles and Implementation gaps	42
2.1 What are the problems and their drivers?	42
2.2 How will the problem evolve?	48
3. Available legal and policy options and proposals for action and priorities for action	51
3.1 Main aspects on approaches and mechanisms to facilitate or impede the effective implementation of legal and policy instruments	51
4. Territorial focus	61
4.1 Sardinia (Italy)	61
Sardinia's Environmental Planning: Integrating Climate and Biodiversity	62
4.2 Crete (Greece)	77
4.3 Montenegro	81
4.4 Country on the southern shore of the Mediterranean: Morocco	89
5. Thematic focus, from a legal point of view, including policies, for marine-coastal areas on the identified themes	101
5.1 Area-based Conservation	101
5.2 Climate Change Adaptation	102
5.3 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	103
5.4 Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions	104
6. A wider Mediterranean overlook: results of the quali-quantitative survey	105
6.1 Main results of the quali-quantitative survey	105



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

6.2 Key findings from the survey	119
7. Focus on governance at regional level in Sardinia: a participatory workshop	120
7.1 Goal of the workshop and selection of participants	120
7.2 Methodology and description of activities	120
7.3 Summary of presentations	121
7.4 Findings from the workshop	122
8. Priorities for proposed actions in the Mediterranean	124
8.1 Identification of proposals and priorities for action	124
Annex 1 - In-Depth Interview Outline	127
ANNEX 2 - Questionnaire for the qualitative - quantitative online survey	129
ANNEX 3 - Agenda of the Participatory Workshop on Regional Governance in Sardinia	145



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Introduction

Mandate and aims

The Dialogue4Nature (D4N) project, within the framework of the ‘Natural Heritage Mission’ of the Interreg Euro-MED programme, aims to improve governance for nature conservation in the Mediterranean by fostering the dissemination and adoption of the results of previous Interreg MED thematic projects and the current Interreg Euro-MED into nature conservation policies in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the D4N project fosters cooperation and promotes a more participatory and integrated policy process for climate change and biodiversity, including subnational governments and civil society. Through the Mediterranean Resilience Network (MRN) and its associated activities, the D4N project, in collaboration with the Community4Nature (C4N) project, works to support the Euro-MED programme in facilitating this vision. The Interreg Euro-Med Dialogue for Nature (D4N) project aims to foster the transition to a climate-neutral and resilient society by protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural environment and heritage of the Mediterranean region. This will be achieved by promoting the improvement of governance and coordination among Mediterranean actors in order to harmonize nature conservation policies and integrate them into sectoral policies.

The study area is the Mediterranean, developed in the framework of the Interreg Euro-Med Dialogue for Nature (D4N) project - Activity 3.2. The Autonomous Region of Sardinia, which participates as a partner, is in charge of Activity 3.2, consisting in carrying out an analysis of the relationships between the legal instruments at the different levels of government, sub-national, national and regional, that influence the implementation of nature and biodiversity protection and conservation policies and their effects on climate change. This analysis is the subject of the consultancy service with which this Study was prepared.

Content

The object of the present Study is to conduct a legal analysis on the relations between legal instruments and spatial governance processes at different levels (sub-national, national and regional) that influence the implementation of nature and biodiversity policies in the Mediterranean area. The analysis identifies possible obstacles (“bottlenecks”) of a legal nature that may impede the effective implementation of legislation and the actions, strategies and policies that are being implemented to achieve protection objectives.

The Study also intends to provide suggestions on which the project will be able to focus its priorities for action in the continuation of its activities and work towards the strengthening of governance on the issues addressed.

The Study describes the relations between legislative instruments and spatial governance processes at different levels that influence the implementation of policies for nature and biodiversity in the Mediterranean area. The analysis - which takes into particular consideration the main policies that affect or have an influence on the conservation of nature and biodiversity and, consequently, on climate change, currently in force in the Mediterranean area - has as its primary object the implementation of the strategies and solutions adopted by the different



Countries (at the different levels of government), highlighting any legal obstacles, forms of governance that include public-private partnerships and financial mechanisms that favour or impede their implementation. The analysis is developed on the basis of the 'Framework Conditions principle', which encompasses the set of conditions necessary for Nature and Biodiversity policies to be effective, including capacity, financial instruments, programming, planning and coordination, implementation, etc. It is therefore based on a consideration of how the European Union, Member States and Regions have transposed and are implementing the policies into their own legislation and institutional framework and whether the failure to achieve the objectives is due to legal/legislative issues.

Therefore, an operational collaboration with the 4 Working Groups (WGs) of the Dialogue4Nature project, listed below together with the respective project coordinator-partner, was envisaged:

WG1 – Area-based Conservation - coordinated by **IUCN**);

WG2 – Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation - coordinated by **MedCities**;

WG3 – Evaluating the Socio-Economic Value of Biodiversity - coordinated by **Marine Institute**);

WG4 – Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions - coordinated by **Plan Bleu**).

Project coordinators-partners ensure a direct and up-to-date source of information, documentation, contacts and contact persons, ideas and suggestions for the drafting of the Study.

The Study, in turn, intends to contribute to feeding the activities of the different thematic Working Groups and other Project activities, such as the annual Institutional Dialogues, as well as the Med Resilience Network (MRN). It is recalled that the latter aims to improve the coordination and influence of nature policies in the Mediterranean, with the main purpose of establishing a permanent dialogue between policy-makers and the most relevant stakeholders (local, national, regional and EU actors) towards the integration of nature, biodiversity and climate change policies at the highest political level.

1. Methodological framework and reference context

From a purely methodological point of view, the Study is developed in close and continuous co-operation with the contracting Authority and with the appropriate involvement of the Project Partners, in order to support and thus guarantee a more correct and calibrated evaluation and definition of the issues covered by the Study.

The aforementioned themes are therefore developed in close correlation with the thematic areas addressed by the 4 Working Groups: both in input, whereby the working tables can provide hints and contributions for the development of the analysis itself; and in output, whereby it is the Study that can provide hints and contributions for discussion within the various



Working Groups. Such an approach makes it possible to gather indications on which legal instruments, which policies, levels of government and territorial areas to focus the analysis on.

The methodology adopted to carry out this Study is therefore intended to be an operational tool, focusing on the aspects considered most relevant to the project and enabling the partnership to understand how to direct its efforts towards enhancing governance on the issues addressed.

The drafting of the Study included its presentation to the WGs and then during the Regional Participatory Workshop held in Cagliari (Sardinia), on 11 June 2025, in order to gather all useful information, comments and contributions to allow its completion.

The methodology used to develop the Study and to activate a fruitful discussion with the project partners includes desk analysis, literature review, contributions from previous projects and experiences indicated by the project partners and considered relevant and pertinent, highlighting success and failure cases, and the reasoning behind them.

The work has been carried out integrating the four main methods:

1. **Desk analysis:** literature review, contributions from projects and experiences;
2. **Qualitative-quantitative** online survey on a sample covering the Mediterranean area;
3. **Focus** on two regions, Sardinia (Italy) and Crete (Greece); and two at national level, Montenegro and Morocco **throughout in-depth interviews to specific stakeholders;**
4. **Participatory Workshop** on Regional Governance in Sardinia.

To facilitate the readers, build and share a common understanding the Study also includes a list of definitions, comprising at least the definition of legal instruments and of policy instruments.

In addition to the legal framework, the policies whose implementation is analysed are the main international, EU, national and regional policies that affect or have an influence on nature conservation and biodiversity and, consequently, on climate change.

The objective of the Study is to understand what legal obstacles are encountered in the implementation of policies.

At the beginning of the activities, a meeting/interview was held with each WG coordinator, followed by a specific questionnaire; in order to focus and better define the reference regulatory framework and the main policies to be analysed, as well as the experiences considered relevant.

In-depth interviews with significant actors were planned to support the analysis on the territorial focuses.

1.1 Main aspects analyzed

As the geographical area under analysis in this study, the Mediterranean constitutes a hotspot of considerable value and interest in terms of its biodiversity, unique landscapes and significant cultural heritage. Although it covers only 1% of the Earth's surface, the Mediterranean



is home to 10% of the world's marine species and is vital for millions of people. (IUCN 2017; WWF 2022). However, it is now under increasing threat from legal and illegal human activities and climate change.

Therefore, protecting the Mediterranean is essential for maintaining the region's ecological balance.

Taking into account the legal and policy instruments in force to protect the Mediterranean, the present Study analyses the following main aspects:

- Actions taken to implement the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the status of actions to fulfil the Nature Restoration Law;
- Mechanisms that facilitate or hinder the implementation of policy;
- Environmental contracts and their contribution to conservation;
- Which conservation funding mechanisms are most effective at the Mediterranean level, particularly for Natura 2000 Network Sites;

With reference to Natura 2000 Network Sites

- Legal difficulties that impede the effectiveness of conservation instruments, with particular reference to the financing, definition and implementation of management plans, as well as verification, monitoring and surveillance;
- Actions and/or initiatives adopted defining and implementing conservation and restoration objectives and measures, also aiming to achieve the targets of the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and other strategies, such as the Renewable Energy Strategy;
- Strategies adopted for facilitating the establishment and designation of Natura 2000 Network management bodies;
- Reference management models defined and implemented to meet local need;
- Governance and coordination tools adopted between the various regional level bodies to appropriately address biodiversity-related aspects in a coordinated and systemic manner;
- Management models that have proved effective or can be developed for the implementation of biodiversity conservation policies.

The above-mentioned points will be addressed in Chapter 3.1, with further details.

1.2 Geographical scope and focuses

The analysis examines a sample that spans the Mediterranean **marine-coastal areas** and focuses on:

2 regions, with a territorial focus on **Sardinia (Italy)** and **Crete (Greece)**;

2 national components, **Montenegro**, as a project partner, as well as Morocco as a representative **country on the southern shore of the Mediterranean**.



The geographic scope of the analysis includes the marine-coastal zone as it is considered in the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol established under the Barcelona Convention.

The analysis covers legal issues and related bottlenecks, obstacles to be tackled, but also contexts that have worked well, with a legal (including policies) thematic focus on the following 4 areas:

- Area-based Conservation
- Climate Change (Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions

1.3 Definitions

The exchange with partners revealed the desirability, if not the necessity, of developing a common, shared glossary of definitions. This legal alphabetisation of the participants was a pivotal step in the course of the work. The glossary encompasses the fundamental concepts of governance, legal and policy instruments.

Nature conservation **governance** can be defined as the set of rules, processes and structures that guide and control actions to protect and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity. It involves different actors and levels of governance, including international, national and local levels. Conversely, environmental **policy** constitutes the array of strategies, objectives and instruments through which an entity (government, organisation, company) defines and implements measures to address environmental issues, including climate change, resource management, biodiversity conservation and pollution control.

It is evident that legal instruments constitute the structure of governance, while policy tools are instruments of policy. Therefore, the following definition is proposed for the terms "legal instruments" and "policy instruments".

In summary, legal instruments, issued by the legislative apparatus, set standards and rules to achieve the objectives defined by policy instruments, defined by the government. While policies outline objectives and strategies, laws detail how to achieve them and impose penalties for non-compliance. As policies evolve, they update the interpretation and application of laws. Therefore, they are:

- Policy instruments (Government/Executive Apparatus). These instruments, issued by the executive, define the general objectives and strategies of a government. They set the general direction of government action, outlining what is to be achieved.

- Legal instruments (Legislative Apparatus). The legislative apparatus, on the other hand, creates laws and regulations that concretise established policies. These laws specify how policies are to be implemented and what actions are required to achieve the set goals.



- Relation and function. Policies provide the framework, while laws define the operating procedures and sanctions for non-compliance. As policies evolve, they can influence the interpretation and application of existing laws, adapting them to reality and new requirements.

- Sanctions. One of the key elements of legal instruments is the presence of sanctions. This ensures that the rules are complied with and that policy objectives are achieved. Sanctions serve as a deterrent and as a corrective tool for non-compliant behaviour.

The following definitions have been used in the present Study:

- "**Legal instrument**" means a written legal document that records the formal execution of legally enforceable acts or agreements, and secures their associated legal rights, obligations, and duties.

EU Directives and Regulations and Decisions, Laws, contracts, deeds, and statutes passed by competent legislatures are examples of legal instruments, as are, at the international level, treaties (such as the EU treaties) and conventions (such as the Barcelona Convention) ratified by States.

The main characteristics:

generality: addressed to the generality of citizens, not to individuals;

abstractness: provides for an abstract hypothesis (called a case), applicable to an indeterminate series of situations (concrete case);

positivity: the rule is laid down by an authority empowered to do so;

coercivity/coercibility: in the event of non-compliance, a penalty/sanction is envisaged.

Examples: Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration; Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora; the Constitution of Greece, Art. 24, stating that "the protection of the natural and cultural environment constitutes a duty of the State and a right of every person"; the Italian framework law on protected areas of 6 December 1991, No 394.

- "**policy instrument**" refers to a governing tool or linkage between policy formulation and implementation that is used to achieve policy targets in resource management while considering social, political, economic, and administrative concerns.

Examples: EU White Papers, the documents containing proposals for European Union action in a specific area, such as the 'White Paper on the future of Europe reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025'; EU Green Papers, published to launch a consultation process at EU level; the 'EU Green Deal', approved in 2020, which envisages a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making the EU climate neutral in 2050.

- "**Climate change mitigation**" means reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This involves cutting greenhouse gases from main sources such as power plants, factories, cars, and farms. Forests, oceans, and soil also absorb and store these gases, and are an important part of the solution. (European Environment Agency).



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

- **“Climate change adaptation”** means adjustments in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects. It refers to changes in processes, practices and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change. In simple terms, countries and communities need to develop adaptation solutions and implement actions to respond to current and future climate change impacts. (United Nations Climate Change Convention - UNFCCC).

- **“Coastal zone”** means the zone identified by the seaward limit of the coastal zone, consisting of the external limit of the territorial sea of States, and the landward limit of the coastal zone, consisting of the limit of the competent coastal units as defined by the State, usually corresponding to the boundaries of coastal municipalities or provinces.

- **“Protected area”** means a geographically defined area, which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives”. (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity- CBD, Article 2).

It may include areas protected under international, national or local legislation. For EU countries, it includes the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

- **“Marine protected area (MPA)”** means a defined area within or adjacent to the marine environment, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by legislation or other effective means, including custom, with the effect that its marine and/or coastal biodiversity enjoys a higher level of protection than its surroundings. (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD)

Marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs) are universally recognized as key tools for the conservation and management of marine species, habitats and ecosystems.

- **“Nature-based Solutions”** are defined as “actions that protect, sustainably manage and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”. (IUCN, WCC-2016-Res-069-EN).

- **“Other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM)”** a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values. (United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD).

- **“Mediterranean level”** refers to the scale of analysis that focuses on the characteristics, trends, and issues affecting the Mediterranean region.

- **“National level”** refers to the scale of analysis that focuses on the characteristics, trends, and issues affecting an entire nation.

- **“Regional level”** refers to an intermediary level of political authority between the state and local governments, characterized by specific political representation and public policies tailored to regional issues.

- **“Local level”** refers to the scale of analysis that focuses on the characteristics, trends, and



issues affecting the local government units, which consist of local government institutional units such as municipalities.

- **“Sedimented Posidonia Oceanica”** (instead of beached Posidonia Oceanica). To avoid perceiving the endemic marine plant of the Mediterranean Sea Posidonia Oceanica present on the coast as waste that can be removed, it is advisable to use the term 'sedimented' rather than 'beached'. This refers to the tangled mass of rhizomes, roots and dead leaves that form a 'matte' or 'mattress' on beaches, the coast in general and the seabed. This is a fundamental component of the marine-coastal ecosystem and plays a crucial role in stabilising and protecting the seabed and coast also from erosion.

1. Political and legal context at international and European Union level

This section, taking into account the legal framework at international and European Union level, presents the analysis carried out of the various instruments, with the indications and suggestions on legal instruments and policies, experiences and examples, that emerged from the meetings organized with the coordinators of the Working Groups.

1.4 Political context

The analysis covers policies and governance strategies related to nature, biodiversity and climate change, defined in the European and Mediterranean context. For each of the policy instruments, the key elements relevant for the study are highlighted.

European Environmental Action program to 2030

The 8th Environment Action Programme (EAP) entered into force in 2022 (Decision (EU) 2022/591 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030).

The program identifies six priority objectives for 2030:

1. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and enhancement of removals by natural sinks to meet carbon emission reduction of at least 55% by 2030 compared with 1990 level and carbon neutrality by 2050;
2. Adaptation to climate changes, strengthening resilience and adaptation and reducing the vulnerability of the environment, society and all sectors of the economy to climate change;
3. Accelerate the transition to a non-toxic circular economy, supporting well-being;
4. Pursuing zero pollution in order to achieve a toxic-free environment, including for air, water and soil, as well as in relation to light and noise pollution;
5. Protecting, preserving and restoring marine and terrestrial biodiversity and the biodiversity of inland waters inside and outside protected areas by improving the



state of the environment, in particular air, water and soil, as well as by combating desertification and soil degradation;

6. Promoting environmental aspects of sustainability in particular in the areas of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system.

Enabling conditions for such a program are:

Requirement for effective implementation of EU environmental laws and adequate resources for enforcement.

- Need for an integrated approach to maximise synergies between environmental, social and economic objectives.
- Promotion of gender equality and social justice in environmental policies.

European Green Deal

The European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final) European Union's strategic framework to transition towards a sustainable economy and society. It aims to achieve a sharp decrease in greenhouse gases emission by 2030 (55% reduction in comparison with 1990 levels) and full climate neutrality by 2050, decoupling economic growth from resource use while ensuring social inclusion and equity. Beside climate neutrality, pursued by prioritizing energy efficiency and renewable energy, as well as phasing out coal and decarbonizing gas, other key objectives are identified, including: boosting the development of circular economy, reducing waste and increasing recycling, and promoting clean sustainable industry; renovation in the construction sector, promoting energy-efficient building; promoting sustainable and smart mobility, and sustainable foods systems.

With reference to nature and environmental protection the EU Green deal prioritizes biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, that should be achieved by:

- Expanding protected areas and restoring degraded ecosystems
- Strengthening the EU Forest Strategy
- Supporting a sustainable "blue economy"

Zero Pollution is also targeted by reducing air, water and soil pollution and implementing stricter chemical regulations.

To support the implementation of this ambitious package, actions for creating a green finance and support just transition are identified by mobilizing public and private funding via the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan and by launching a Just Transition Mechanism to support affected regions and workers.

Strengthening the EU's role in climate negotiations (Paris Agreement, COP summits) and promoting green trade policies and international cooperation are also included in the key objectives of this strategy.

The implementation strategy foresees:

- The launch of the European Climate Pact to engage citizens, businesses, and governments
- Integration of green budgeting and fiscal reforms



- Investment in R&D, digitalization, and skills training.

European Biodiversity Strategy

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (COM/2020/380 final) aims to halt biodiversity loss and restore ecosystems by 2030. The main goals are:

- Protecting and restoring nature: Expanding protected areas to cover 30% of EU land and sea, with 10% under strict protection, and creating an EU Nature Restoration Plan.
- Sustainable agriculture and forestry: Reducing pesticide use by 50%, increasing organic farming to 25%, planting 3 billion trees, and promoting agroecology.
- Marine and freshwater conservation: Restoring 25,000 km of free-flowing rivers and implementing sustainable fishing practices.
- Urban greening and pollution reduction: Encouraging Urban Greening Plans, eliminating chemical pesticides in urban areas, and reducing nutrient pollution by 50%.
- Governance and global leadership: Strengthening biodiversity laws, improving enforcement, and advocating for a global biodiversity framework at the UN.

With regards to nature protection and restoration, the objective is the realization of a coherent network of protected areas in Europe by legally protecting a minimum of 30% of the EU's land area and 30% of the EU's sea area and integrate ecological corridors, as part of a true Trans-European Nature Network and strictly protect at least a third of the EU's protected areas, including all remaining EU primary and old-growth forests. The need to effectively manage all protected areas, is underlined by defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately.

The Strategy specifies that to achieve its objectives, particularly the implementation of a coherent network of protected areas, investments in green and blue infrastructure and cooperation across borders among Member States should be promoted and supported, including through the European Territorial Cooperation.

In addition, the strategy underlines the need for important improvements in governance including:

- ensure better implementation and track progress
- improve knowledge, financing and investments
- better respecting nature in public and business decision-making.

Online tools are available to track the implementation of the Strategy: an online [actions tracker](#) provides on the state of implementation of the strategy's many actions and a [targets dashboard](#) to show progress to the quantified biodiversity targets at the EU level and in the Member States.

Finally, the Strategy also introduces the need for a Nature Restoration Law and Action Plan, which have been achieved with the adoption of the Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 that is described in the paragraph related to legislation.

European Climate change adaptation strategy



The EU strategy on adaptation to climate change (COM(2021) 82) builds on the 2018 evaluation of the 2013 EU Adaptation Strategy and identifies some main needs that becomes principles for the next step of implementation:

- Improved knowledge, data collection, and risk assessment tools (Smarter Adaptation)
- Integration of climate resilience into all EU policies: agriculture, urban planning, infrastructure (More Systemic Adaptation)
- Acceleration of the investments and action across sectors (Faster Adaptation)

And, in addition: supporting adaptation in vulnerable regions, including Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Stepping Up Global Efforts).

The Strategy identifies the following objectives/key actions:

- Strengthening nature-based solutions (e.g., wetland restoration, urban green spaces).
- Mainstreaming adaptation into fiscal policies, infrastructure projects, and climate-proof investments.
- Enhancing climate data platforms, like Climate-ADAPT, to support decision-making.
- Expanding financial support through EU funding mechanisms, private investment incentives, and insurance reforms.

A Report on the implementation of the strategy has been prepared in 2023.

European Green Infrastructure Strategy

The Green infrastructure strategy (COM/2013/0249 final)¹ represents an important component of the implementation of actions to protect biodiversity and support adaptation to climate change. In the Strategy, Green Infrastructures are defined as “A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, while also enhancing biodiversity”. The Strategy encourages local, regional, and national authorities to adopt Green Infrastructure principles in urban planning, infrastructure projects, and environmental conservation. To help planners and decision makers at local level considering Green Infrastructures, two guidance documents have been prepared by the EU Commission;

- [Guidance on supporting the deployment of strategic EU level green and blue infrastructure encourages a more strategic and integrated approach to scaling-up investments.](#)
- [EU guidance on integrating ecosystems and their services into decision-making \(Summary, Part 1, Part 2, Part 3\).](#)

Synergies can be exploited between green infrastructure and environmental policies on land, water and the marine environment. In fact, a range of further EU policies support nature-based solutions and green infrastructure and harness their potential, such as agriculture and forestry, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and risk reduction

¹ The Green infrastructure strategy - Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions Green Infrastructure (GI) — Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital /* COM/2013/0249 final, of 6.5.2013

https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:d41348f2-01d5-4abe-b817-4c73e6f1b2df.0014.03/DOC_1&format=PDF



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

(for example through natural flood management and water retention measures), energy, transport, health, and research.

The development of green infrastructure can be facilitated by its further integration into spatial planning tools, Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environment Assessment.

A Report on the implementation of the strategy has been prepared in 2019.

European Ocean Pact

The European Ocean Pact is a new strategy officially adopted by the European Commission on June 5, 2025, and presented at the United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, France, which took place from June 9-13. The pact serves as a unified, coordinated framework for all EU ocean-related policies through a collaborative approach between EU countries, regions, and stakeholders, aiming to improve ocean protection, support science and sustainable fishing, promote a sustainable blue economy, and support coastal communities.

There is the commitment to halving plastic and nutrient pollution and restoring 20% of Europe marine ecosystems by 2030.

The pact focuses on the following **six key priority areas for action**:

- **protecting and restoring ocean health** by supporting EU countries in their efforts to restore degraded coastal marine habitats
- **boosting the competitiveness of the EU sustainable blue economy** including by strengthening the EU's maritime industry and by introducing a Blue Generational Renewal Strategy, to foster access to young professionals in marine research, ocean tech, and sustainable fisheries
- **supporting coastal and island communities, and outermost regions** by presenting new or updated strategies for these regions and communities
- **enhancing maritime security and defence** by strengthening EU coast guard cooperation and maritime border security
- **advancing ocean research, knowledge, skills and innovation** by proposing an ambitious EU Ocean Observation Initiative
- **strengthening EU ocean diplomacy and international ocean governance** by stepping up its fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUUF).

It aims to ensure coherence and alignment of European maritime policies with **the new Mediterranean Pact for the blue economy sectors of common interest** (the final version is expected in autumn 2025), exploiting synergies with other relevant policy and legal instruments, e.g: the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Clean Industrial Strategy (with regard to waterways), the Maritime Industry Strategy, the legislation on accelerating industrial decarbonisation (for ports, maritime transport, fisheries and aquaculture), the EU Ports Strategy, the major projects of common European interest (IPCEI) for strategic sectors, the European biotechnology legislation (for blue biotechnology and the provisions of the BBNJ agreement on marine genetic resources), the updated strategy for the bioeconomy the new European Homeland Security Strategy (for cyber security and critical maritime infrastructure), the circular economy legislation, the European Water Resilience Strategy, the European Clean Energy Investment Strategy, the European Innovation Act the EU strategy for start-ups and scale-ups,



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Horizon Europe and EU missions, the new European Bauhaus, the updated EU agenda for international ocean governance, the vision for agriculture and food, the Skills Union, the European university degree and European university alliances and the new Climate Change Adaptation Plan.

The Commission has announced its intention to introduce an "Ocean Act" by 2027, which will be based on a revision of the maritime spatial planning directive. The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure the implementation of the priorities established by the European Ocean Pact, while also facilitating the monitoring of progress.

Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAPBIO)

The Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (SAP-BIO), which was developed with special attention to aligning with the vision of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, UN SDGs, UNEP/MAP Strategies, including the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 and the Mediterranean Action Plan/Mid Term Strategy (MAP/MTS) (2022-2027), and other strategies and plans developed by Mediterranean organisations.

The first goal of the Post-2020 SAPBIO is to reduce the threats to biodiversity. This includes minimizing anthropogenic pressures on protected species and habitats, controlling pollution—especially plastic and noise—and halting the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. A significant emphasis is placed on enhancing the effectiveness and representativeness of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs). Restoration of ecologically significant ecosystems, progress toward Good Environmental Status (GES), and adoption of nature-based solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change are also central to this goal.

The second goal focuses on ensuring that biodiversity is preserved, maintained, or enhanced to meet people's needs. This is pursued through improved knowledge on the distribution and status of key species and habitats, and through better information sharing mechanisms like a Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform. Sustainable fisheries management—including curbing by-catch, illegal and unreported fishing, and improving small-scale fisheries and aquaculture—is critical. Equally important is mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors by integrating it into spatial planning, cross-sectoral governance, and national policy-making, ensuring biodiversity is accounted for in economic and development strategies.

The third goal aims to enable transformative change through the implementation of tools and nature-based solutions. It supports refining and enforcing monitoring systems such as IMAP, and the establishment of national reporting mechanisms for SAPBIO targets. Building capacities—especially in developing countries—and fostering regional networking are prioritized. The goal also includes raising public and political awareness, integrating biodiversity in education and training, and ensuring sustainable funding. The strategy promotes stronger



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

cooperation and increased financial flows to bridge the gap between developed and developing Mediterranean countries.

Together, these three goals translate the Mediterranean countries' expressed priorities into actionable and measurable targets, aiming to reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. The goals align with global and regional biodiversity frameworks, such as the CBD/GBF and UNEP/MAP strategies, while remaining adaptable to national contexts. The Post-2020 SAPBIO is intended as a pragmatic, inclusive roadmap to support both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

The Post-2020 SAPBIO also provides practical guidance for Mediterranean countries to turn priorities into measurable steps.

Regarding Goal 1: Reduce threats to biodiversity, key actions include updating and enforcing national regulations on pollution, especially concerning plastic and noise pollution in marine environments. Countries are encouraged to designate and effectively manage Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) and expand the coverage of OECMs. For example, countries may launch clean-up campaigns targeting hotspots of marine litter or deploy acoustic monitoring tools to assess and manage noise levels affecting marine species. A priority is the prevention and control of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) through early warning systems, regional databases, and rapid response protocols. Restoration of degraded habitats like coastal wetlands or Posidonia beds is also critical, which can involve community-based replanting projects and ecosystem rehabilitation funded through green or blue investment schemes.

Considering Goal 2: Ensure sustainable use and fair benefits from biodiversity, countries are encouraged to integrate biodiversity values into sectoral policies, such as fisheries, agriculture, and tourism. One concrete action is implementing selective fishing gear to reduce by-catch and promote responsible artisanal fishing practices. Developing biodiversity-sensitive aquaculture standards and encouraging participatory governance models—such as co-management of marine resources with local communities—are also central. Strengthening data sharing through platforms like the Mediterranean Biodiversity Platform is essential to inform and harmonize national and regional decision-making.

In relation to Goal 3: Facilitate transformative change and effective implementation, strengthening governance, financing, and human capital is requested. Countries are encouraged to develop National SAPBIO Action Plans with SMART targets, aligned with IMAP indicators and national biodiversity strategies. A recommended action is the integration of biodiversity in primary and secondary school curricula and the promotion of citizen science initiatives that engage the public in monitoring species and habitats. To secure sustainable financing, the document proposes tapping into climate and biodiversity funds, engaging private investors through blue economy frameworks, and promoting Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes. Building or reinforcing national biodiversity observatories and improving statistical capacities for regular progress reporting is also emphasized.

A shared monitoring and evaluation framework to assess progress toward goals is also recommended, including a standardized set of indicators. Coordination across countries, sectors, and governance levels is considered crucial.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 and the Mediterranean Action Plan/Mid Term Strategy (2022-2027) (MSSD)

MSSD provides a regional framework to guide the transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive Mediterranean. Adopted with Decision IG22/2 by the Mediterranean countries at 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016), the strategy provides an integrative policy framework to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels in the Mediterranean region. Its overarching goal is to promote sustainable development while preserving the Mediterranean's natural capital, reducing inequalities, and enhancing resilience. The strategy is structured around the following seven strategic objectives:

- Ensure sustainable development in marine and coastal areas.
- Promote resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production.
- Address climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean.
- Ensure sustainable urban development.
- Promote transition towards a green and blue economy.
- Strengthen governance in support of sustainable development.
- Enhance the resilience of ecosystems.

Objective 1: Ensure sustainable development in marine and coastal areas, addresses the critical need to manage and protect the Mediterranean unique marine and coastal environments while allowing for sustainable use of their resources. It promotes ICZM and MSP as essential tools to balance conservation, development, and human activities. Sustainable tourism and fisheries are highlighted as key sectors needing improved governance and environmental responsibility.

Specific actions foreseen include, for example, the adoption and implementation of national ICZM strategies, following the Protocol on ICZM to the Barcelona Convention, creating regulatory frameworks that integrate land-sea interactions and stakeholder involvement; the development and implementation of Marine Spatial Plans that reflect ecological sensitivity and human uses, aiming to avoid conflicts and promote biodiversity conservation; the designation and management of MPAs and Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), increasing their coverage and ensuring adequate resourcing and enforcement; the promotion of sustainable tourism in coastal areas, e.g., by establishing eco-certification schemes and carrying out environmental impact assessments for infrastructure development; the support of sustainable small-scale fisheries, including the development of co-management models, reducing by-catch, and enforcing fishing regulations; the prevention and control of marine pollution, such as implementing national action plans to reduce marine litter and addressing pollution from ships and land-based sources.

The objective emphasizes that development in coastal and marine zones must be managed holistically, with particular attention to ecosystem protection, stakeholder engagement, and inter-sectoral coordination.

The MSSD can be analysed as a regional environmental management system, comparable to international standards such as ISO 14000 or the European Union's EMAS regulation n°1221/2009 (Eco-audit).



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Despite its classification as "soft law", the MSSD commits CPs, chiefly by means of a system of indicators to assess the attainment of targets.

Recently, the 21th meeting of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSDD), established under the auspices of the UNEP/MAP, took place in Corinth (Greece) from 24-26 June 2025.

The members of the MCSDD (representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, local authorities, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, parliamentarians and the science community) discussed and shared information on the implementation of the MSSD and the development of a battery of indicators. Some of these fall specifically within the legal field, such as:

- the development of national sustainable development strategies,
- the existence of laws on marine protected areas,
- the adoption of laws on climate change, etc.

Legal indicators are rarely identified or even confused with other types of indicators. In order to define it, a legal indicator makes it possible to know whether a standard exists, is implemented, is accessible, with an administrative, legal and financial framework. It must then be incorporated into targets that are subject to an imperative of effectiveness.

To illustrate this point, it is important to note that the absence of a national sustainable development strategy that incorporates the MSSD within a state would, in fact, compromise the very effectiveness of the MSSD. It is only through the utilisation of a legal indicator that this deficiency can be exposed.

Post-2020 Regional Strategy for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures in the Mediterranean - MCPA & OECM Strategy

The Post-2020 Strategy for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean provides a ten-year roadmap to significantly strengthen the conservation and sustainable management of marine biodiversity in the region. Developed under the Barcelona Convention framework, this strategy is aligned with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and aims to achieve ecologically representative, effectively managed, and equitably governed systems of MPAs and OECMs. It seeks to halt biodiversity loss, enhance ecosystem resilience, and support sustainable development through inclusive, science-based, and adaptive management approaches.

The strategy is built around the following five strategic pillars:

- Governance and Policy Framework
- Planning and Design
- Management and Monitoring
- Sustainable Finance and Investment
- Capacity-Building, Awareness, and Knowledge

Pillar 1. Governance and Policy Framework focuses on improving regional and national legal and institutional frameworks to support MPA and OECM development. It promotes policy



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

coherence across sectors (e.g., fisheries, tourism) and encourages integrated coastal and marine governance. Examples of key outputs foreseen under this pillar are: Review and harmonization of national legislation with regional commitment; Establishment of national inter-sectoral MPA coordination mechanisms.

Pillar 2. Planning and Design emphasizes the need for ecologically representative and well-connected MPA and OECM networks, guided by scientific criteria and stakeholder input. The goal is to contribute to the “30 by 30” global target and ensure long-term ecological effectiveness. Examples of key outputs foreseen under this pillar are: Updated MPA network designs incorporating ecological connectivity; Identification and formal recognition of OECMs using agreed regional guidelines.

Pillar 3. Management and Monitoring addresses the operational effectiveness of MPAs and OECMs. It promotes adaptive management, clear objectives, and standardized monitoring systems aligned with the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP). Examples of key outputs foreseen under this pillar are Development and application of regional management effectiveness indicators; Strengthened data sharing through national and regional platforms.

Pillar 4. Sustainable Finance and Investment acknowledges the critical funding gap and encourages innovative financing mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability of area-based conservation. Examples of key outputs foreseen under this pillar are: creation of national MPA financial sustainability plan; Mobilization of public-private partnerships and blended finance instruments.

Pillar 5. Capacity-Building, Awareness, and Knowledge aims to empower stakeholders through education, training, and knowledge exchange. It supports awareness campaigns and fosters inclusive participation in MPA governance. Examples of key outputs foreseen under this pillar are:

Regional training programs for MPA managers and practitioners; development of communication strategies to engage communities and policymakers.

This structured framework ensures that the Mediterranean region can move from commitment to implementation, enhancing the quality, coverage, and effectiveness of MPAs and OECMs in line with international biodiversity goals.

UNOC-3

The Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC-3) was convened in Nice, France, from 9-13 June 2025. The overarching theme of the conference was "Accelerating action and mobilising all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean". The Conference transmitted unambiguous and favourable signals of support for multilateralism and international cooperation on issues pertaining to the protection of the seas and coasts. These signals should now be translated into concrete action at the national level and in intergovernmental fora. Developed in the context of the preceding UN Ocean Conferences (New York 2017 and Lisbon 2022) UNOC-3 aimed to facilitate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water). It expressed the unanimous view of the scientific community and



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that it is no longer feasible to focus solely on the quantitative aspects of networks of protected areas (objective 30x30 of the Kunming-Montreal agreement), without ensuring adequate guarantees regarding their level of protection.

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species is a comprehensive inventory of the world's most endangered fauna and flora, encompassing a wide range of species and subspecies. The institution was founded in 1964 and is recognised as the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungal and plant species.

The IUCN Red List is a critical indicator of the health of the world's biodiversity. This is a significant instrument for the dissemination of information and the catalysation of action in relation to biodiversity conservation and policy change, which are imperative for the preservation of the natural resources necessary for survival. The provided information encompasses such aspects as range, population size, habitat and ecology, use and/or trade, threats, and conservation actions. The information is designed to inform necessary conservation decisions.

The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria have been developed as a system for classifying species at high risk of global extinction that is both easily and widely understood. The classification system divides species into nine categories: The following categories are used to evaluate the conservation status of species: 'Not Evaluated', 'Data Deficient', 'Least Concern', 'Near Threatened', 'Vulnerable', 'Endangered', 'Critically Endangered', 'Extinct in the Wild' and 'Extinct'.

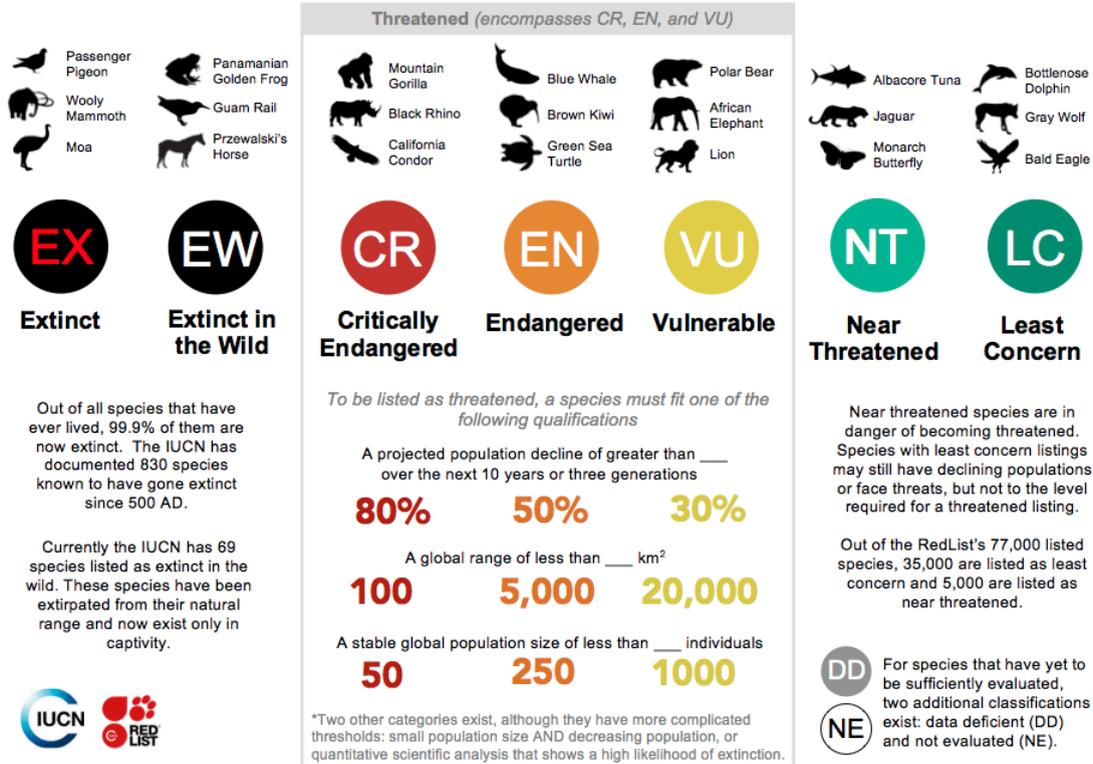


Figure 1. IUCN Criteria for Classification, broad thresholds of the conservational status of the species, 2021

Assessments can be carried out worldwide, or at a regional level, leading to the development of tailored Red Lists for particular states and for specific animal and plant categories. To date, more than 169.400 species have been assessed for The IUCN Red List with more than 47,000 species threatened with extinction, including 44% of reef building corals, 41% of amphibians, 38% of trees, 37% of sharks and rays, 34% of conifers, 26% of mammals, 26% of freshwater fishes and 12% of birds.

1.5 Legal context

The analysis covers the legal framework related to nature, biodiversity and climate change, as delineated within the International, European and Mediterranean contexts. For each of the legal instruments, the key elements relevant for the study are highlighted.

This legal framework set many ambitious goals and targets for the marine and coastal areas that need to be implemented and realized in a complex landscape of old and new policies and laws. The Chapter examines aspects of the complex regulatory environment related to the marine-coastal environment and the need for greater policy coherence to ensure the envisaged goals and targets.

Among the various levels of coherence or incoherence between instruments and objectives, the issue of the important division of competences is mentioned, and therefore the



different approach and consideration of the issue of fisheries (EU common fisheries policy-CFP) in relation to marine resources, understood as resources to be protected in their ecosystem and biodiversity aspects.

International level

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

The overarching international legal instrument is represented by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, a multilateral treaty concluded on 10 December 1982 (hereinafter referred to as UNCLOS), setting out the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to their use of the world seas and oceans and dealing with the protection and preservation of the marine environment, as contained in Part XII of the Convention. The marine environment regulated by the UNCLOS is not a spatial entity removed from the territorial jurisdiction of any single State, rather it is a concept comprising all zones of marine jurisdiction governed by the Convention, including internal waters and high seas. (M.L. McConnell et al, 1991). So far, these principles are intrinsically part of the international environmental law. The primary obligation of States in relation to the global marine environment is stated in Article 192: "States have the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment. " The marine environment is not a distinct entity separate from any State's territorial jurisdiction, as evidenced by Article 193 of the UNCLOS.

These two Articles 192 and 193 are insofar generally regarded as statements of customary international law on the extent of a State environmental responsibility toward the oceans. A State breaching its obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment would also be in breach of international law.

This is further substantiated by Article 235(1) of UNCLOS, which provides that: "States are responsible for the fulfilment of their international obligations concerning the protection and the preservation of the marine environment. They shall be liable in accordance with international law" In Section 2 on "Global and Regional Co-operation", Article 197 provides that "States shall cooperate on a global and, as appropriate, on a regional basis... in formulating and elaborating international rules for the protection and preservation of the marine environment, taking into account characteristic regional features."

The obligation to cooperate includes an obligation to notify affected States of actual or imminent danger to the marine environment, to make contingency plans for dealing with such dangers, to research, to study and to exchange information and data in order to provide scientific criteria for the development of rules, standards, procedures and practices to reduce, prevent or control pollution to the final result to protect and preserve the marine environment as a whole.

Under UNCLOS, States Parties agree to adopt domestic laws and regulations to prevent, control, and reduce marine pollution from different sources, in particular by dumping, from land-based sources, seabed activities, and vessels (see UNCLOS, Section 5 on international rules and national legislation to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment, in particular Article 211 on pollution from vessels, combined with Article 207 on pollution from



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

land-based sources and the following ones). Thus Countries have to ensure that vessels flying their flag are compliant with applicable international rules and standards for the prevention, reduction, and control of marine pollution, also by adopting domestic laws, regulations and measures for their implementation and providing for effective enforcement of these rules. (D. Addis, 2018).

1973/78 MARPOL Convention

The obligations foreseen by UNCLOS are strictly connected with the framework of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, Nov. 2, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (1973/78 MARPOL Convention) and, specifically, to Annex V for preventing loss and discard of debris and garbage generally and fishing gear particularly.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a multilateral treaty concluded in 1992, under the auspices of the UN, on the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Under CBD are developed the so-called **Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs)**, areas of the ocean that have special importance in terms of their ecological and/or biological characteristics, for example, as essential habitats, food sources or breeding grounds for particular species. These areas can include seabed habitats from the coastline to deep ocean trenches, and can be located at a variety of depths in the water column from the surface to the abyss.

EBSAs are identified based on scientific criteria, which include uniqueness or rarity, importance for life-history stages of species, importance for threatened species, vulnerability, biological productivity, biological diversity, and naturalness.

The implementation of the CBD should be achieved through the means of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). NBSAPs thus constitute the key policy-cum-strategy document for the realization of the objectives of the CBD. An NBSAP is, by virtue of being founded in article 6 of the Convention, a legally backed instrument, especially if argued so within the confines of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

Article 6: General measures for conservation and sustainable use



Each party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities:

- a) Develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the party concerned; and
- b) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

Source: *Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992.*

Table 1. Article 6: General measures for conservation and sustainable use

The **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**, adopted by Decision X/2 (UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/X/2, 29 October 2010) at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP10), foreknows that by 2050 biodiversity is to be valued, conserved, restored and wisely used, maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people. It urges Parties and other Governments, with the support of intergovernmental and other organizations, as appropriate, to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and in particular to: (b) Develop national and regional targets.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), formally adopted by Decision 15/4 (CBD/COP/DEC/15/4) at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) in December 2022, sets out action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030, committing nations to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.

The implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework is supported by: Decision 15/5 on the monitoring framework for the GBF, Decision 15/6 on planning, monitoring, reporting and review, Decision 15/7 on resource mobilization, Decision 15/8 on capacity-building and development and technical and scientific cooperation, Decision 15/9 on digital sequence information on genetic resources, Decision 15/13 on cooperation with other Conventions and international organizations, that are affirmed to be of equal standing to the GBF; as well as by relevant decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocols, in particular the Implementation Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Decision CP-10/3) and the Capacity-building Action Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (Decision CP-10/4).

The GBF includes 23 global targets, such as conserving at least 30% of land and sea areas and reducing pollution. In particular,



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Target 1 - to ensure that all areas are under participatory, integrated and biodiversity inclusive spatial planning and/or effective management processes addressing land and sea use change; to bring the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance, including ecosystems of high ecological integrity, close to zero by 2030 while respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, as set out in the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and

Target 3 – to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories, where applicable, and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.

In this context, should be also cited the conventions on endangered species, in particular:

- **The 1973 CITES or Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**, with the aim to halt and regulate the trade in wild animals and plants crosses borders between countries, through international cooperation to safeguard certain species from overexploitation;
- **The 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats**, a multilateral treaty adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe, on the conservation of wild flora and fauna species and their habitats, in particular endangered or vulnerable.

The so-called CMS Family, which refers to the Convention on Migratory Species and the collection of Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding that have been concluded under it:

- The **1979 Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**, a multilateral treaty adopted under the auspices of the UN, concerning the conservation and effective management of particularly species of wild animals that migrate across or outside national jurisdictional boundaries (migratory species), recognising that the States are and must be their protectors when they live within or pass through their national jurisdictional boundaries (based on the fundamental principles stated in Article II);
- The **1996 ACCOBAMS Agreement on the conservation of cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area**, with the aim to coordinate measures to achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for cetaceans, calling the Parties to prohibit and take all necessary measures to eliminate any deliberate taking of cetaceans, in a cooperative frame to create and maintain a network of specially protected areas to conserve cetaceans (in particular, Articles I and II).

BBNJ Agreement

The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National



Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement), was adopted in New York on 19 June 2023. The treaty constitutes a legally binding instrument that governs the marine biodiversity of ocean waters beyond national jurisdiction. The 4 main themes to which the treaty is aimed are capacity building and the transfer of marine technology; area-based management tools, including marine protected areas; environmental impact assessments; and marine genetic resources, including questions on the sharing of benefits.

Its Part III (Articles 17-26) includes area-based management tools (**ABMTs**), such as marine protected areas (**MPAs**), as a key element. These tools are designed to conserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. According to Art. 1(9) of the BBNJ Agreement, an MPA “means a geographically defined marine area that is designated and managed to achieve specific long-term biological diversity conservation objectives and may allow, where appropriate, sustainable use provided it is consistent with the conservation objectives.” An ABMT “means a tool, including a marine protected area, for a geographically defined area through which one or several sectors or activities are managed with the aim of achieving particular conservation and sustainable use objectives in accordance with this Agreement. (BBNJ Art. 1(1)). Thus the main distinction between MPAs and ABMTs is that the latter focus on individual human activities, with the aim of achieving “*particular conservation and sustainable use objectives.*”

Article 17 sets out the specific objectives of this Part, including the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity, the establishment of detailed environmental objectives (“protect, preserve, restore and maintain”), as well as references to climate change and ocean acidification, and the enhancement of the “productivity and health” of marine ecosystems.

Its Part IV (Articles 27-39) is dedicated to **environmental impact assessments-EIAs**, defined as the process to identify and evaluate the potential impacts of an activity to inform decision-making. It establishes processes, thresholds, and other requirements, ensuring that EIAs are conducted and reported by parties, supporting the **consideration of cumulative and transboundary impacts** and impacts in areas within national jurisdiction, also **providing for strategic environmental assessments-SEAs** (Art. 27 letters c and d and Annex I on indicative criteria for identification of areas).

The environmental assessments envisaged in the BBNJ covers ocean areas outside national jurisdiction, establishing innovative baseline requirements and strengthening the assessment and management of human activities, such as proposed geoengineering, deep-sea aquaculture, floating energy installations, etc., which are subject to detailed public notice and consultation provisions and will have to be managed to avoid, mitigate or prevent significant adverse impacts on the marine environment.

Marine and Coastal Protected Areas

The marine and coastal protected areas deserve a dedicated analysis.

There is no universal definition or legal framework for marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in international law. The two main definitions of the term are to be found in the recent BBNJ Agreement (see below) and in the IUCN definition. According to the latter, “*A protected area is a*



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values". However, designating MPAs is a legal obligation under international law, and several international agreements encourage states to establish and manage such areas as they are considered the most effective way to protect the ocean and its natural resources.

In particular, the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment is legally binding under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and customary law. In this sense, it binds all states universally, including those that have not ratified UNCLOS, i.e. Turkey.

This obligation requires states to adopt measures to actively protect the marine environment from future harm and maintain or improve current conditions. The content and scope of these obligations must be guided by the best available scientific evidence. Where such scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that the designation of MPAs is necessary to meet environmental protection standards, the designation, establishment, and operation of an MPA become a policy choice and a legally binding obligation, not discretionary ones.

MPAs contribute to healthy oceans by promoting the management of marine resources, securing the livelihoods of fishers, stimulating the local economy, and creating opportunities for sustainable tourism. Thus, the establishment of MPAs is a key objective in many of the world most important environmental policy documents. The first of these is the Strategic Plan comprising the 'Aichi Targets', which were adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010 for the period 2011–2020. The second is the Sustainable Development Programme, structured around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. Implementing global environmental policies requires adopting a legal framework at regional and national levels. At the regional level, the Barcelona Convention, through the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC), coordinates the efforts of states. Under the recommendations of the Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol), Mediterranean states are encouraged to establish SPAs in their marine and coastal areas. National legislation is also needed to provide a framework for creating and effectively implementing marine and coastal protected areas.

Environmental Assessments (Environmental Impact Assessment-EIA and Strategic Environmental Assessment -SEA)

The 1991 **Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention)** offers a dedicated international legal framework and well-established practice regarding the scope and content of the environmental impact assessment procedure between countries for a wide range of proposed activities across the economic sectors that are likely to cause significant adverse transboundary impact. Its procedural obligations support the practical application of the obligation under general international law for all States to undertake an environmental impact assessment of their planned activities that may have a significant impact in a transboundary context. It also puts into practice the commitments undertaken by all



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

the Member States of the United Nations as part of the 1992 Rio Declaration principles, to provide a “prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States” and to “consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith” on such planned activities.

The 2003 **Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment** to the Espoo Convention (**SEA Protocol**) is an international agreement that provides for legal obligations and a procedural framework for the implementation of strategic environmental assessment, requiring its Parties to evaluate the environmental consequences of their official draft plans and programmes for a wide range of proposed activities across the economic sectors which are likely to have significant environmental, including health, effects (Article 4).

In addition to the regional sea conventions, such as the Barcelona Convention, the European Union legislation on maritime spatial planning recognizes environmental assessment as an important tool to integrate environmental considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans and programs, especially in cases where the management plans of the maritime space may have significant effects on the environment (recalling the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive) as well as in cases of the presence of protected natural areas/Natura 2000 sites.

Strategic environmental assessment is undertaken much earlier in the decision-making process than project environmental impact assessment, and it is therefore seen as a key tool for sustainable development. The Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment also provides for extensive public participation in government decision-making in numerous development sectors.

In the European Union legal context, EIA/SEA system mainly exists of the **EIA Directives** (Directive 97/11/EC that has aligned the directive with the Espoo Convention; Directive 2011/92/EU, amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) and the **SEA Directive** (Directive 2001/42/EC), which transposes the Protocol into EU legislation, the provisions of which have been transposed in national legislation by EU Member states.

By Council Decision 2008/871/EC of October 20, 2008, the SEA Protocol was approved on behalf of the European Community.

The Directives give member states a considerable amount of freedom to determine the specific configuration of their EIA/SEA legislation, to allow for tailor-made solutions that are appropriate for the national context. For that reason, the Directives are less specific than most national EIA/SEA systems.

Aarhus Convention

For what concerns public participation, at the international level the most important instrument is the UNECE Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters or Aarhus Convention of June 25 1998, which requires that the Contracting Parties of the Convention guarantee rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The Convention sets out minimum requirements for public participation in various



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

categories of environmental decision-making, and also foresees the development of compliance mechanisms to ensure that the Contracting Parties implement its provisions.

From the perspective of the public participation on sectors of environmental law, in particular to protect endangered species, biodiversity, and fragile ecological areas, in the principal biodiversity-related conventions consideration is given to the intersection of public participation and resources development, focusing on the three global conventions of most direct relevance for this topic, namely, the 1992 multilateral Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar), and the World Heritage Convention (WHC), which have helped to encourage further public-participation activities.

Mediterranean level

Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and General Fishery Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM)

The Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) are important at the regional level for managing fisheries that extend beyond the areas of national jurisdiction. The FAO General Fishery Council for the Mediterranean (GFCM) plays an important role for the marine resources protection within planning, safeguarding of marine environment and of threatened species in connection with fishing activities. It deals with the interaction between vulnerable species and human activities, and the mitigation of bycatch and the depredation of marine resources. Its Contracting Parties are called to comply with relevant international law and agreed upon standards. States, sub-regional and regional fisheries management organisations are invited to adopt appropriate measures to minimise bycatch and its impact on non-target species, in particular endangered species. They must also conduct fishing activities with due regard for the requirements of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) relating to the protection of the marine environment and the loss of fishing gear.

Barcelona Convention System

Within the framework of the UN Environment/MAP-Barcelona Convention, the only legally binding framework for the protection of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, the implementation of the legal documents and activities and the coordinated collection of various fundamental information for the management and planning of activities in the Mediterranean is planned and implemented through the Coordinating Unit of MAP providing also the Secretariat to the Barcelona Convention and supported by the MAP Components, i.e. six Regional Activity Centres (RACs) and the Mediterranean Pollution Assessment and Control Programme (MEDPOL). (D. Addis, 2018).

The Barcelona Convention System provides valuable tools for the conservation and restoration of Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems, in particular through the **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol** (2008) and the **Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity Protocol** (1999).



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The 1995 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (**Barcelona Convention**) has 22 Contracting Parties: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, European Union, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Türkiye.

The Barcelona Convention has seven Protocols, which have been ratified by some (but not all) of the Contracting Parties to the Convention. To varying degrees, the Protocols to the Barcelona Convention, which address specific aspects for the achievement of the objectives of the Convention and, therefore, for the overall protection of the Mediterranean, constitute substantial and robust legal and operational instruments for the conservation of coastal and marine species and habitats.

LBS Protocol

The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (**LBS Protocol**), adopted in 1980 (22 Parties) and amended in 1996 (17 Parties), aims to protect the Mediterranean Sea against pollution from land-based sources, on eliminating substances that are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate.

Prevention and Emergency Protocol

The Protocol concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in cases of Emergency, combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (**Prevention and Emergency Protocol**) adopted in 2002 (17 Parties), aims to maintain and promote, either individually or through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, contingency plans and means for combating pollution of the sea by oil and other harmful substances.

Dumping Protocol

The Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (**Dumping Protocol**), adopted in 1976 and amended in 1995 (not yet into force) (21 Parties, including the European Union and the 8 Mediterranean Member States) aims to preserve the Mediterranean prohibiting activities, such as incineration at sea and discharge of wastes or other materials, except for dredging materials, fishing wastes, platforms and other structures.

Hazardous Wastes Protocol

The Protocol on the Prevention of Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (**Hazardous Wastes Protocol**), adopted in 1996 (7 Parties) aims to reduce and progressively eliminate the hazardous waste generation, generally through substitution and other clean production methods considering the danger threatening the Mediterranean Sea caused by the trans-boundary movements and disposal of



hazardous wastes, in the light of the Basel Convention on the control of trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal.

Offshore Protocol

The Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (**Offshore Protocol**), adopted in 1994 (8 Parties, including the European Union) aims to regulate, organize, and limit the increase in the activities concerning exploration and exploitation of the Mediterranean seabed and its subsoil, considering their adverse impact on environment and human beings.

In particular, under Article 12, Parties are requested to prohibit the disposal of garbage at sea, including all plastics and therefore also the synthetic ropes, fishing nets and plastic garbage bags, all other non-biodegradable garbage. In parallel, Parties shall ensure (Article 13) the disposal of all wastes and harmful or noxious substances and materials in designated onshore reception facilities, adopting the related sanctions in respect of illegal disposal.

Cooperation and coordination is requested for the development and implementation of contingency plans in cases of emergency to combat accidental pollution (coordinated with the contingency plan foreseen by the Emergency Protocol) (Article 16 and Section V). With regard to Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance, Article 21 provides that “Parties shall take special measures to prevent, abate, combat and control pollution arising from activities in these areas. Such measures may include, inter alia:

- a) Special restrictions or conditions when granting authorizations for such areas.
- b) The preparation and evaluation of environmental impact assessments.
- c) The elaboration of special provisions in such areas concerning monitoring, removal of installations and prohibition of any discharge.
- d) Intensified exchange of information among operators, the competent authorities, Parties and the Organization regarding matters which may affect such areas.”

SPA/BD Protocol

The Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (**SPA/BD Protocol**), adopted in 1982 and amended in 1995 (17 Parties, including the European Union and 7 Mediterranean Member States), provides a regional framework for the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biological diversity in the Mediterranean. It aims to protect and improve the state of the Mediterranean natural and cultural heritage, particularly through the establishment of Specially Protected Areas in order to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of ecosystems. Since its adoption a number of strategies, programmes, action plans and roadmaps have been developed to help the Contracting Parties meet their obligations under the Protocol.



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Article 4 of the Protocol provides a comprehensive statement of the objective of marine protected areas with strong antecedents in the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Protocol places a general obligation on Parties “to protect, preserve and manage in a sustainable and environmentally sound way areas of particular natural or cultural value, notably by the establishment of specially protected areas (Article 3(1)(a) – called “Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Interest” (SPAMI) and provides for a set of protective measures to use in case such an area is established.

The Protocol is applicable to all marine waters, irrespective of their legal status as well as to the seabed and subsoil and to coastal terrestrial areas designated by each Party.

If a SPAMI is established on the high sea, the protection measures are those prescribed by the State proposing the SPAMI: other Parties must comply with measures, but enforcement must be in accordance with international law.

ICZM Protocol

The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (**ICZM Protocol**), adopted in 2008 (12 Parties, including the European Union and 5 Member States in the Mediterranean Region), aims at establishing a common framework for the integrated management of the Mediterranean coastal zones, meant as a dynamic process for the sustainable management and use of such zones. In order to preserve the natural habitats and ecosystems of the coastal zone, which includes the territorial sea, the Contracting Parties are invited to adopt specific activities, laws and measures within the framework of a dedicated planning in this sense.

The Protocol provides two key definitions:

‘Coastal zone’ refers to the geomorphologic area either side of the seashore in which the interaction between the marine and land parts occurs in the form of complex ecological and resource systems made up of biotic and abiotic components coexisting and interacting with human communities and relevant socio-economic activities.

‘Integrated coastal zone management’ refers to a dynamic process for the sustainable management and use of coastal zones, taking into account at the same time the fragility of coastal ecosystems and landscapes, the diversity of activities and uses, their interactions, the maritime orientation of certain activities and uses and their impact on both the marine and land parts.

Under Article 9, economic activities shall be conducted considering the fragile nature of coastal zones; in particular fishing practices must be compatible with sustainable use of natural marine resources; aquaculture shall be regulated by controlling the use of inputs and waste treatment; tourism is encouraged as far as it is sustainable to preserve coastal ecosystems, regulating or prohibiting the practice of various sporting and recreational activities, including recreational fishing and shellfish extraction; maritime activities shall be conducted in such a manner as to ensure the preservation of coastal ecosystems.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Moreover, Article 10 requests Parties to take specific measures also to protect marine areas hosting habitats and species of high conservation value, through legislation, planning and management, promoting regional and international cooperation for the implementation of common programmes on the protection of marine habitats. In accordance with the provisions of the MSP Directive, the ICZM Protocol, Article 28, identifies a trans-boundary cooperation as the fundamental process to coordinate national coastal strategies, plans and programmes related to contiguous coastal zones.

The Barcelona Convention and its Protocols also expressly include provisions that require the Contracting Parties to “undertake **environmental impact assessment** for proposed activities that are likely to cause a significant adverse impact on the marine environment”, referring to the geographical area of the whole maritime waters of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention, Article 1), including the transboundary aspects.

Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean

With the adoption of Decision IG.23/7 of the 20th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 20) (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017), the Meeting took note of the Conceptual Framework for Marine Spatial Planning as a guiding document to facilitate the introduction of this management tool into the Integrated Coastal Zone Management framework. In addition, the 21st Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 21-Naples, Italy, 2-5 December 2019), adopted Decision IG.24/5 on the Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management. At their 23rd meeting in 2023, the Contracting Parties adopted Decision IG.26/10 on the Conceptual Framework for Implementing Marine Spatial Planning in the Mediterranean as a guiding document for coordinated implementation of Marine Spatial Planning within the geographical scope of application of the Barcelona Convention.

The adoption of the Conceptual Framework for the Implementation of MSP in the Mediterranean is a decisive step towards a unified regional approach to MSP. This will contribute directly to achieving global objectives, including those set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly the goal of conserving at least 30% of marine and coastal areas. The importance of adopting and developing specific coastal plans for the resilience of coastal regions has been highlighted in many quarters.

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention System are therefore urged to fulfil the UNEP/MAP objectives by protecting marine and coastal areas and promoting global biodiversity efforts. It should be noted that some of these parties have signed or ratified the BBNJ Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, which represents a significant milestone in the protection of the high seas supporting the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Barcelona Convention Compliance Committee



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

A special mention should be made of the compliance mechanism, in order to elicit compliance and enforce convention obligations. In fact, the Barcelona Convention has provided for a specific Compliance Committee since 2008, the subsidiary body in charge of the implementation and enforcement of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. Through this mechanism and the parallel submission of reports by the Contracting Parties under Article 26, it is intended to ensure the verification and therefore the timely compliance and application of what is provided for in the Convention and its Protocols, as well as in the decisions taken by the Parties.

At the EU level, relevant EU legislation needs to be considered, including, among others:

The Habitat and Birds Directives (HD and BD) of Natura 2000 Network

The **Habitats Directive** - Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora - and the **Birds Directive** - Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds – constituting the Natura 2000 Network, the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world. They aim to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain and re-establish destroyed biotops for birds and to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, (defined in Articles 1 and 2), natural habitats and non-bird species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest listed on the Annexes to the Directive, introducing robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance (HD Article 12).

Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy or Water Framework Directive (WFD) aims to improve and integrate the management of water bodies throughout Europe achieving good status of all EU waters, including transitional waters and coastal waters, by 2027 (as per the recent extension of the directive).

It promotes an integrated approach to protecting water and developing sustainable use of the water environment, managing water within the wider ecosystem, and considering the movement of water through the hydrological cycle. The WFD introduces modern concepts intended to shift EU water governance from focusing solely on controlling water pollution to applying principles and practices associated with catchment-based 'Integrated Water Resources Management'.

The WFD requires the production of a River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for each river basin. The plans are based on a detailed analysis of the impacts of human activity on the water environment and set environmental objectives for all groundwater bodies and surface water bodies (including transitional water bodies and coastal water bodies) within each River Basin District (RBD). In addition to the plan, a programme of measures must be established to improve water bodies where required.

To summarise, the WFD is designed to:



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

- Enhance the status and prevent further deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and, regarding their water needs, terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystems
- Promote the sustainable use of water based on long-term protection of available water resources
- Reduce water pollution, especially by 'priority substances' and 'priority hazardous substances'
- Ensure progressive reduction of groundwater pollution
- Contribute to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts

Flood Directive (FD)

The EU Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks (Flood Directive-FD) aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity.

The directive contains provisions pertaining to coastal erosion from a "precautionary" point of view, with the aim of anticipating potential damage to the coastal zone through scientific risk analysis. The formulation process, implemented at the national level, provides for the adoption by Member states of specific catchment-based Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), including coastal zones.

These plans are to be harmonised with the WFD River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) cycle, which is focused on prevention, protection and preparedness. The objectives of the FRMPs are to manage the flood risk within Areas of Potentially Significant Flood Risk (APSFRs), and the plans set out a prioritised set of measures for achieving these objectives.

Member States are required to coordinate their flood risk management practices in shared river basins, including with third countries, avoiding measures that would increase the flood risk in neighbouring countries, and should consider long-term developments, including climate change.

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The **Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)** (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) currently under review, provides guidance on the necessity for integration and complementarity of diverse instruments and a unified vision.

The overarching aim of the MSFD is to achieve and maintain good environmental status (GES) in European marine regions and sub-regions by 2020 and obliges Member States to achieve the GES of their marine waters, adopting appropriate measures to meet the established targets, monitoring and reporting the conservation status. It provides the following 11 descriptors of the status of the marine environment and requires Member States to periodically assess these descriptors in order to evaluate their short and long-term variations: D1 Biodiversity, D2 Non-indigenous species, D3 Commercial fish and shellfish, D4 Food webs, D5 Eutrophication, D6



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Seafloor integrity, D7 Hydrographic conditions, D8 Environmental contaminants, D9 Contaminants in seafood, D10 Marine Litter, and D11 Introduction of energy, including noise.

The operational implementation of the descriptors is also ensured by the support provided by dedicated technical groups.

The MSFD has thus far been unsuccessful in arresting the ongoing deterioration of the marine environment. Consequently, the objective of achieving Good Environmental Status by 2020 in all EU waters across all GES descriptors has not been realised.

Environmental Liability Directive (ELD)

The Environmental Liability Directive (ELD) (Directive 2004/35/CE of 21 April 2004 on environmental liability with regard to the prevention and remedying of environmental damage) established a framework based on the polluter pays principle with a view to preventing and remedying environmental damage.

Invasive Alien Species Regulation

The Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on invasive alien species establishes a set of measures to be taken across the European Union concerning invasive alien species included in the list of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern (Union List). According to its Art. 3 (1) and (2), 'invasive alien species' means any live specimen of a species, subspecies or lower taxon of animals, plants, fungi or micro-organisms introduced outside its natural range, including any part, gametes, seeds, eggs or propagules of such species, as well as any hybrids, varieties or breeds that might survive and subsequently reproduce, whose introduction or spread has been found to threaten or adversely impact upon biodiversity and related ecosystem services.

The species included in the list are subject to restrictions and measures set out in the Regulation. These include restrictions on keeping, importing, selling, breeding, growing and releasing of the species into the environment.

Member States are required to take action on pathways of unintentional introduction (i.e. prevention), to take measures for the early detection and rapid eradication of these species, and to manage species that are already widely spread in their territory.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

In the European context, the issue of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is governed by the provisions of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of ICZM in Europe (2002/413/EC) and the Council Decision 2010/631/EU of 13 September 2010 concerning the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the ICZM Protocol to the Barcelona Convention. This Protocol becomes part of the *acquis communautaire* and provides a valuable horizon and a broad panorama for preparing an effective and context-integrated management.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

With the adoption of Directive 2014/89/EU of 23 July 2014, the European Union provides itself with a specific legal instrument establishing a framework for **Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)**.

MSP constitutes a pivotal element within a series of rules and policy processes, which are integral components of international and EU maritime governance systems. In such systems, transboundary cooperation and collaboration between neighbouring states assumes paramount importance for the effective coherence of the management of marine regions and sub-regions. At EU level, should be given due consideration the related pertinent EU policies and legislation, in particular, to the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), the Natura 2000 network and associated legislation, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), the Renewable Energy Directive and the INSPIRE Directive.

In this context, the MSP Directive aims to address the high and rapidly increasing demand for maritime space for different purposes, including the sustainable exploitation of marine biological resources and the conservation of the ecosystem and biodiversity. This requires an integrated planning and management approach to address multiple pressures and human impacts, such as maritime shipping, fishing activities and aquaculture facilities (as stated in the first recital of the MSP Directive 2014/89/EU).

It is therefore essential to achieve a shared conceptualisation of planning problems and objectives, establishing clear and common management and planning objectives, especially in shared seas such as the Mediterranean Sea.

For its implementation, the international cooperation component, using the legal instruments provided for by the international legal system and first and foremost UNCLOS, assumes an entirely relevant role. Indeed, cooperation with Member States with which sea basins are shared is aimed at ensuring the coherence and coordination of the respective maritime spatial management plans of the marine region or sub-region itself, taking into account existing institutional structures of regional cooperation, such as those provided for in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, in particular Article 18 on regional cooperation on conservation measures.

European Climate Law

The European Climate Law (Regulation EU/2021/1119 of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality) establishes a binding objective of climate neutrality in the Union by 2050. It commits to stepping up efforts to tackle climate change and to delivering on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, it provides a framework for achieving progress in pursuit of the global adaptation goal established in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement.

EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL)

The **Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration or Nature Restoration Law (NRL)** officially entered into force on August 18, 2024. The NRL is an ambitious and binding piece of legislation, aiming to address the decline of biodiversity across the European Union through the implementation of restoration



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

measures for 20 per cent of land areas and 20 per cent of seas by 2030 and for all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Consequently, European legislation is now aligned with the GBF, thereby becoming a key instrument to assist the EU and its Member States in meeting international biodiversity commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It includes specific targets for terrestrial, coastal and freshwater, marine, urban, agricultural and forest ecosystems, as well as pollinator populations (Articles 4 to 12). The NRL also includes important provisions regarding the implementation process, as well as monitoring and reporting, to ensure that all the tools are in place to achieve the NRL objectives.

Different restoration targets apply to different ecosystems and Member States are called to decide the specific measures they put in place on their territories. Therefore, Member States are requested to develop and adopt **National Restoration Plans (NRPs)** outlining how they will meet the objectives and obligations set by the regulation to restore degraded ecosystems in the EU by 2050, adapted to the national context and taking into account the diversity of different regions. Member States should follow a step-by-step approach, whereby NRPs should initially provide detailed information for the period up to 2032, as well as a strategic overview of planned measures and actions up to 2050.

Member States are called upon to identify and ensure synergies with other relevant legislation and policies, which will have to be taken into account during the preparation of the plans and avoid delays in the subsequent implementation of the regulation. Member States will have to submit their draft NRPs by 1 September 2026 (Article 16). Following the step-by-step approach, the plans will have to include detailed information on the measures foreseen by 2032 and a more strategic overview of the information required for the period up to 2050.

According to Article 14, Member States shall carry out monitoring and preparatory research to identify the restoration measures necessary to meet the objectives and obligations (Article 14.1). They shall, therefore, take stock of any gaps in knowledge that might hinder the adoption of appropriate restoration measures and identify ways to address them. They shall also proceed for specific ecosystems, including for the restoration of coastal freshwater and marine ecosystems, to quantify the area to be restored (Article 14(2)). These are the habitat types listed in the Habitats Directive (the Annex I habitats) and the other marine habitats listed in Annex II of the NRL. Therefore, the Regulation sets quantified and time-bound restoration targets for habitats included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive (including rivers and lakes), as well as targets for habitats of protected species under the Habitats and the Birds Directives, and restoration targets for essential marine habitats covered by the nature directives and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

Member States can and must use the monitoring and reporting mechanisms provided by existing regulatory frameworks to collect information, as required by the NRL. In particular, under Art. 4, Member States with reference to the Habitats Directive shall measure or estimate and map the areas of Annex I habitat types present on their territory (separately for each biogeographical region) and report on their condition (structure and function) every six years in the report referred to in Art. 17. Member States must also define the favourable area of each habitat. It is important to note that the EEA has made estimates of the areas of each Annex I habitat that would need to be restored to achieve favourable conservation status.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

In addition, under Article 5, for Annex I marine habitats listed in the Habitats Directive, Member States may use the same reports as in Article 4. For EUNIS marine habitats listed in Annex II of the Regulation, Member States will have to consult additional maps of marine habitats (e.g. through Emodnet and the Copernicus Marine Service).

They can use data from the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) reports, which also follows a six-year cycle. Member States should work together with European regional maritime organisations to jointly monitor and utilise existing databases and thus with the Coordination Unit of the Barcelona Convention for the Mediterranean.

It is important to note that Member States shall identify synergies with climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as with land degradation neutrality and disaster prevention, and take into account a range of other policies (Art. 14 NRL).

Member States have to coordinate the drafting of their NRP with the mapping of areas for achieving their national contributions to the 2030 renewable energy target and the designation of renewable energy acceleration areas (Art. 14(13)).

In addition, Member States should explain how they are monitoring restoration areas and describe the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the measures and reviewing them where necessary (Article 15.3(p)).

Finally, they should seek synergies with the NRPs of other Member States, especially for transboundary ecosystems or when they share a marine region or subregion (Article 14.17).

Another key element is the participatory processes, whereby civil society actors and stakeholders have to be involved from the very beginning of the preparation process. Indeed, although the obligation stemming from the NRL is in itself rather weak, it is nevertheless supported by specific provisions of the Aarhus Convention on public participation and subsequent case law on environmental plans, programmes and policies. It is recalled that under Article 7 of the Aarhus Convention, parties are obliged to create an appropriate, fair and transparent framework for public participation during the preparation of plans relating to the environment.

Member States shall therefore:

- Identify stakeholders who can participate in the planning process, which for NRPs refer to scientific experts, NGOs, local communities, youth and landowners, farmers and fishermen who will play a decisive role in the implementation of the NRP.

- Give them the opportunity to contribute, share their knowledge and experience and provide guidance and recommendations on how to implement the objectives.

- Provide them with the necessary information to effectively contribute to the preparation of the NRP, ensuring a consistent dialogue between the public and the relevant institutions.

- Provide them with sufficient time to be informed that the process is taking place and to prepare for effective participation, which, under the Convention, means that their contributions should be duly considered by the Parties in the outcome of the participation process and in the finalisation of the NRPs.



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

- Identify existing networks to facilitate public participation (such as those related to the Natura 2000 network) and, if necessary, create new networks appropriate for participation.

- Establish and publicise public consultations throughout the preparation process and before the submission of the plan and promote bottom-up approaches that foster cooperation, e.g. between citizens, fishermen and environmental organisations. Furthermore, once NRPs have been submitted and finalised, they must ensure that stakeholders can also challenge the content of the plans or procedural elements.

Article 14 of the NRL also encourages Member States to use existing or future tools that may be useful for the preparation of NRP. These tools are not mandatory, but may be used by Member States as assistance, aid or guidance.

The NRL may promote Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as a priority for urban adaptation to climate change, including the use of urban wetlands to mitigate flooding and green roofs for temperature regulation. Furthermore, there is a need to advocate for the integration of urban green and blue infrastructure within NRP.

It is therefore required to go beyond strictly binding requirements and make full use of available tools to maximise the ambition and efficiency of the plans. These voluntary tools provide additional support to the competent institutions in charge of preparing and drafting the plans, potentially increasing their efficiency and likelihood of successful implementation on the ground and should therefore not be neglected.

In order to properly plan and implement measures within and outside Natura 2000, the NRL calls on Member States to prioritise restoration measures in Natura 2000 sites until 2030 for coastal, terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. The selection of sites and habitats of species (already designated or soon to be designated) should be a starting point for the implementation of restoration measures. However, restoration within Natura 2000 sites may not be sufficient to achieve the objectives of Article 4.

Member States should balance the restoration of ecosystems both within and outside Natura 2000, especially as restoration measures are mutually reinforcing and can have positive impacts beyond the ecosystems concerned.

The **European Climate Law** (EU/2021/1119 of 30 June 2021), the revised **Energy Efficiency Directive** (EU/2023/1791 of 13 September 2023), as well as the **Renewable Energy Directive** (EU/2023/2413 of 18 October 2023) will also contribute the ecosystem restoration of marine and coastal zone.

Public Participation Directive

A complex and organic EU legislation governs the participatory processes.

The Directive 2003/35/EC of 26 May 2003 (the Public Participation Directive) aims to contribute to the implementation of the obligations arising under the Aarhus Convention, in particular by providing for public participation in the drawing up of certain plans and



programmes relating to the environment; by improving public participation; and by providing for provisions on access to justice.

2. Problem Definition of Legislative Instruments: obstacles and Implementation gaps

2.1 What are the problems and their drivers?

Although the existence of the international legal obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment and the importance of cooperation, still fails the coordination of responses and the degree of those responses at the States implementation level. These legal obligations can be summarized in the three main-related following ones:

- 1) the obligation to protect and preserve the marine environment and, specifically, not to pollute;
- 2) the obligation to cooperate on global and regional levels, primarily to develop acceptable standards, rules and practices in response to the first obligation; and,
- 3) the obligation effectively to adopt, implement and enforce at a national level, the agreed upon standards, under the second obligation, in response to the first obligation.

Not fulfilling one of the three obligations implies the defeat of the entire regime.

Moreover, the complete framework including all these sets of legal instruments, is not well or fully known by most of the competent institutions and stakeholders dealing and involved with the protection and restoration of nature, biodiversity and ecosystems. This constitutes the main lack, within the absence of a concrete effective vertical and horizontal integration among the same competent institutions and subjects.

In addition to the legal and policy framework described at the supranational level, to properly understand how these instruments have been adopted, declined or adapted by individual states, the distinctive characteristics of each state should be considered. These include geomorphological features such as size, population density, coastline length, and the characteristics of the coastline and seabed. Socio-economic characteristics and the main coastal sector activities (e.g. fishing, aquaculture, tourism, maritime transport and water sports) should also be considered, as well as historical and administrative factors that influence their organisational and governance structures.

As emphasised by the EU institutions, the aforementioned pieces of legislation contribute to the enhancement and rehabilitation of ecosystems, encompassing marine and coastal environments. However, collectively, these measures prove to be inadequately effective in addressing the problem magnitude and scope.

Further details of the reasons for some of the policy and legislative failures are given in Chapter 2.



With regard to national legal frameworks, there are institutional differences among Mediterranean States. In some of them, such as Morocco, legislative and administrative powers on maritime matters belong to the State, which exercises them also through councils and agencies, while the regional and local level has the task of promoting national policies. In others, such as Italy, Regions have legislative and administrative powers, and municipalities and other territorial entities also have administrative powers.

It should also be noted that eight of the 21 countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea are Member States of the European Union: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia and Spain.

Since two of the territorial focus, i.e. Sardinia-Italy and Crete-Greece, are within Member States of the European Union and European Union law is part of their national legal system, the analysis will include European Union regulations and directives.

These aspects will be examined in detail in [Chapter 4](#) to substantiate their implementation in practice.

European Union Mediterranean Sea

Marine biodiversity and habitat loss is a challenge for Europe seas, including the Mediterranean. While a framework is in place, EU actions have not restored seas to good environmental status or fishing to sustainable levels. EU protection rules have not led to the recovery of significant ecosystems and habitats. Marine Protected Areas provide limited protection and fisheries policy is rarely coordinated with marine protection policy. Relatively few of the available funds are used for conservation measures and there has been no measurable improvement in fish stocks in the Mediterranean.

The EU and the Barcelona System for the Mediterranean have a legal and policy framework to protect the marine environment and use marine resources sustainably. Scientists and policy makers have recognised that fishing, through resource extraction and damage to the sea floor, is a key pressure on the EU and Mediterranean seas.

The EU has a greater role in the conservation of marine biological resources than for environmental policies, where the Commission and Member States share responsibility. The most relevant maritime environmental policies are set out in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and the Birds and Habitats Directives. EU funding is spread over different funding instruments. EU action has resulted significantly overfished in the Mediterranean; and only a small share of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund was used to support marine conservation.

The Special report 26/2020 of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) on marine environment affirms that the EU protection is wide but not deep.

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) found that while the EU has a framework to protect the marine environment, it has not achieved good environmental status or sustainable fishing levels. Key issues include:

- Marine biodiversity and habitat loss remain significant challenges, particularly in the Mediterranean, where overfishing is prevalent.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

- Marine Protected Areas offer limited protection, and fisheries policy is rarely coordinated with marine protection policy.
- Only a small portion of available funds is used for conservation measures, with no measurable improvement in fish stocks.
- The EU aims to protect marine environments and promote sustainable use of marine resources through directives and funding, but implementation and enforcement gaps persist.
- Recommendations include identifying regulatory and administrative changes necessary to protect sensitive species and habitats, improving protection measures in the Mediterranean, and increasing the potential of EU funding.

A report by the European Environment Agency, published the same year, identified that “Marine biodiversity remains under threat in Europe’s seas. A high proportion of marine species and habitats’ assessments continue to show an ‘unfavourable conservation status’ or a status that is ‘unknown’” (EEA Report No 17/2019 of 2020).

EU protection rules have not led to the recovery of significant ecosystems and habitats. The network of marine protected areas was not representative of the EU diverse seas and sometimes provided little protection. In practice, the provisions to coordinate fisheries policy with environmental policy had not worked as intended, and the species and habitats protected by birds and habitats directives were based on outdated threat assessments.

In the Mediterranean, where fisheries management is mostly linked to limits on fishing effort (and not catches), fishing rates were at twice sustainable levels. Good examples of projects funded with LIFE and Interreg were found.

The EU is committed to integrate environmental protection and sustainable development into its policies and to promote the sustainable use of the oceans and protect marine ecosystems (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU Articles 7 and 11)). The EU as a body and its Member States individually are parties to several international agreements relevant to the protection of marine habitats and species. These include conventions on the Law of the sea (1982 UNCLOS), Biological Diversity (1992 CBD), Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979 CMS or Bonn Convention), and the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979 Bern Convention). Regional sea conventions such as the Barcelona Convention and regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs) also have a key role.

The EU has exclusive competence over the conservation of marine biological resources through its common fisheries policy (CFP), while it shares with the Member States responsibility for environmental policies, the most relevant of which for the seas are set out in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD- Directive 2008/56/EC of 17 June 2008) and the Birds and Habitats Directives (BHDs or Natura 2000 Network- Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 and Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992).

In this context, the EU and the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention System are committed to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 14 setting targets related to “life below water” (see Table 2) in its seas.



Sustainable Development Goal 14: life below water

This goal aims to conserve and sustainably use the seas and marine resources. It covers:

- achieving the Aichi target to, by 2020, cover 10 % of marine waters through protected areas or other effective conservation measures.
- Ending overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices by 2020;
- prohibiting certain forms of fishing subsidies by 2020; and
- allowing access to marine resources and markets for small-scale, artisanal fishers.

Table 2. Sustainable Development Goal 14: life below water

The EU Commission defines MPAs as marine areas created with a primary objective of nature conservation and to protect marine areas against a wide range of pressures (fishing, dredging, mining, oil and gas exploration, industrial discharges, anchoring, shipping, underwater cables, etc). To be effective MPAs need to have clear objectives with well-managed actions based on best available science. The MSFD requires Member States to include in their strategies spatial protection measures, contributing to coherent and representative networks of marine protected areas.

MPAs do not qualify for EU designation under the Natura 2000 network unless they refer to habitats or species listed in the BHDs. Designated MPAs often overlap each other and with national protected areas and Natura 2000 sites.

In 2020, the EEA reported that less than 1 % of European MPAs could be considered marine reserves with full protection, with a management plan defining the actions needed to protect the area and the responsible authorities for doing so; and that management of MPAs needed to be strengthened.

The report revealed that while European legislation provides Member States with tools to make common recommendations to enable the Commission to take appropriate measures for the effective protection of their marine waters and MPAs, these processes are often complicated to apply and thus most Member states did not seek to use them. It emerged that the fishing stocks in the Mediterranean remained in a poor situation and overexploited.

Mediterranean region

The present section outlines the salient findings on the Mediterranean region.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The most recent decisions by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention ((See Decision IG.25/12 of December 2021 adopted by COP22) highlight that biodiversity loss and environmental degradation pose serious threats to the global economy. Among the solutions identified, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are deemed fundamental. In this context, Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs), equivalent to Specially Protected Areas (SPAs) when fully managed, are key instruments.

MCPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation by protecting marine biodiversity, contributing to carbon regulation (thanks to habitats such as *Posidonia oceanica* meadows), and enhancing ecosystem resilience against global warming and acidification. MCPAs also provide natural barriers against coastal erosion and flooding, mitigating the effects of extreme weather events.

Beyond their ecological function, MCPAs and OECMs also support the sustainable growth of the blue economy by enhancing the natural capital of the Mediterranean. Strategically designed MCPAs promote the increase of fish resources (both adults and larvae) and, where management is effective, lead to healthier fish stocks and higher incomes for fisheries, in addition to stimulating tourism linked to biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

Currently, there are 1,126 MCPAs in the Mediterranean covering 209,303 km² (8.3% of the surface area), but only a small portion (0.06%) is under strict protection. No OECMs have been reported.

There are significant differences between countries: the majority of MCPAs are found in the western Mediterranean and the northern part of the region, while less than 4% of marine habitats deeper than 1,000 meters are protected. While progress has been made (some countries have already reached or exceeded the 10% target set by Aichi Target 11), regional coverage remains insufficient and uneven.

The new post-2020 objectives require not only a greater extension of protected areas but also a more balanced representation between countries and ecosystem types, as well as truly effective management. However, only a few MCPAs conduct regular evaluations of management effectiveness.

The main barriers identified include: lack of political will and support, insufficient and unsustainable funding, scarcity of trained personnel, limited cooperation among sectors and stakeholders, knowledge gaps, lack of management plans, inadequate surveillance and enforcement, and unsystematic and incomplete monitoring.

To overcome these challenges and meet the 2030 targets, it is essential to strengthen political will, ensure adequate financial and human resources, promote cooperation, and fill the gaps in the management and monitoring of protected areas.

Assessment Report of the National Implementation Reports under Article 26 of the Barcelona Convention

According to Article 18 (2) of the Barcelona Convention, one of the functions of the meetings of the Contracting Parties is to keep under review the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and its Protocols and, in particular, to consider the reports



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

submitted by the Contracting Parties under Article 26. The Contracting Parties in fact are called to transmit to the Organization every two years reports on: (a) the legal, administrative and other measures taken by them for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention, its Protocols and the recommendations adopted by their meetings, and (b) the effectiveness of the measures so taken, and problems encountered in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

By submitting their national implementation reports, Contracting Parties provide an essential tool for keeping the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols under review, on the basis of which information the most appropriate decisions, actions and initiatives can be taken in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols along with proposals for further measures, as necessary.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) principles have been integrated into domestic legal and policy frameworks in all reporting Contracting Parties through a variety of instruments encompassing, laws ratifying the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol and national strategies and plans on marine and coastal management, as well as on marine spatial planning; and laws on the development, protection and conservation of the coast, including laws on protected areas, such as Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (SPAMIs).

Many Contracting Parties reported having developed Management Plans for their Specially Protected Areas. Some Parties clarified that, although formal plans are not always in place for each SPA, protective and management measures have been adopted through other legal instruments or frameworks. Further efforts appear necessary to ensure the effective implementation and operationalization of these plans.

Many Parties have engaged local communities in the management and stewardship of SPAs.

Appropriate training initiatives for SPA staff, managers, and technical personnel were organised in many Contracting Parties, often implemented through national programmes, international cooperation, or support from regional organizations like SPA/RAC.

The last assessment reports of the overall findings from the general status of the progress in the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols through an analysis of the information mentioned in the biennial National Reports, confirms a decline in the reporting rate over the last three two years, from 64% to 45% for data on the Convention and from around 50% to 20% for data on most of its Protocols.

The difficulties encountered by the Contracting Parties in implementing the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols include regulatory framework and legislative challenges, such as absence of an adequate legal and institutional framework or limited staff trained in the implementation and enforcement legislation; limited financial resources to undertake work for the drafting of the necessary legal and regulatory framework putting in place the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols; and administrative management difficulties, such as fragmentation of roles and responsibilities amongst government ministries, departments and agencies or central, regional and local authorities making challenging the collection of information from entities.



2.2 How will the problem evolve?

The major challenges to achieve good environmental/conservation status are linked to implementation gaps and lack of ambition and resources, rather than significant problems in the policy framework.

As stated by the EU Commission in several reports, the effectiveness of the marine protected areas and coherence of their networks needs to be improved, and this is one of the main goals of the new Biodiversity strategy. The Commission also considers that the protection of the marine environment would benefit from the improvement on 'implementation' of the EU policies, as already reflected in the MSFD implementation report or the 'Fitness Check' of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, among others. Actually, the newly adopted EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030 asks for full implementation of environmental and fisheries policies.

The conservation measures in MPAs may impose fishing restrictions if necessary to reach the conservation objectives.

It should be highlighted that there are many EMFF-projects, which support the management of Natura 2000 areas.

The protection of the marine environment requires a comprehensive approach to tackle all pressures at European and Mediterranean level and beyond. Key pressures on the marine environment to be considered are fisheries, resource extraction, maritime transports, land pollution.

The effectiveness of the marine protected areas and coherence of their networks needs to be improved, and this is one of the main goals of the new Biodiversity strategy.

ECA elaborated the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Identifying the regulatory and administrative changes necessary to protect sensitive species and habitats.

It should be noted that enhanced implementation and enforcement could be more important than legislative changes.

It is also important to recall that all marine species and habitats are protected by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and it is up to Member States to implement adequate conservation measures on the ground to ensure good environmental status.

States should make more use of the regionalized approach in order to agree on more joint recommendations on conservation measures.

It is a Member State responsibility to establish the marine protected areas under its jurisdiction or sovereignty and the necessary conservation measures. The Mediterranean Regulation puts the onus for establishing fishing protected areas essentially on the Member States. Member States have established such 'protected areas' through national law. The Mediterranean Regulation is unique in the sense that it is the only CFP instrument that provides for fisheries restrictions in coastal areas (ban on trawling within 3 nm from the coast / 50m isobaths) and above certain habitats (e.g. Posidonia beds).

Recommendation 2 – Improving protection measures in the Mediterranean



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

The existing regulatory framework provides the necessary tools, both at the EU and international (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - GFCM) level. Establishing FRAs in EU waters is primarily a national competence. The EU and MS are exploring ways to streamline the management modalities for FRAs in the Mediterranean basin.

Recommendation 3 – Increasing the potential of EU funding

In the context of the programming exercise for the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027 - supporting the EU common fisheries policy (CFP), the EU maritime policy and the EU agenda for international ocean governance, and which does not exclusively finance the marine environment - the Commission have encouraged Member States to increase their EMFAF spending on measures protecting the marine environment. The EMFAF will continue to support the achievement of the CFP objectives, the protection and restoration of marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems which are key challenges for achieving healthy seas and oceans. It will also support actions to achieve or maintain a good environmental status in the marine environment as set out in the Maritime Strategy Framework Directive, for the implementation of spatial protection measures established pursuant to that Directive, for the management, restoration and monitoring of NATURA 2000 areas and for the protection of species under the 'Habitats' and 'Birds' Directives.

Barriers and opportunities for policy implementation: nature-based solutions

Despite their recognized potential, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) remain largely underutilized, especially in some ecosystems, and face several structural barriers to wider adoption and scalability European Investment Bank (2023). The findings from the study include important considerations regarding barriers to implementation of policies targeting NbS. (European Investment Bank (EIB) 2013. Investing in Nature-based Solutions).

Marine environments are significantly underrepresented in EU-supported nature-based projects. The majority of documented initiatives are concentrated in urban or agricultural landscapes, and where marine projects are present, they often lack baseline data on spatial scale, financing, and outcomes. This indicates a pressing need for ecosystem-specific frameworks and investment strategies tailored to coastal and marine contexts, supported by targeted research and planning instruments.

Another critical challenge is the insufficient assessment of the cost-effectiveness of NbS, which undermines their comparability with traditional “grey” infrastructure. The majority of existing NbS projects do not include reliable financial performance data or cost-benefit analyses. Projects generally lack any financial investment figures. This weakens the case for NbS in financial planning and infrastructure investment decisions, despite evidence that NbS often provide multiple co-benefits and long-term cost savings. Developing standardized tools for valuing ecosystem services and incorporating outcome-based funding models is needed to better capture the full economic and environmental value of nature-based approaches.

Scaling up NbS will also require **stronger and more diversified financial support**. Currently, NbS remains predominantly small-scale and publicly funded: over 80% of projects cost less than € 10 million, and only 3% report more than half of their funding from private sources. There is the need for enhanced blended finance mechanisms—combining public grants with



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

concessional loans, guarantees, and performance-linked financing—to attract private capital and create sustainable investment pipelines.

Closely linked to the financial gap is the **fragmentation of local initiatives** and the lack of integration of local NbS projects into broader national or European or Mediterranean policy frameworks. Many community-level projects operate in isolation, without alignment to national climate adaptation plans or biodiversity targets. Also in this case vertical policy integration is needed and NbS should be systematically integrated into International-EU and Mediterranean legislation and national strategic frameworks. This would ensure coherence, increase impact, and improve funding access.

Lastly, the **need for meaningful stakeholder involvement and capacity building** should be emphasised. The success of nature-based interventions often depends on community engagement, cooperation among landowners, and participation from local institutions. Dedicated funding for early-stage stakeholder engagement, the provision of tailored technical assistance, and the promotion of co-creation models that ensure local relevance and long-term ownership are recommended.



3. Available legal and policy options and proposals for action and priorities for action

The health of nature is in alarming decline, including in the Mediterranean and Europe, with more than 80 per cent of habitats in poor condition (European Environment Agency, 2023).

The EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR), adopted in 2024, sets ambitious goals to reverse biodiversity loss, boost climate resilience and ensure long-term sustainability in Europe. To this end, Member States are expected to design their national nature restoration plans by September 2026.

To support this process, four projects - MERLIN, REST-COAST, SUPERB and WaterLANDS - have been funded under the Green Deal call of Horizon 2020, with the aim of providing evidence-based guidance, tested tools and other resources, as described in their recent report 'Supporting the development of national restoration plans', presented on 10 March 2025 at the European Commission in Brussels².

3.1 Main aspects on approaches and mechanisms to facilitate or impede the effective implementation of legal and policy instruments

Taking into account the previous analysis on the legal and policy instruments in force to protect the Mediterranean, a markedly vulnerable area to anthropogenic pressures and climate change, the present chapter considers the main aspects on approaches and mechanisms adopted that either facilitate or impede the effective implementation of conservation policies, including funding strategies for conservation efforts, especially within the context of Natura 2000 Network Sites.

It provides a synthesis of the strategies, challenges, and outcomes associated with the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity, offering insights into integrated and effective policy implementation at different levels, with a particular emphasis on the following questions.

- The actions and/or initiatives taken by the EU, its Member States, regions and local authorities to implement the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

In order to implement the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and respond to this commitment, the EU, its Member States, regions and local authorities have taken several actions and/or initiatives. These include the establishment and management of protected areas and marine coastal protected areas (MCPAs), including within the Natura 2000 network.

² European Commission: European Research Executive Agency, Hart, E. E., Sanchez-Arcilla, A., Richards, C., Bullock, C. et al., Supporting the development of national restoration plans – Insights from EU Green Deal projects – Report and resources, High-Level Workshop in Brussels on 10 March 2025, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2848/3694350>



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Another initiative is the adoption by the European Union of the Nature Restoration Law, which will be implemented through National Plans in the coming years.

- What is the status of the actions developed that contribute to the fulfilment of the 'Nature Restoration Law'.

Not much progress has been made in developing actions that contribute to the fulfilment of the 'Nature Restoration Law', a piece of legislation that was adopted shortly before the EU political priorities shifted towards economic growth and security, including military security, at the expense of environmental protection.

In this context, the Member States adopted guidelines for preparing the National Plan, identifying the areas to be included in nature restoration actions, the competent institutions and the bodies involved with their respective areas of expertise, as well as the funding to be allocated.

- What are the obstacles and mechanisms that facilitate the implementation of the policies under consideration.

The policy under consideration face obstacles like financial constraints, lack of sufficient monitoring systems, and the need for better integration of biodiversity into other sectors. However, mechanisms like the legislative framework of the Nature Restoration Law and specific restoration targets for various ecosystems; the obligations under the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols, particularly the transboundary cooperation mechanisms to protect the Mediterranean Sea, which include information sharing, coordinated response to emergencies like pollution incidents, and joint efforts to protect biodiversity and manage coastal zones; and the EU commitment to funding biodiversity initiatives can facilitate their implementation.

In detail, the main obstacles relate to the financial challenges of implementing large-scale restoration projects, which require significant financial resources. Some countries may therefore face budget limitations or prioritise other areas. Furthermore, many countries lack the advanced monitoring systems (e.g. GIS and remote sensing) required to effectively track progress and ensure compliance with international and EU obligations, as well as national laws. Successfully integrating biodiversity considerations into various sectors remains challenging. The spread of invasive alien species poses a major threat to biodiversity and can hinder restoration efforts, while climate change-induced habitat transformation and other impacts can further complicate matters.

On the other hand, the Nature Restoration Law provides facilitating mechanisms in the form of a clear legal framework with specific restoration targets for different ecosystems. This ensures a consistent approach across the EU and inspires other Mediterranean countries. It requires Member States to develop national restoration plans that outline specific measures to meet EU-level targets. Furthermore, it is important to mention the fundamental mechanisms for engaging stakeholders in the planning and implementation process, as well as the need for robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability. It is also crucial to invest in research and innovation to address knowledge gaps and develop solutions for biodiversity conservation and restoration. Transboundary cooperation mechanisms are also essential for protecting the Mediterranean Sea and include data and information sharing, a coordinated response to emergencies such as pollution incidents, and joint efforts to



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

protect biodiversity and manage coastal zones. The EU is also committed to mobilising financial resources for biodiversity, including aligning funding with the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the EU's long-term budget.

Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, Sustainable Development Goal 13, 'Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts' and Target 13.1, 'Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries', play a key role in the EU legal framework on this issue. This framework is primarily based on the 'European Climate Law' (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality). Together with the Paris Agreement³, they set out the main global goals relating to adaptation, adaptation planning and monitoring, and cooperation with developing countries. The EU Climate Law therefore requires the EU and Member States to ensure continuous progress in enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, with the ultimate goal of achieving a climate-resilient Europe by 2050. This involves adopting an EU adaptation strategy and an EU climate risk assessment, as well as requiring Member States to have a national adaptation strategy and a national adaptation plan and to report regularly on climate adaptation, based on the latest scientific data available (Articles 17 and 19).

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) Special Report 9/2022, 'Climate Spending in the 2014–2020 EU Budget', revealed that EU spending is not as high as reported, highlighting the potential for overestimation of climate-related spending (including adaptation). However, the pace of action to adapt to climate change in the EU is not keeping pace with the ambition set out in the EU's climate change strategy.

In 2023, the European Commission issued updated guidelines on national adaptation strategies and plans. Significant progress was made in the sub-objective of promoting nature-based solutions (NbS) for adaptation in EU law, guidelines and funding. According to the Commission, NbS are "solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience".

It should also be recalled that the EU Nature Restoration Law, aiming to restore degraded ecosystems, contributes to disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The main binding target at EU level is to put in place restoration measures to cover at least 20 % of the EU land and sea areas by 2030.

- Whether and in what terms environmental contracts (river contracts, lagoon contracts, wetlands, etc.) make a concrete contribution to conservation.

Environmental contracts contribute to conservation facilitating dialogue and collaboration between diverse stakeholders, including public authorities, local communities, businesses, and

³ The Paris Agreement was adopted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change-UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015, reaching a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future. Building upon the UNFCCC, it is the first agreement to bring all nations together in a common cause to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, providing enhanced support to assist developing countries in doing so.



non-governmental organizations, to help establish a common understanding of environmental issues and share vision and objectives.

Examples of environmental contracts include **river contracts**, which aim to manage river basins in an integrated way, addressing issues such as water quality, flood control, and habitat restoration; **coastal contracts**, which address the unique challenges of coastal ecosystems, including coastal erosion, water quality, and biodiversity conservation; **and lagoon and wetland contracts**, which aim to protect and restore lagoons and wetlands, recognising their vital role in biodiversity conservation, water quality, flood control and climate change mitigation.

By involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, these contracts ensure that solutions are tailored to local contexts and address the specific needs and concerns of the community.

They offer concrete conservation actions, often including provisions for restoring degraded ecosystems; addressing sea/water pollution by promoting sustainable land and sea management practices, wastewater treatment, and other measures; prioritizing the protection of vulnerable species and habitats, including measures to control invasive species and promote ecological connectivity; encouraging sustainable resource management (such as responsible fishing and tourism practices that minimise environmental impact), and facilitating the building of resilience to climate change by promoting coastal resilience, water conservation, flood control, and other measures. The process of developing and implementing environmental contracts often involves educational and awareness-raising campaigns to inform the public about the importance of environmental protection and to involve local communities and thus fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the environment.

Environmental contracts require sustained commitment from all stakeholders to ensure their long-term success. Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential to track progress, identify challenges, and adapt strategies as needed. Any potential conflicts of interest should be addressed in the process of reaching the agreement to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, environmental contracts offer a valuable framework for collaborative and participatory approaches to conservation, fostering a shared vision and enabling the implementation of concrete actions for the protection and restoration of valuable ecosystems.

Summary, environmental contracts encourage dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders to establish shared understandings and objectives, involving them in decision making to ensure solutions that meet local needs. These concrete contracts include restoring ecosystems, addressing pollution, protecting species and their habitats and promoting sustainable resource management. Developing and implementing environmental contracts often involves educational campaigns.

Environmental contracts require sustained commitment from all stakeholders to ensure long term success. Regular monitoring



and evaluation are essential to track progress and address conflicts of interest.

Table 3. Summary

- **Which conservation funding mechanisms are most effective at the Mediterranean level.**

In order to support nature-positive outcomes, reforms are needed to redirect financial flows and reshape the economy. This requires a focus on integrating nature into economic and financial decision-making processes and their implementation, establishing the role of the finance sector in driving climate action and facilitating a just energy transition. To achieve this, it must address nature loss alongside climate change as the two are linked. This is crucial for achieving the Global Biodiversity Framework and building countries resilience against the economic and social impacts of nature loss, such as floods, diseases, food price fluctuations, and supply chain disruptions.

Effective nature conservation funding mechanisms in the Mediterranean include trust funds for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), such as MedFund, as well as innovative financing tools, including carbon credits and public-private partnerships. Strengthening political will, promoting synergies among stakeholders and ensuring long-term financial sustainability are also crucial.

MedFund, for example, is a trust fund dedicated to the sustainable financing of MPAs in the Mediterranean. Initiated by France, Monaco and Tunisia, it is a partnership between several Mediterranean states and environmental organisations that innovatively funds and mobilises the long-term management of MPAs. It supports the implementation of international agreements such as the Barcelona Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

The environmental fund uses a financing mechanism that reliably and consistently generates capital, which is then invested in MPAs.

Collaboration between public institutions, private companies and non-governmental organisations can leverage diverse resources and expertise for conservation projects. Developing long-term financial strategies that integrate various funding mechanisms is crucial for the success of conservation efforts in the Mediterranean.

Investing in Nature-based Solutions such as adapting forests to climate change, social forestry and protecting coastal vegetation can provide environmental and economic benefits.

In particular, with reference to **Natura 2000 Network Sites**:

- **Whether and what legal difficulties are hampering the effectiveness of conservation instruments (financing, definition and implementation of management plans, verification and monitoring, surveillance, etc.).**

Legal and practical challenges significantly hinder the effectiveness of conservation efforts within the Natura 2000 network. These challenges include insufficient funding, inadequate management plans, and difficulties in monitoring and surveillance, all of which impact the



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

network's overall success in protecting biodiversity. Specific legal and implementation issues include:

- **Financing.** A significant gap exists between the funding needed for effective management and what is currently available. Member States often struggle to secure adequate financial resources for planning, implementation, and monitoring of conservation measures within Natura 2000 sites.

- **Management Plans.** While the designation of Natura 2000 sites is largely complete for land sites with recent improvements in the marine environment, the development and implementation of effective management plans for these sites remains a challenge. Many sites lack comprehensive, site-specific management plans, and even when plans exist, their implementation can be hampered by a lack of coordination between the different competent public institutions, institutions and stakeholders and with other bordering or overlapping protected areas.

- **Coordination and Enforcement.** Horizontal and vertical coordination between different national, regional and local institutions (environmental, fishing, spatial planning, etc.) and with local stakeholders is crucial for successful Natura 2000 implementation. However, weaknesses in coordination can lead to fragmented approaches, overlapping responsibilities, and difficulties in enforcing conservation measures.

- **Integration with Spatial Planning.** Integrating Natura 2000 objectives into spatial planning policies remains a challenge, with potential conflicts between conservation goals and development pressures. This requires a more proactive approach to integrating Natura 2000 considerations into land-use planning and decision-making processes.

- **Monitoring and Surveillance.** The lack of robust and coordinated monitoring and surveillance systems hinders the ability to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures and adapt management strategies accordingly. Limited resources and capacity often result in insufficient data collection and analysis, making it difficult to track the status of habitats and species and to identify areas requiring urgent attention.

To improve the effectiveness of Natura 2000, several actions are needed:

- **Increase funding.** Adequate financial resources are essential for developing and implementing management plans, conducting monitoring and surveillance, and ensuring effective enforcement.

- **Strengthen management planning.** Management plans, in addition to having to be adopted and implemented, should be site-specific, comprehensive and regularly updated, with clear conservation objectives and actions, in coordination with the management plans of neighbouring and bordering and/or overlapping protected areas, inclusive and consistent with the objectives of other related strategies and policies (MSFD, Climate Change, Renewable Energy, ect.).

- **Improve monitoring and surveillance.** Robust and coordinated monitoring systems are needed to track the status of habitats and species and assess the effectiveness of conservation measures.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Enhance coordination. Improved horizontal and vertical integration and coordination between different institutions and between them and stakeholders is fundamental for ensuring a coherent and effective approach to Natura 2000 implementation. It involves streamlining processes, enhancing communication, and fostering collaboration between different levels of an organization (vertical) and between different organizations (horizontal).

Integrate Natura 2000 into spatial planning. Natura 2000 objectives should be integrated into spatial planning policies to ensure that development activities are compatible with conservation goals.

By addressing these legal and practical challenges, the Natura 2000 network can better fulfill its potential to protect Europe's biodiversity.

- What actions and/or initiatives have EU Member States and Regions adopted to define and implement conservation and restoration objectives and measures, also with a view to achieving the targets imposed by the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and to overcome any clashes with the achievement of targets imposed by other strategies, such as the Renewable Energy Strategy.

Within the EU legal framework for conservation and restoration, Member States and Regions are actively implementing actions also to meet the targets set by the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and other related strategies like the Renewable Energy Strategy. However, the specific actions and their effectiveness vary across Member states. A variety of factors influence the specific actions taken, the pace at which implementation occurs, and the subsequent results achieved, and these factors are contingent on national and regional contexts.

These actions focus on protecting and restoring ecosystems, with a particular emphasis on achieving specific targets by 2030 and 2050.

The actions are aligned with the strategy goals of putting Europe biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030, with benefits for people, climate, and the planet. These activities are strictly related to broader strategies. In fact, the Nature Restoration Law is integral to the European Green Deal.

It should be recalled that the targets imposed by the European Biodiversity Strategy to be delivered by 2030 include specific commitments and actions 1) to protect nature, establishing a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea and enlarging existing Natura 2000 areas; 2) to reverse the degradation of ecosystems launching and thus adopting the Nature Restoration Law with binding restoration targets for specific habitats and species; 3) to build resilience to future threats such as the impacts of climate change. The restoration efforts are designed to work in conjunction with the development of renewable energy, ensuring a sustainable transition within the Renewable Energy Strategy. This is closely linked to biodiversity conservation, as it aims to promote sustainable energy sources that reduce reliance on fossil fuels and their associated environmental impacts.

- Which strategies have been adopted by Countries to favour the establishment and designation of management bodies adequately structured to manage the Natura 2000



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Network and for the definition and implementation of reference management models that are adequate and respond to the actual needs of the territories.

To effectively manage the Natura 2000 network, Member states have adopted strategies focused on establishing robust management bodies, developing tailored management models, and ensuring adequate and sustainable funding and stakeholder engagement. This includes creating specific management plans, integrating Natura 2000 into sectoral legislation, and fostering collaboration between different levels of governance and stakeholders.

Concerning the strategies for establishing and designating management bodies, many Member states have delegated the responsibility for managing Natura 2000 sites to regional authorities (e.g. Italy) and thus to the management bodies of overlapping and/or bordering protected areas.

Developing national or regional financing plans and programs with clear objectives, priorities, and measures became crucial.

To secure adequate management, Member States adopt **Prioritized Action Frameworks (PAFs)** - a strategic, multi-annual planning tool used to identify and prioritize actions needed to manage the Natura 2000 network and its associated green infrastructure across the EU.

With regard to the essential transboundary aspects of marine Natura 2000 sites, it is fundamental to encourage cooperation between Member states as well as non-Member states for the management of the transboundary sites and components. The European Commission supports the implementation of marine Natura 2000 through expert groups that facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Natura 2000 governance should be improved efficiently and effectively through better coordination and communication between different levels and stakeholders.

In addition to developing management plans for each site, outlining specific conservation measures identifying and prioritizing actions based on site-specific needs and objectives, and adopting flexible and adaptive management approaches that can respond to changing ecological conditions and new scientific information, the Natura 2000 management needs to be integrated into broader governance structures, including spatial planning, water management, climate change and other sectoral policies. In this management process, various stakeholders, including landowners, local communities, and businesses should be actively involved. Also, for the marine and coastal sites, should be established robust and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the effectiveness of management measures and make necessary adjustments.

In order to ensure the effective management of sites, it is essential to organise both regular public awareness campaigns on the importance of Natura 2000 and the role of local communities in its management, as well as training and support activities for those involved in Natura 2000 management to improve their skills and knowledge.

- What governance and coordination tools have been adopted between the various regional level bodies to appropriately address biodiversity-related aspects in a coordinated and systemic manner.



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

To effectively address biodiversity-related issues in a coordinated and systemic manner, there are not many examples of governance and coordination tools being adopted between the various regional level bodies. Among these we can mention and still take into account the following: joint work programs, to align policy development and implementation; memorandums of understanding and memorandums of cooperation, formal agreements to outline collaborative actions and responsibilities between different bodies, ensuring a coordinated approach to addressing specific biodiversity-related issues; thematic expert groups, from various organizations and professional areas, to focus on specific themes (e.g., marine protected areas, invasive species) and facilitate focused collaboration and knowledge sharing; standardized reporting mechanisms and monitoring systems to comparably monitor progress, identify areas in need of attention and ensure accountability between different regional bodies; National Biodiversity Monitoring Systems (NBMSs), established to generate long-term data sets that underpin analysis of biodiversity trends; capacity building activities and project activities usually financed by third parties (EU, such as Interreg as part of its cohesion policy; Barcelona Convention, such as Coastal Area Management Programme-CAMP projects, oriented at the implementation of practical coastal management pilot projects in selected Mediterranean coastal areas; etc.).

In this context, a special mention should be given to the Environmental Assessments (EIA/SEA) conducted for projects and plans with potential biodiversity impacts, considering both on-site and off-site effects, ensuring that biodiversity considerations are integrated into decision-making processes, thereby facilitating the effective management of biodiversity in the context of development.

These tools are designed to promote collaboration, facilitate information sharing, and encourage joint action across different regional entities and their respective obligations.

- Considering that Natura 2000 is an extensive and heterogeneous network, both in terms of ecosystem types, which within the same region vary between mountain, forest, river, wetland, transition, coastal and marine environments; and in terms of the availability and ownership regime of the same areas (public-domestic, military sites, private areas, just to mention a few examples), **which management models have proved effective or can be developed for the implementation of biodiversity conservation policies.**

The Natura 2000 network is a coordinated system of protected areas on land and at sea under EU law. Member States designate sites under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC, now 2009/147/EC) and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). These include Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCIs), which are then designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The network aim is to protect the EU native species and their habitats, ensuring their long-term sustainability.

While improvements have been made to the marine environment, further efforts are required to adequately protect marine habitats and species.

Natura 2000 fulfils the obligations of EU Member States as Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, as well as to the



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Pan-European Emerald Network. The two networks are combined using the same methodology and information tools.

Furthermore, Natura 2000 makes a significant contribution to achieving the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. Target 1 of the Strategy calls for a significant improvement in the conservation status of species and habitats protected under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Completing the Natura 2000 network and ensuring effective management are essential to address this.

The Directives require the Member States to report on the conservation status of habitats and species, as well as on the compensation measures implemented for projects that have a negative impact on Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6 is a key part of the Habitats Directive. Paragraphs 6(1) and 6(2) require Member States to protect and restore habitats and species within the Natura 2000 network. This involves avoiding activities that could disturb or damage these species or their habitats.

Paragraphs 6(3) and 6(4) outline the procedure for planning new developments that could affect a Natura 2000 site. An 'appropriate assessment' must be carried out for any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site.

Article 10 calls for Member States to enhance the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, encouraging the management of landscapes that are of significant importance to wild fauna and flora through land use planning and development policies.

Effective management of the Natura 2000 network, given its diversity, requires tailored, integrated multi-approach, considering not only biodiversity conservation but also other societal objectives, such as sustainable fishing, tourism, and recreation. These include incorporating various management models, such as:

- **Collaborative management**, involving diverse stakeholders, given the varied ownership and land uses within and around Natura 2000 sites, adopting building trust **mechanisms** between stakeholders and ensuring that all parties have a voice in decision-making.

- **Adaptive management strategies**, that respond to changing ecological conditions, as Natura 2000 sites face diverse pressures, including climate change, land-use changes, and invasive species; connectivity-focused planning that links protected areas, including the so-called "ecological corridors", part of the Natura 2000 network, territories (such as natural features like rivers or beaches, or created through land management practices) that connect areas that are separate from each other but similar in function, facilitating the movement and migration of animal and plant species, essential for maintaining connectivity between habitats and ensuring the long-term survival of biodiversity; landscape scale planning, as connectivity should be considered at a broader landscape level, integrating Natura 2000 sites with surrounding areas to create a more resilient network (e.g. restoration of pre-dune and dune areas along coastal zones to improve connectivity between habitats and marine-coastal species). Additionally, structured regular monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity, habitat quality, and management effectiveness are essential to assess the validity of chosen models and adapt them as needed, based on reliable and constantly updated monitoring data.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Funding availability, stakeholder awareness and cooperation are the main factors affecting implementation, as is knowledge availability and ineffective integration with other policies. It is clear that explicit, well-defined, time-bound targets are needed. These must be accompanied by effective enabling measures, including planning, monitoring, reporting and funding.

A more detailed exposition of the subject is provided in Chapter 4, which is dedicated to the territorial focus.



4. Territorial focus

The present Study has chosen the Mediterranean marine-coastal area as the geographic scope of analysis, with four specific focuses: **two at the national level**, with **Montenegro** as the project partner and **Morocco** as a representative country on the southern basin; and **two at the regional level**, with **Sardinia** for Italy and **Crete** for Greece, as examples of large islands from the two project partners.

To share objectives and jointly identify the policy and regulatory instruments that are the subject of the analysis, which aims to develop a focus on environmental legislation, in depth interviews throughout online meetings were held with institutional representatives from the aforementioned countries and regions. This was followed by email communication and the exchange of documents and information.

Previous information was exchanged to better understand what would be most appropriate to highlight in their legislation, experience and best practice for the Study.

The analysis focuses on the following three interconnected main points, which were discussed and agreed upon:

- a) Protected natural areas, particularly marine and coastal areas, which are established in accordance with national legislation and included in the nature protection network, as well as their management plans;
- b) Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), in terms of its principles and objectives as envisaged and applied in practice, particularly in cases referred to in (a); and
- c) Climate change policies, particularly with regard to ecosystem services, and therefore the importance of protecting biodiversity and restoring nature, as well as energy policies.

The final objective is to analyse the legislation on these focus areas, highlighting its positive points and good practices, as well as its critical points and the obstacles to implementing the relevant legislation and policies. This will serve as a valid basis for comparison with other Mediterranean countries when developing new shared approaches.

The three main topics mentioned above were discussed during the meetings. Together with the supporting documentation, they formed the following framework.

4.1 Sardinia (Italy)

Within the three mentioned interconnected main points, this territorial focus has been developed around four specific key topics identified together with the Autonomous Region of Sardinia, representing areas of interest for possible improvement of governance and legislative tools and their implementation.

The topics are:

- Management of protected areas
- Tools for sustainable management of territories: the River and Coastal Contracts
- Relation between Protected Natural Areas and Climate Change Policies
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

During the interviews, it was taken into account that **Art. 9 of the Italian Constitution**, as amended in 2022, includes provisions related to the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and ecosystems. Specifically, it states that the Republic "*safeguards the natural beauties and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation. It shall safeguard the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, also in the interest of future generations*". This amendment, introduced in 2022, elevates environmental protection, including biodiversity, to a fundamental principle of the Italian Republic. However, it was noted that the current legislation is not sufficient and further implementing measures are therefore expected.

Sardinia's Environmental Planning: Integrating Climate and Biodiversity

Sardinia's environmental planning framework is built upon several key documents, with a strong emphasis on integrating **climate change adaptation** and **biodiversity conservation**.

The **Regional Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation (SRACC)**, updated in 2024, provides the core framework for addressing climate impacts. It includes detailed climate profiles and outlines adaptation methodologies applicable across various sectors.

Overarching the SRACC is the **Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development Sardegna2030 (RSSD)**. This strategy localizes the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, setting clear objectives and actions for a sustainable pathway. It explicitly incorporates **energy transition, decarbonization, biodiversity protection, and the strengthening of ecosystem resilience**. Sardegna2030 considers climate change adaptation a fundamental, cross-cutting principle, integrating it into multi-level planning, surveillance, impact management, and capacity building.

The RSSD positions **biodiversity conservation** as an integral part of its vision for a sustainable future. It recognizes the intrinsic link between biodiversity, environmental health, ecosystem services, and the region's overall well-being. The Strategy explicitly states that its Strategic Regional Goals are rooted in **environmental protection**, alongside social well-being, inclusion, prosperity, and economic equity. Biodiversity conservation is a fundamental component of this environmental protection pillar.

Furthermore, the strategic theme "**A Greener Sardinia**" is a key focus within the RSSD. This theme emphasizes:

- The **conservation, management, and enhancement of natural resources and land**, directly implying the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- An **ecological and resilient transition** in response to climate change, acknowledging biodiversity's crucial role in fostering ecosystem resilience and facilitating climate adaptation.

The RSSD adheres to the sustainable development methodology of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By aligning with SDGs such as **SDG 14 ("Life Below Water")** and **SDG 15 ("Life on Land")**, the Sardegna2030 strategy inherently includes comprehensive biodiversity targets.

At a more detailed planning level, several crucial documents guide territorial and sectoral management. These include:



- The **Regional Landscape Plan (RLP)**, which guides territorial governance with a focus on preserving and enhancing Sardinia's unique landscape.
- The **Hydrogeological Structure Plan (Piano stralcio di bacino per l'assetto idrogeologico PAI)**
- **Piano di Assetto Idrigeologico PAI**, which addresses comprehensive water management and hydrogeological risks.
- **Flood Risk Management Plan (Piano di Gestione Rischio Alluvioni - PGRA)**, aiming at reducing negative impacts of floods on human health, the environment and on society. **Piano di Gestione Rischio Alluvioni (PGRA)**, finalizzato alla riduzione delle conseguenze negative sulla salute umana, sull'ambiente e sulla società derivanti dalle alluvioni.
- Sector-specific plans like the **Regional Plan of the Tourist Port Network** (currently under Strategic Environmental Assessment - SEA) and the **Water Protection Plan**.
- **Regional Environmental Forestry Plan (Piano Forestale Ambientale Regionale - PFAR)**, a framework policy tool aimed at planning, programming and managing regional forestry and agroforestry land in order to pursue the objectives of environmental protection and sustainable development of Sardinia's rural economy.
- **The Regional Environmental Energy Plan (Piano Energetico Ambientale Regionale - PEARS)** is a tool through which the Regional Administration pursues energy, socio-economic and environmental objectives for 2020, starting from an analysis of the energy system and the reconstruction of the Regional Energy Balance (BER).

While these plans are highly relevant for climate considerations, the full integration of climate adaptation remains in development, with dedicated working groups actively engaged in this process. Coastal planning currently lacks a formal, comprehensive plan, relying instead on the **Coastal Action Programme (Piano di Azione Costiera - PAC)** (2013) as a descriptive tool to identify critical coastal stretches for defense interventions.

A vital component for biodiversity protection is the **Priority Action Framework (PAF)** for the Natura 2000 Network. This strategic document identifies conservation priorities and estimated financial needs for Sardinia's extensive Natura 2000 sites. The PAF is crucial for directing EU funding towards specific conservation measures, including those related to climate change adaptation. Its effective integration with the broader RSSD and other sectoral plans is essential to ensure comprehensive and coordinated environmental management across the region.

Moreover, in the context of the Italian Red Lists⁴, a specific focus has been placed on freshwater fish, amphibians, reptiles, nesting birds, mammals, cartilaginous fish, corals, certain groups of insects, and flora (<http://www.iucn.it>). This notable list includes the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*), the Noble Pen Shell (*Pinna nobilis*), the European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*), and the Atlantic Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), among other species.

For a considerable number of these species, specific protection regulations have been formulated and adopted at both national and regional levels.

Protected areas

⁴ See: <https://www.iucn.it/liste-rosse-italiane.php>



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The Natura 2000 Network is the main tool of the European Union for the conservation of biodiversity. Established under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (now 2009/147/EC), it forms a coherent European ecological network composed of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Its goal is to ensure, when necessary, through restoration actions, the maintenance of a favourable conservation status for natural habitats and protected species across European territories. In Sardinia, the network includes a total of 128 sites, comprising 89 SACs, 8 Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) awaiting designation, and 31 SPAs, some of which overlap with the SACs/SCIs.

The marine and coastal component of the Natura 2000 network is particularly significant in Sardinia, with 78 sites located in marine or marine-coastal areas. These are integrated with other protection instruments, such as 7 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and 2 National Parks. The network covers a substantial portion of the island's coastline: out of 2,461 km of total coastline, 1,432 km are included in Natura 2000 sites, while the marine areas involved cover more than 4,365 km², within Sardinia's 22,494 km² of territorial waters.

Despite the scale and importance of the network, there are some management challenges. Currently, only 33 sites have a designated management body. For the remaining sites, new opportunities will be made available through upcoming calls. A positive example is the site overlapping with the future Capo Spartivento MPA, which will be managed by the same MPA under a Ministerial Decree. However, management becomes more complex in sites that are exclusively marine and not overlapping with MPAs or National Parks, or in those that are very large and involve multiple municipalities, leading to fragmented governance responsibilities.

Effective protection of Natura 2000 sites relies on key tools, such as Management Plans and Conservation Measures, particularly for priority habitats, which are at risk of disappearing and for which the European Union holds specific responsibility. Notable examples include *Posidonia oceanica* meadows (code 1120)* and *coastal lagoons (code 1150)**; marine environments of great ecological value. Special attention must also be given to dune habitats, which are among the most vulnerable to human pressures such as unsustainable tourism, incompatible infrastructure, and the spread of invasive alien species.

It is also important to note that Natura 2000 areas are not strict nature reserves. Instead, they are spaces where nature conservation is reconciled with traditional human activities, valuing the historical interaction between people and nature. However, increasing anthropogenic pressures threaten this balance. It is therefore essential to carry out periodic assessments of pressures and conservation status, and to define appropriate conservation and restoration measures when needed.

Finally, climate change presents a cross-cutting challenge: habitat alteration due to rising temperatures and sea level, the spread of pathogens and invasive species, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss are all growing threats. In this context, the need for adaptation strategies becomes stronger, focusing on the protection and restoration of ecosystems. These may include targeted restoration of degraded habitats and actions that enhance ecosystem resilience, such as the renaturalization of wetlands and the implementation of Nature-based Solutions (NbS).

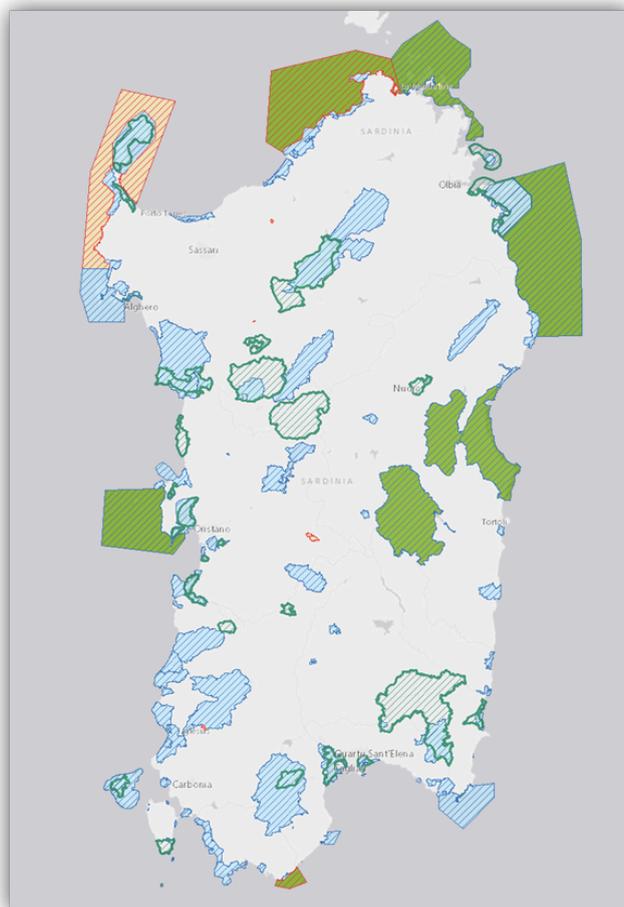


Figure 2. Natura 2000 network in Sardinia



Figure 3. Marine and coastal Natura 2000 sites in Sardinia



Figure 4. Habitat 1120* *Posidonia oceanica* meadows



Figure 5. Habitat 1150* Coastal lagoons

For this topic, the analysis highlighted the **interconnection among three thematic areas**: the protection of natural areas, particularly marine-coastal zones included in the Natura 2000 network; integrated coastal zone management (ICZM); and policies related to climate change, especially those concerning biodiversity, ecosystem services, ecosystem restoration, and energy transition. These themes are examined through the lens of their regulatory frameworks and implementation challenges, including legal gaps, enforcement limitations, and the role of derogations.

A significant example is the Tyrrhenian Link – West cable project by Terna. This infrastructure, although located near a Natura 2000 site and overlapping with habitats of EU interest such as *Posidonia oceanica*, was not subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under Italian legislation due to its technical specifications. However, the project did undergo Appropriate Assessment (ViNCA), which concluded that, with appropriate mitigation measures, it would not have significant environmental impacts. Despite this, fragmentation between institutional responsibilities emerged, with different services managing protected area planning and environmental assessments separately. This reflects a broader organizational weakness in coordinating conservation efforts across different administrative levels.

The legal framework for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive does not impose a general obligation for public consultation, unlike the EIA and SEA Directives. Nevertheless, European case law affirms that public access to environmental information, participation in decision-making, and access to justice must be guaranteed, including in the context of ViNCA procedures. The Aarhus Convention, as integrated into EU law, reinforces this requirement, making it possible to legally challenge the adequacy of environmental evaluations.

Further legal gaps are evident **in the fields of port planning and urban development, where the protection of natural areas is not always systematically integrated.** Nature-based Solutions (NbS), such as green infrastructure to support climate resilience, have started to gain recognition in project funding criteria, even in small-scale interventions.



Management plans for Natura 2000 sites are also uneven. While some incorporate participatory processes, others do not. One critical barrier remains the **limited availability of dedicated financial resources**. European funds cover only a small portion of the actual needs, and public budgets are often insufficient. Additionally, the system's reactive, **emergency-driven approach compromises long-term strategic planning**. For instance, the rapid preparation of project proposals under the EU Nature Restoration Law revealed misalignments between the scale of planning and the funds effectively available.

However, some positive practices emerge where Natura 2000 sites fall within established protected areas. In such cases, clearer regulations, monitoring systems, and management authorities contribute to better implementation. Legal instruments regulating the establishment, perimeter, and activities within these areas strengthen enforcement capacity. Still, complications arise when Natura 2000 sites extend beyond the boundaries of those areas and lack specific regional acts assigning management responsibilities. This institutional void creates uncertainty and limits the effective conservation of habitats.

To address this, regions have begun identifying suitable **managing authorities** and formalizing their roles through agreements or delegations. This model avoids creating new entities and helps streamline responsibilities, provided sufficient financial and technical resources are allocated. In Sardinia, for example, regional legislation has enabled municipalities, MPAs, and parks to take on Natura 2000 site management, backed by specific funding mechanisms and detailed criteria.

The division of responsibilities in environmental assessments is also regulated. For projects of provincial or municipal relevance, Impact Assessment or Appropriate Assessment (ViNCa - Valutazione di Incidenza Ambientale) procedures are entrusted to provinces and protected area managers. However, where Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures apply, competence remains at the regional level.

The ICZM theme also ties into coastal erosion and the management of marine habitats such as Posidonia beds. These areas are increasingly addressed through integrated planning approaches, often linked to climate adaptation goals. Nature-Based Solutions have become an important dimension in calls for proposals, supporting green and blue infrastructure.

Territorial contracts, such as river and coastal agreements, are another instrument being used to promote strategic, participatory environmental planning. Although voluntary, these contracts offer flexible tools that support wetland protection and ecosystem restoration, and their implementation is tracked through regional networks.

Lastly, new funding opportunities are emerging under regional and EU programs to support these initiatives, with emphasis on participatory planning, resilience-building, and ecosystem-based approaches. Despite promising developments, the effectiveness of these policies ultimately depends on overcoming institutional fragmentation, ensuring long-term financing, and strengthening coordination across all levels of governance.

In synthesis:

- **Three interconnected thematic areas.** Protection of natural areas (especially marine-coastal zones), integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), and climate policies related to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and the energy transition.



- **Governance challenges.** Institutional fragmentation between entities responsible for protected area planning and those in charge of environmental assessments, with a lack of internal coordination.
- **Appropriate Assessment (ViNca).** A tool applied to Natura 2000 sites, often without mandatory public consultation, despite European law requiring public participation and access to environmental justice. Unlike the requirements for Environmental Assessments, SEA and EIA, the “Habitats” Directive does not establish a general obligation to obtain the opinion of the public for the Appropriate Assessment, but instead refers to a “case-by-case” evaluation. However, in applying this provision, it is necessary to take into account the interpretation provided by the European Court of Justice, which refers to the Aarhus Convention as an instrument that forms an integral part of the EU legal system.
- **Regulatory gaps and sectoral planning.** Protected areas are often excluded from port and urban planning processes. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are emerging as innovative tools to integrate environmental protection into spatial planning.
- **Structural underfunding.** Available financial resources are significantly below actual needs. European funds cover only a small portion of the requirements for conservation and restoration.
- **Good practices in Natura 2000 site management.** More effective outcomes are observed where sites fall within protected areas managed by active authorities with clear regulations and strong monitoring capacity.
- **Delegation and co-management models.** Entrusting management to local authorities or existing territorial entities through formal agreements and funding contracts avoids the creation of new bodies and enhances the implementation of conservation measures.
- **Vigilanza e regime sanzionatorio carenti.** All'interno della rete ecologica regionale, serve rafforzare il sistema di vigilanza e definire norme chiare e cogenti, che permettano la contestazione del reato (es. divieti) e, prevedere un coerente regime sanzionatorio.

River and Coastal Contracts

River and Coastal Contracts have emerged as strategic voluntary tools to support the planning and management of specific areas, particularly marine-coastal protected zones and wetlands. These agreements address local environmental and socio-economic challenges that existing regulatory frameworks alone often fail to resolve.

The agreements are based on participatory processes involving public and private stakeholders and aim to achieve goals related to water resource management, landscape and environmental protection, hydrogeological risk prevention, and the promotion of local development. Their rationale often stems from the need to respond to specific territorial issues linked to EU directives on Water, Floods, Habitats, and Climate Change. These contracts allow for the integration of structural interventions (e.g., infrastructure) and non-structural measures (e.g., education, awareness, and participatory governance).

River Contracts, as formalized in Italian environmental legislation (Legislative Decree 152/2006, Article 68-bis), support the development of district and sub-district basin planning and promote coordinated territorial development. They encourage the local territory to act as a steward and guardian of its own resources, fostering co-responsibility among institutions, communities, and citizens.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Several examples illustrate both the potential and the challenges of these agreements. In some cases, the preparation of River or Coastal Contracts included detailed territorial analyses, participatory processes, and support from universities or non-profit associations. These initiatives often integrated environmental education activities and coordination with entities managing water or energy infrastructure. However, political instability, lack of long-term administrative continuity, and insufficient internal capacities within municipalities have frequently disrupted these processes.

While guidelines and training efforts have been developed to support contract implementation, especially through regional-university collaborations, the lack of stable technical structures within local administrations remains a critical weakness. The externalization of contract preparation and management, in the absence of internalized competencies, has often led to interruptions or delays. Contracts that have reached the signing phase have sometimes struggled to implement planned actions due to a lack of dedicated technical coordination and financing.

At the national level, coordination structures such as the National Observatory on River Contracts have played an important role in promoting best practices and interregional cooperation. Though currently inactive due to funding cuts, the National Table of River Contracts (TNCdF) continues to operate, facilitating dialogue and proposing improvements to governance frameworks.

Future perspectives point to the need for stronger institutional support, more stable technical structures, and improved integration with existing funding mechanisms. Formal mechanisms for the establishment and long-term financing of technical secretariats are considered essential for sustaining contract implementation. There is also a growing recognition of the value of aligning River and Coastal Contracts with national restoration objectives, particularly those under the EU Nature Restoration Law (Regulation 2024/1991).

Opportunities exist to enhance citizen involvement, particularly in the management of public goods, urban green areas, and ecological restoration of impermeable surfaces. These contracts represent a "win-win" governance model, where public authorities ensure compliance and private stakeholders benefit through active territorial stewardship.

The establishment of regional networks, training agreements with universities, and shared guidelines have laid the groundwork for broader adoption. However, the success of River and Coastal Contracts continues to depend on local commitment, adequate financial resources, and stronger interinstitutional coordination. A regional strategy that enhances technical support, strengthens interdepartmental dialogue, and fosters continuous interaction with municipalities remains fundamental to ensuring the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of these voluntary planning tools.

In synthesis:



- **Voluntary and strategic tools:** River and Coastal Contracts serve as planning and management instruments to address critical environmental and socio-economic challenges not fully covered by existing legislation.
- **Participatory processes:** Based on the involvement of public and private stakeholders, they promote shared management of water resources, landscapes, and local development.
- **Legislative and territorial support:** Anchored in Italian environmental law, they encourage integrated planning at the basin level and empower local communities to act as stewards of their territories.
- **Recurring challenges:** Political instability, lack of stable technical bodies, and limited in-house expertise within municipalities hinder contract continuity and implementation.
- **Future prospects and recommendations:** Long-term technical secretariats, stronger links to existing funding mechanisms, and alignment with the EU Nature Restoration Law are essential for sustainability.
- **Win-win governance model:** Public institutions ensure oversight and compliance, while private actors gain benefits through active stewardship and care of local ecosystems.

Protected Natural Areas and Climate Change Policies

This part of the analysis highlighted the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) within the RAS ecological network; the current role and competences of the Coastal Conservation Agency (Conservatoria delle Coste); and the application of climate change (CC) policies across the network.

There appears to be no formal linkage at the regional level between the Natura 2000 network, ICZM, and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). The RAS Nature Protection and Forestry Policies Service (TNPF), specifically the Regional Ecological Network (RER) unit, is rarely involved in ICZM or MSP processes. This indicates **a lack of communication and coordination among regional structures and agencies**. As a result, RN2000 and ICZM remain largely disconnected.

The Coastal Conservation Agency of Sardinia was established by Regional Law no. 2 of 29 May 2007, to safeguard and enhance coastal ecosystems and promote integrated coastal management. However, following the agency's placement under temporary administration, only the Executive Director's position remains filled; all other posts, including those on the Scientific Committee, are vacant. Consequently, the agency currently lacks an operational technical structure and its role is effectively inactive.

Climate change is formally addressed within RN2000 in connection with national strategy. Italy National Adaptation Strategy (SNAC, 2015) outlines measures to be implemented through sectoral action plans. Climate change considerations appear in funding calls encouraging actions focused on mitigation, adaptation, and increasing territorial resilience. Scientific analysis of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under RN2000 allows for some assessment of climate-related pressures, such as the spread of invasive species, which may be exacerbated by climate trends. In 2019, as previously outlined in the report which was subsequently updated in 2024; among the adaptation objectives, particular attention was given to Nature-Based Solutions (NbS).



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

However, the RN2000 database should be further integrated with climate data. Changes in ecosystems, such as shifts from grassland to shrubland or Mediterranean maquis following wildfires, may be linked to climate change. Nevertheless, causal connections are complex, multifactorial, and insufficiently studied. In wetland areas, habitat consistency has not significantly changed, but pollution—primarily from agriculture—remains a key pressure. Human disturbance continues to be the main threat to bird nesting sites, with examples like the Molentargius lagoon showing adaptation to urban-natural hybrid systems, while disturbances from unusual presence tend to drive species away.

Currently available data do not easily support clear links to climate change impacts; observed pressures are more often linked to land use, construction, and infrastructure. **Monitoring protocols and RN2000 standard forms offer limited flexibility, constraining the ability to assess CC-related impacts effectively.** Additionally, **RN2000 rules do not allow consideration of external areas that may impact protected sites, limiting actions supported by funding instruments like the European Regional Development Fund.**

These constraints reflect RN2000's systemic limitations and the need for a broader, integrated approach. While RN2000 implementation spaces still exist, action is increasingly confined to predefined measures, reducing the potential for tailored climate adaptation actions. This lack of integration is also due to the absence of a coherent set of coordinated measures across the RN2000 strategy and climate policy frameworks.

Scientific research in this context is often narrow, sector-specific, and highly dependent on limited project-based funding. Broader, applied research is lacking, although EU programmes such as INTERREG and LIFE provide valuable opportunities for deeper analysis and knowledge exchange. To date, climate variables are not considered in the identification of new protected areas, though Sardinia has initiated a process to include these factors in the designation of new regional parks.

The Region, based on a participative process, is drafting a law to revise Regional Law no. 31 of 7 June 1989, which regulates the establishment and sustainable management of protected areas. The participatory process organized by the Region included a Forum held in May 2025, involving all protected area stakeholders. The proposal aims to strengthen biodiversity conservation and the protection of endangered ecosystems and species, while explicitly integrating climate change adaptation, ecosystem service enhancement, and sustainable economic development. Park management plans will be required to map and assess ecosystem services, identify pressures and threats, and analyse causes and trends, with a focus on climate change and human activities.

The proposed law defines objectives for conservation and ecosystem service enhancement and outlines actions needed to achieve them. It recognizes that pressures on protected areas often originate externally and calls for broader territorial analysis.

There is a call to rethink the EU's approach to RN2000, advocating a paradigm shift that strengthens links between RN2000, ICZM, and climate policy. Coordination among regional departments, institutional communication, and citizen awareness must be reinforced.



Municipalities often lack adequate staff and expertise, limiting their ability to implement complex environmental strategies. Investing in local capacity building and creating channels for continuous inter-agency dialogue are essential.

A proposed solution may include the creation of a permanent regional technical secretariat to support RN2000 and related planning processes, potentially housed within ARPAS and supported by external experts. This could align with the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Law (Regulation 2024/1991), ensuring consistency with national restoration plans. The integration of climate variables into policy design, financing tools, and participatory governance models is seen as essential for the future resilience of Sardinia’s natural heritage.

In synthesis:

- **Lack of integration between RN2000, ICZM, and MSP.** There is no operational linkage between the Natura 2000 network, Integrated Coastal Zone Management, and Maritime Spatial Planning at the regional level.
- **Inactive Coastal Conservation Agency.** The regional agency responsible for coastal protection lacks technical structure and staff, making it currently ineffective.
- **Limitations in assessing climate impacts.** Available data and RN2000 standard protocols do not allow for adequate evaluation of climate change impacts on protected areas.
- **Need for regulatory reform.** A new regional law is being drafted to modernize protected area management, including objectives for climate adaptation and ecosystem service enhancement.
- **Lack of integrated scientific research.** Scientific efforts are fragmented and project-based, lacking a comprehensive approach to climate-related ecosystem dynamics.
- **Proposal for institutional strengthening.** A permanent regional technical secretariat is proposed to coordinate RN2000 activities and align them with the EU Nature Restoration Law.

A SWOT analysis was also considered. The results are reported in the tables here below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide coverage of coastal and marine areas. • Consolidated coordination of the regional ecological network that includes Natura 2000, marine protected areas and national parks. • Presence of areas with established governance and ongoing projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a designated management body in many sites. • Overlapping of competencies among multiple public authorities (state, region, municipalities). • Absence of dedicated financial resources for management. • Difficulties in managing very large sites.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidated synergy with marine protected areas and national parks. • Advanced experiences in drafting Management Plans and defining conservation measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for tools to better integrate conservation and restoration objectives into local development policies
---	--

Table 4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Natura 2000 Instrument (Marine Sites)

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient integration of conservation objectives into local and sectoral policies. • Gaps in effective protection and enforcement measures. • Fragmentation of responsibilities among different institutional levels. • Absence of stable and adequate funding. • Limited sharing of data and knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation of new governance and management models for marine sites. • Enhanced integration with planning tools for coastal and marine areas. • Strengthening synergies with Marine Protected Areas and the regional ecological network. • Access to funding under biodiversity and climate change adaptation strategies. • Development of monitoring and data sharing systems across different institutional actors.

Table 5. Challenges and Opportunities of the Natura 2000 Network in the Marine Environment

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

This part of the analysis focuses on the implementation of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in Sardinia, highlighting the region’s pioneering role within the Italian context, including its early involvement in shaping the ICZM Protocol under the Barcelona Convention. Although the protocol became binding in 2011 following EU ratification, Italy has only recently moved towards ratification, with final approval pending.

The Region of Sardinia currently lacks a specific coastal management plan. While the Hydrogeological Structure Plan provides partial coverage, its scope is limited to cliff coasts and landslide phenomena. The Regional Landscape Plan (adopted in 2006) identifies the coastal zone as a strategic asset for sustainable development and emphasizes the need for integrated



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

management. However, it is under revision. The 2013 Coastal Action Program (PAC) classifies Sardinian coasts into “rocky” and “sandy” types and includes detailed mapping of 271 beach units.

Flood risk management is addressed through plans in line with Directive 2007/60/EC and Legislative Decree 49/2010, but these plans show limited operational integration with comprehensive coastal protection.

Recent and ongoing EU-funded projects such as RESMAR, MAREGOT, POSBEMED2, NATURE4CCCHANGE, DesirMED, and AMMIRARE have contributed to exploring climate resilience, Nature-based Solutions (NbS), and sediment dynamics. For instance, DesirMED supports transformative adaptation approaches for Mediterranean regions, while AMMIRARE targets beach resilience via pilot actions integrating NbS and innovative monitoring.

Sardinia’s Coastal Conservation Agency was founded with high ambition but has since stalled. While legally active, it lacks personnel and technical capacity. In its absence, the Nature Protection and Forestry Policies Service—composed of three departments—manages coastal issues but lacks planning instruments to ensure integrated action. Many municipalities also face staff shortages, limiting the efficient use of available funding.

One of the main management challenges concerns beach accumulations of Posidonia oceanica. These deposits, which play a crucial ecological role in shoreline stabilization, are often removed prematurely for tourism purposes. Regional guidelines (DGR 40/13 of 2016) offer three options: full retention, seasonal removal and return, or permanent removal with sand recovery. Despite this framework, decisions are often made without ecological assessments.

Regional Law 1/2020 recognizes beached Posidonia as a natural barrier against erosion and mandates the development of a dedicated management plan, including monitoring, classification protocols, and guidelines for municipalities. The Region is currently working on a technical standard for beach classification and regional guidelines, which will form the basis of a future regional management plan.

Several classification methods are being developed—based on geomorphology, erosion vulnerability, and Posidonia management complexity. These efforts refer to the 2018 National Guidelines for Coastal Erosion and Climate Change, developed by the MATTM-Regions Coastal Erosion Task Force with ISPRA coordination. These guidelines serve as a national reference for sediment balance and climate impact response.

To support municipalities, the Region created a €4.9 million revolving fund for coastal protection planning. Approved projects are progressively financed through a public ranking, with design costs reimbursed once final funding is received. Time constraints are enforced to ensure effective fund usage. In more complex sites like Alghero and Nora, tailored planning funds have been allocated.

Public participation remains limited in coastal management decisions. Economic pressures, such as mass tourism, often outweigh environmental considerations, and public engagement



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

typically arises only during crises. A broader communication strategy is needed, including environmental education, school engagement, and better alignment of tourism messaging with ecological realities, such as the role of Posidonia.

There is also limited coordination between coastal and inland water management. Few river contracts are active and no coastal contracts exist. Projects such as DesirMED estimate sediment retention behind dams, like the Coghinas reservoir, which may significantly reduce sediment flow to coastal areas, contributing to erosion.

The Region acknowledges the need for integrated coastal planning aligned with national guidelines. Environmental impact assessments (VIA, VINCA) are required for coastal interventions, especially near Natura 2000 sites, but without a shared management framework, intersectoral coordination remains weak.

Sardinian municipalities express growing interest in participating in improved governance mechanisms. Local governments seek stronger dialogue with the Region and tools for implementing environmental strategies. In response, the Region aims to avoid imposing top-down instruments and is open to participatory approaches. Enhanced communication, training, and cross-sectoral collaboration are essential for the future of Sardinia's coastal governance.

The Region is also developing a comprehensive framework for managing Posidonia and beach ecosystems. A technical manual is being prepared for classifying beaches based on their vulnerability to Posidonia management, in compliance with Regional Law 1/2020. This document will guide a future public tender for developing a regional Posidonia management plan tailored to specific beach conditions.

Among the innovative studies underway, DesirMED is assessing the impact of sea-level rise on Sardinian beaches, while POSBEMED2 developed a typology-based beach classification algorithm. Sardinia is combining these insights—macrotypes, geomorphic vulnerability, and management feasibility—to support adaptive planning.

Beach vulnerability is now being categorized into three levels: high, low, and none. High vulnerability reflects severely compromised beaches needing immediate action to avoid irreversible environmental loss. Low vulnerability indicates environmental stress requiring targeted interventions. Beaches with no current vulnerability still require attention to prevent localized degradation.

All classification methods are aligned with the 2018 National Guidelines for Coastal Defense. These were produced through a coordinated effort involving 15 coastal regions, ISPRA, and national research institutions, and address sediment balance and climate change impacts in coastal planning. The Mediterranean coastline is considered a high-value economic and ecological zone, where erosion control and climate resilience are top priorities.

Integrated sediment management is increasingly seen as essential. For example, the Coghinas dam has accumulated 20 million m³ of sediment, significantly reducing sediment



input to the Gulf of Asinara and contributing to erosion. A unified sediment management strategy is crucial to restoring balance.

While outdated projects are sometimes revived without updates, improved public communication can help align stakeholders and prevent project rejection. Coordinated efforts involving municipalities, researchers, and local communities are required to bridge technical and governance gaps.

The Region is committed to shared governance and avoiding unilateral solutions. Municipalities request resources, training, and inclusion in decision-making processes. Ongoing efforts aim to support this transition toward participatory, sustainable, and scientifically informed coastal governance.

In synthesis:

- **Lack of an integrated coastal plan.** Despite its pioneering role in ICZM, Sardinia has yet to adopt a dedicated coastal management plan, a critical tool for coordinated and sustainable governance.
- **Challenging *Posidonia oceanica* management.** Beach cleaning practices often lack ecological criteria. A regional plan is under development, based on beach classification and vulnerability levels.
- **EU projects driving innovation.** Projects like DesirMED and AMMIRARE promote beach resilience and climate adaptation using Nature-based Solutions and advanced monitoring tools.
- **Limited public participation and communication.** Public engagement remains weak, with insufficient communication strategies—especially in aligning ecological protection with tourism promotion.
- **Revolving fund for local planning.** The Region has launched a € 4.9 million fund to support coastal defense planning by municipalities, with reimbursement mechanisms and spending deadlines.
- **Need for integrated sediment management.** Erosion is exacerbated by sediment trapped behind dams like Coghinas. A regional sediment strategy is needed to restore coastal balance.
- **Shift toward shared governance.** Municipalities increasingly seek involvement in coastal decision-making. The Region is responding by encouraging participatory and bottom-up approaches.

4.2 Crete (Greece)

Specific meetings with the Crete representatives could not be arranged, only an exchange of emails containing information. The following analysis is based on this limited information.

Protection of natural areas and in particular marine-coastal areas

The protection of natural areas in Greece, and especially in Crete, relies on a legislative framework working at both the national and regional levels. In recent years this framework has



been complemented by several concrete, state-approved instruments. For Crete, the Ministry of Environment & Energy has issued Special Environmental Studies, which set conservation objectives, identify pressures and management needs, and provide the legal-technical basis for forthcoming protected area management plans. At sea, the National Spatial Strategy for the Marine Area (FEK Δ' 227/17.04.2025) now establishes the national marine spatial system and the cascade to Marine Spatial Plans, giving a stable compass for reconciling conservation with navigation, aquaculture, tourism and energy infrastructure. On land, the Regional Spatial Framework of Crete and the Region's Strategic and Operational Plans 2024–2028 route biodiversity and restoration priorities into funded measures with defined governance and monitoring arrangements. Together these instruments link constitutional principles to day-to-day conservation decisions on the island.

Greece has established several key laws to safeguard its natural and cultural heritage. According to Article 24 of the Greek Constitution, the protection of the natural and cultural environment is both a state obligation and an individual right. The State is mandated to implement special preventive or repressive measures within the framework of sustainability to ensure preservation for future generations. In Crete, these principles are no longer abstract: the new Special Environmental Studies dossiers for the island's Natura 2000 network translate them into site-specific objectives and measures, while regional programmes ensure that those measures can be financed, implemented and monitored over time.

Several important laws form the foundation of environmental protection in Greece:

- Law 1650/1986: focuses on the protection of the environment, laying the groundwork for subsequent regulations.
- Law 4014/2011: concerns the environmental licensing of projects and activities, aiming to regulate development through a licensing process, including within Natura 2000 areas (Article 10).
- Law 4042/2012: addresses the criminal protection of the environment, adding legal consequences for environmental harm.
- Law 2971/2001: pertains to the management and use of Aegialos beach and other provisions, including the conditions, technical concerns, and processes for coastal, riverine or wetland development.
- Law 3937/2011: focuses on the conservation of biodiversity, establishing guidelines for the protection of ecosystems and species, including setting national conservation targets for species and habitats of importance, conservation targets for birds and Special Protection Areas.
- Decree 148/2009: implements measures for environmental liability, prevention, and remediation of environmental damages, aligning with European Directive 2004/35/EC.
- Law 4014/2011: concerns the environmental licensing of projects and activities, regulation of unauthorized activities in connection with the creation of an environmental balance and other provisions under the competence of the Ministry of Environment.
- Laws 4685/2020, 4722/2020 and 819/2021 launched the NECCA, the Natural Environment & Climate Change Agency. N.E.C.C.A aims to implement the policy formulated by the Ministry of Environment and Energy for the management of protected areas, biodiversity conservation, promotion and implementation of sustainable development actions and climate change mitigation. NECCA is supervised by the Ministry of Environment and



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Energy, and has administrative and financial autonomy and operates for the benefit of the public interest according to the rules of the private sector economy.

These national acts are complemented by the National Spatial Strategy for the Marine Area and sectoral frameworks such as the Special Spatial Framework for Aquaculture (FEK B' 2505/2011), which provide siting criteria and compatibility rules for activities that press on sensitive coastal and marine habitats.

Furthermore, the NATURA 2000 network, part of a European initiative, protects about 30% of Cretan territory, underlining the island's ecological significance. On the regional level, the main regional planning adopted are the following ones:

- Regional Plan for water resources management of Crete, according to 2000/60/EC Directive.
- Regional Plan for risk management of Crete, according to 2007/60/EC Directive.
- Regional spatial Plan for sustainable development of Crete (under national law).
- Regional adaptation plan for climate change.

These plans are not stand-alone documents; they are meant to work together. Water and flood-risk plans provide hydrological baselines and programmes of measures that support nature-based solutions in and around Natura 2000 catchments. The Regional Spatial Plan is the umbrella that disciplines siting for tourism, renewables and infrastructure, while the Regional Adaptation Plan identifies climate vulnerabilities and priority ecosystems for resilience interventions. The Region's Operational Plan 2024–2028 then functions as the bridge to delivery, turning these strategic layers into funded actions tied to specific services, timetables and indicators.

Protected area management

Roughly one-third of Crete lies within Natura 2000, underscoring the island's ecological significance. Here, the Special Environmental Studies for eastern Crete approval in 2025 was pivotal: as state-approved material it sets conservation objectives and management priorities and constitutes the legal-technical substrate for the Presidential Decrees that will formalise zonation and protection regimes and for the Management Plans that will guide operations (monitoring, visitor management, restoration). Because these Special Environmental Studies are approved by the State after a long public consultation period, they carry regulatory weight for Natura 2000 sites even before the final decrees are promulgated, by fixing the content that those decrees must translate into binding rules.



Figure 6. Natura 2000 protected area network in Crete

Regional Planning in Crete

At the regional level, Crete has adopted several strategic plans to enhance environmental management and sustainability:

Water Resources Management Plan: developed in accordance with Directive 2000/60/EC, this plan ensures the sustainable management of Crete water resources. It sets ecological status objectives, programmes of measures and monitoring obligations, which can be aligned with river and wetland restoration inside or adjacent to Natura 2000 sites.

Risk Management Plan: following Directive 2007/60/EC, this plan addresses the assessment and management of flood risks in the region. In coastal plains and deltas, nature-based measures (dune and wetland restoration, riparian buffers) directly support both safety and biodiversity outcomes.

Regional Spatial Plan for Sustainable Development: this plan, compliant with national law, guides the sustainable development of Crete territory. Because it is SEA-grounded, it provides the forum where environmental constraints—especially for protected areas—are integrated before individual permits are issued.

Regional Adaptation Plan for Climate Change: this forward-thinking plan aims to prepare the island for the impacts of climate change. Its actions are operationalised through the Region's programme and can be targeted to Natura 2000 priorities, ensuring that adaptation and conservation reinforce each other rather than compete for space.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Despite the evident need for coordinated management, Crete currently does not have an integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) plan. Instead, planning in the coastal areas tends to be sectoral, addressing specific needs or protection measures. Examples include the development of commercial and tourist ports or the implementation of measures to combat coastal erosion. This fragmentation makes the marine–terrestrial edge of Natura 2000 particularly sensitive, because pressures converge at the shoreline.

A new national lever can help stitch these pieces together. The National Spatial Strategy for the Marine Area (FEK Δ' 227/17.04.2025) sets long-term objectives to 2050, subdivides waters into marine planning units and establishes the cascade to Marine Spatial Plans, with provisions on implementation, monitoring and data systems. For Crete, where protected sites interleave with ferry routes, aquaculture areas, beach economies and submarine cables, this marine compass supplies the missing half of coastal coherence. When a Cretan ICZM is prepared, it can lock into this sea-side grammar while aligning with the Regional Spatial Framework on land.

Climate Change Adaptation

Crete is implementing a regional adaptation plan for climate change, demonstrating the island's commitment to proactively addressing the challenges posed by a changing climate. Crucially, adaptation is treated as a programmable agenda: through the Operational Plan 2024–2028, nature-based solutions can be written directly into calls and contracts, with responsible services and indicators. This approach allows adaptation funding to deliver measurable benefits for species and habitats under the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Alignment with the marine strategy reinforces coastal resilience. Siting rules for energy cables, anchoring practices, aquaculture zones and navigation lanes can be assessed against coastal processes and sensitive habitats, reducing conflicts and improving long-term performance of both infrastructure and ecosystems.

Environmental Assessments and International Agreements

Greece actively participates in several international agreements relevant to environmental impact assessments:

- *Espoo Convention*: Greece signed the Espoo Convention on 26 February 1991 and ratified it on 24 February 1998, committing to cross-border environmental impact assessments for significant projects.
- *SEA Protocol*: Greece signed the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Protocol on 21 May 2003 and ratified it on 23 October 2024, reinforcing its commitment to environmental evaluation in policy and planning.

As a member state of the European Union, Greece has transposed EU directives on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) into its national legislation. However, Greece is not a party to certain UNECE legal instruments or the ICZM Protocol. The application of SEA procedures for various plans and programs is mandated by the transposition of Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) into Greek law. Notably, this was accomplished in August 2006 through Joint Ministerial Decision MEPPPW/SES/10717/28.08.2006,



later amended by Ministerial Decision 40238/2017. SEA procedures require a detailed description of the current environmental status, consideration of alternatives, identification and evaluation of significant environmental impacts, integration of public consultation and environmental assessment results into the final plan or program, and systematic monitoring of impacts following implementation.

In Crete, this SEA/EIA architecture is not standalone; it meshes with the ΕΠΜ/Management Plan pipeline for Natura 2000 and with the Region's planning set. The result is a coherent pathway from assessment to decision: studies establish objectives and measures; plans embed them with budgets and indicators; decrees make them binding; and SEA/EIA provides transparency, alternatives analysis and monitoring across the whole cycle.

In summary

In summary, Crete has made some strides in environmental protection and management through comprehensive legal frameworks, regional planning efforts, and commitment to international agreements. While there are areas for improvement, particularly in integrated coastal management, the island continues to move towards greater sustainability and environmental resilience. The combination of state-approved plans for Crete's Natura 2000 areas, the National Marine Spatial Strategy, the Regional Spatial Framework, and the Region's Strategic/Operational Plans 2024–2028 provides both the legal basis and the delivery machinery.

4.3 Montenegro

Legal Framework and Governance Challenges

Process of accession to the European Union. Montenegro officially applied to join the EU on 15 December 2008. Membership negotiations began on 29 June 2012. As of 2024, Montenegro's goal is to achieve membership of the EU by 2028.

The **key instruments** considered in the analysis of Montenegro are the 2016 Law on Nature Protection; the Environmental Law (Zakon o zivotnoj sredini); and the 2019 Law on the Protection of the Marine Environment (Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 73/19), which provides for the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Currently, four MPAs have been established. The implementation of the ICZM Strategy is also planned for this year.

Several **government bodies** are involved in marine and coastal biodiversity, including Ministries for Ecology, Agriculture, and Transport, as well as the Nature and Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) and the Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management. **Local governments** play a role in protected area management, biodiversity action plans, and local environmental planning. NGOs such as MedCem and Green Home are active in marine conservation, participating in awareness campaigns and regional projects. The 2016 Nature Protection Law gives local governments authority over certain categories of protected areas, while the central government manages marine protected areas in public maritime zones.



A common feature of Montenegro sectoral legislation is its strong inspiration from, and practical implementation of, the obligations deriving from the Barcelona Convention and its related Protocols, particularly the ICZM Protocol and the SPA/BD Protocol.

The government is currently working on adapting Montenegro legislation to the European Union legal framework and finalising the ICZM Strategy. In this context, a consultancy contract has been activated with a group of experts dedicated to these processes.

It should be noted that at the moment, Montenegrin law does not provide for measures related to nature restoration as set out in the Nature Restoration Law (NRL). Conversely, integrated coastal zone management is well established, along with other instruments derived from the Barcelona Convention system - with a particular focus on the coastal area and climate change, which are also addressed through specific projects. Case studies and examples of collaboration with PAP/RAC on vulnerable sites, climate change, and Nature-based Solutions can be cited as tangible outcomes of these efforts.

Environmental Law

Zakon o životnoj sredini⁵, the Montenegrin law on environment, was adopted on 28 July 2016, and amended on 01 January 2019 (repeals Environmental law 2008-07-29).

Environmental protection and sustainable development are regulated by this law and special laws regulating individual segments of the environment.

According to its Article 7 (9) integrated coastal zone management is the process of sustainable management and use of coastal areas, taking into account the sensitivity of coastal ecosystems, landscapes, diversity of activities and their use and interaction and impact on marine and terrestrial areas; (19) **marine ecosystem** is a marine environment that must be preserved and protected in order to maintain biodiversity and ensure the diversity and dynamism of processes occurring in the seas and oceans; (42) **environmental protection** is a set of activities, measures, conditions and instruments that monitor, prevent, mitigate and limit environmental pollution, preserve and maintain the natural balance, sustainably use and improve natural and man-made values; (43) **protected natural asset** is a natural asset that, due to its special values and characteristics (biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes), enjoys special protection.

Environmental protection, within the framework of their rights and obligations, is ensured by state administration bodies, local self-government units, legal and natural persons, non-governmental organizations, citizens and associations of citizens. These entities of environmental protection cooperate and communicate with each other in accordance with special regulations. (Article 8).

Article 18 is dedicated to the **protection of the sea and coastal zones**, stating that the protection of the sea and coastal zones from pollution shall be ensured by implementing measures to reduce and/or eliminate pollution, i.e. burdens in the marine and coastal

⁵ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mne178839.pdf>



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

environment, preservation of protected and ecologically significant areas in the sea and coastal zone, protection, conservation and restoration of marine resources and systematic monitoring of marine and coastal ecosystems. Therefore, **alongside protection and conservation there is also foreseen restoration.**

The protection of the sea shall be carried out by implementing measures to protect the marine environment, including the marine ecosystem and the coastal zone as an indivisible whole, prevention of harmful interventions with negative consequences on the marine ecosystem, taking into account their cumulative and synergistic effects, sustainable use of natural resources, prevention of pollution of the sea from the air, from land, from vessels, including pollution caused by discharges from vessels, or from aircraft with the aim of sinking or burning at sea, transboundary pollution, prevention of pollution due to major accidents and elimination of their consequences.

Protection and management of the coastal zone shall include measures to protect coastal ecosystems and sustainable and integrated management of coastal resources.

Nature Protection is achieved by preserving geological and biological diversity, landscape values and diversity, as well as protecting natural values, as well as by monitoring the state of nature, establishing a system for protecting natural values for the purpose of their permanent preservation and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. (Article 20).

The provision of Article 28 foresees also the **protection of the environment from the negative impact of climate change**, which is achieved by applying measures to reduce the negative effects of climate change on the environment.

The documents of sustainable development and environmental protection are:

- **National strategy of sustainable development of Montenegro**, which sets out key principles, objectives, and guidelines to ensure the country long-term sustainable growth, considering current circumstances and international commitments. It requires sectoral plans and policies to align with sustainability goals, and features an action plan with specific measures, responsible authorities, and deadlines. The Strategy, effective for 15 years, is coordinated by the Ministry, which reports every two years to both the Government and the National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- **Climate change strategy**
- Low-carbon development strategy
- **Climate change adaptation plan**
- National plan to combat desertification
- **Marine environment protection strategy**
- **National Strategy for Integrated Coastal Zone Management**, which sets out objectives, measures, and guidelines for managing Montenegro coastal land and marine environments in line with international agreements. It includes an Action Plan specifying responsibilities, timelines, and coordination roles. The Strategy requires alignment with other state and local plans, is adopted by the government for 15 years, and its implementation is coordinated and reported by the Ministry and submitted to the Government and the National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- **Local environmental protection plans**, which set out tailored measures and goals for environmental protection and sustainable development within a local government area.



It outlines conditions, adaptation actions, responsible parties, current environmental status, objectives, deadlines, and funding. The plan is adopted by the assembly of the local self-government unit for four years and must be submitted to the Agency within a month of adoption.

- Strategies, plans and programs that are adopted according to special regulations in individual areas for certain environmental segments and loads.

Environmental protection instruments explicitly include environmental assessments (EIA/SEA), liability for environmental damage, **spatial plans, harmonised with documents on sustainable development and environmental protection**, the environmental management system (EMAS) and the ecolabel.

The **environmental monitoring** in Montenegro covers biodiversity, water, air, soil, marine ecosystems, noise, radiation, waste management, and greenhouse gas emissions. Data is systematically collected and reported annually to the Ministry and Government.

Regular “State of the Environment” reports are produced at both national and local levels, including action plans for improvement.

An Environmental Protection Information System is maintained by the Agency, centralizing data on environmental quality, emissions, resources, waste, accidents, and environmental measures. This system ensures public access and integration with other information systems.

Public participation: the public is granted access to environmental information and is involved in decision-making on strategic assessments, impact evaluations, permits, and plans. Legal recourse is available to challenge environmental decisions.

Environmental Funds: environmental protection is financed by national and local budgets, eco-fees, the Eco-Fund, international funds, and donations.

Penalty system: strict penalties (fines ranging from € 2,000 to € 40,000 for legal entities) are set for violations, including failures to report hazardous facilities, or not conducting required monitoring.

Marine and coastal conservation efforts in Montenegro. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

Currently, four MPAs have been established. Three of them (Platamuni, Katič, and Stari Ulcinj) were established in 2021, covering a total of 4,761.22 hectares. The process was supported by a GEF project, which provided crucial field data and initiated management and business plans for these areas.

The Public Enterprise for Coastal Zone Management oversees the MPAs, with plans for further management development by 2022.

Local initiatives are underway, such as preventive protection of coralligenous communities in Kotor Bay.

A Vulnerability Assessment is used to identify key pressures and hotspot areas for urgent action. The main pressures stem from tourism (especially microbial pathogens), urbanization,



and industry. The major hotspot is Boka Kotor Bay, identified as the most threatened marine location.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are called upon to update their management plans; capacity building for MPA management and enforcement authorities are also required.

Supportive measures include further identification of MPAs and key habitats/species; Continued biological monitoring (seabirds, marine mammals, sea turtles, invasive species); Acoustic mapping for noise distribution; Protective infrastructure (e.g., anchoring buoys).

Further actions are needed, aiming at a stronger control of human activities and illegal actions in marine/coastal zones, the establishment of new MPAs and mainstreaming enforcement across institutions, a systematic monitoring and assessment of fish stocks and Monk Seal habitats, the preparation of a national marine habitat classification and further MPA identification, enhancing training, capacity building, and international cooperation, particularly with neighboring Albania and through regional initiatives

International Agreements

Montenegro is a party to many key international conventions, including the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES, Ramsar, the Barcelona Convention, and others focused on wildlife, habitats, and marine conservation.

Transboundary and Regional Cooperation

Montenegro participates in regional networks for MPAs and collaborates on monitoring and conservation projects in the Adriatic and Mediterranean regions.

There is an emphasis on harmonizing legislation, joint monitoring of migratory species, and capacity building for effective biodiversity protection.

Best Practices

The following are examples of successful policy implementations that have resulted in tangible outcomes:

- The Coastal Management Plan, led by PAP/RAC, is requested by Article 18 of the Barcelona Convention's Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol and Montenegro's National Strategy on Integrated Coastal Zone Management, and aims to provide holistic policies and action measures for sustainable coastal development and resource use, supported by a participatory approach. In the framework of the **MedProgramme Child Project 2.1: Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Water Security, Climate Resilience and Habitat Protection**, a **Coastal Zone Management Plan for Boka Kotorska Bay** was developed through an extensive three-year exploration of environmental challenges and opportunities. The Plan was presented to national stakeholders and international experts involved in the process on 10 December, 2024, in Doniji Stoliv, Montenegro, and is designed to balance environmental preservation with



sustainable development in this UNESCO Heritage site. It provides actionable strategies to safeguard the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic vitality.

- As part of the **MedProgramme SCCF Project: Enhancing regional climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas**, Plan Bleu led the preparation of a climate risk assessment of the Boka Kotorska Bay, Montenegro. The SCCF project integrates coastal climate change adaptation to Child Project 2.1's Climagine workshops through activities related to the ecosystem-based adaptation, cost-benefit analyses for coastal adaptation solutions and engaging the private and financial sectors in Mediterranean coastal adaptation efforts.
- Applying area-based direct conservation measures led Montenegro to declare the first three Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) of the country in 2021: Platamuni, Katič and Stari Ulcinj. This process has been supported by the GEF project "Promoting Protected Areas Management through Integrated Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Protection in the Coastal Area of Montenegro", that provided recent field data for preparing Nature Protection Studies for these three MPAs.

The **stakeholders** involved in the implementation and management of the examples identified above: UNEP/MAP - PAP/RAC; Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development of Montenegro; UNESCO/HPI; GWP-Med.

A SWOT Analysis of Montenegro Environmental Policy Framework with focus on marine and coastal environmental governance and conservation was also considered. The results are reported in the table here below.

	Description
Strengths	Robust Legal Framework: Montenegro has established comprehensive environmental laws, such as the 2016 Law on Nature Protection and the Environmental Law, providing a solid foundation for conservation efforts, sustainable development, and climate change mitigation.
	Alignment with International Standards: sectoral legislation is inspired by international conventions, notably the Barcelona Convention and its protocols, reflecting strong alignment with EU and global best practices.
	Established Marine Protected Areas (MPAs): four MPAs, including Platamuni, Katič, and Stari Ulcinj, have been set up, demonstrating concrete progress in marine conservation, supported by field data and management plans.
	Strategic Planning and Coordination: Montenegro employs national strategies on sustainable development, climate change, and integrated coastal zone management, all designed with clear objectives, action plans, and coordination mechanisms across ministries and agencies.



	Active Stakeholder Engagement: NGOs, local governments, public enterprises, and international bodies (like PAP/RAC, UNEP/MAP, UNESCO/HPI) are actively involved, fostering a participatory and multi-level governance model.
	Public Participation and Access to Information: the public can access environmental information, participate in decision-making, and pursue legal recourse, promoting transparency and accountability.
	Regional and International Cooperation: Montenegro is a party to key international conventions and collaborates regionally, enhancing capacity building, joint monitoring, and knowledge exchange.
Weaknesses	Incomplete Legislative Transposition: while progress has been made, some legal measures, such as those specifically addressing nature restoration as per the EU Nature Restoration Law, are not yet incorporated.
	Enforcement and Capacity Gaps: management and enforcement of MPAs require further capacity building, resources, and effective monitoring to ensure compliance and achieve conservation objectives.
	Fragmented Implementation: coordination among various governmental and non-governmental actors can be challenging, potentially resulting in overlaps, inefficiencies, or gaps in policy execution.
	Limited Financial Resources: despite multiple funding sources, sustained and sufficient financial investment remains a challenge, especially for ongoing monitoring, enforcement, and infrastructure needs.
	Data and Information Gaps: environmental monitoring systems, while established, face challenges in comprehensive data collection (e.g., on fish stocks, invasive species, and ecosystem services), impacting evidence-based decision-making.
	Public Awareness: awareness and education on marine conservation and environmental responsibilities are still developing, which may limit the effectiveness of participatory and community-based measures.
Opportunities	EU Accession Process: the ongoing alignment with EU laws and standards offers opportunities for legislative



	<p>improvement, technical support, and access to substantial funding for environmental projects.</p> <p>Expansion of MPAs and conservation initiatives: there is potential to establish additional MPAs, enhance current management plans, and scale up monitoring, habitat restoration, and species protection programs.</p> <p>Innovative Approaches: adoption of Nature-based Solutions, ecosystem-based adaptation, and climate resilience strategies, supported by international projects, can improve environmental outcomes.</p> <p>Transboundary and Regional Collaboration: strengthening cross-border cooperation in the Adriatic and Mediterranean regions can address migratory species protection, marine pollution, and climate change challenges more effectively.</p> <p>Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer: engagement with international experts, training programs, and participation in regional networks can enhance institutional knowledge and operational effectiveness.</p> <p>Eco-tourism and Sustainable Development: sustainable tourism and blue economy initiatives aligned with conservation can generate revenue and raise awareness, while supporting local livelihoods.</p> <p>Public Engagement and Education: expanding environmental education programs and community involvement can foster stewardship and long-term support for conservation objectives.</p>
Threats	<p>Tourism and Urbanization Pressures: high tourism density, urban expansion, and associated pollution, especially in hotspots like Boka Kotor Bay, pose significant threats to marine and coastal ecosystems.</p> <p>Industrial Activities and Pollution: industrial development, waste discharges, and marine traffic increase the risk of pollution, degradation, and habitat loss.</p> <p>Climate Change Impacts: sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events threaten natural habitats, infrastructure, and the resilience of ecosystems and communities.</p> <p>Illegal Activities and Weak Enforcement: illegal fishing, poaching, and non-compliance with environmental rules</p>



	undermine conservation efforts, especially when enforcement is insufficient.
	Biodiversity Loss and Invasive Species: ongoing habitat degradation, overexploitation, and the spread of invasive species continue to erode marine biodiversity and ecosystem health.
	Financial Constraints: global or national economic downturns could constrain funding for environmental protection, jeopardizing long-term projects and monitoring systems.
	Institutional Instability: potential changes in government priorities, administrative reorganization, or policy shifts could disrupt continuity in environmental governance.

Table 6. SWOT Analysis on marine and coastal environmental governance and conservation in Montenegro

4.4 Country on the southern shore of the Mediterranean: Morocco

The three main topics were discussed also during the meetings with the representatives of Morocco (Moroccan officials from the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development and legal experts) as the southern Mediterranean State identified for the analysis at national level on the relationship between legislative instruments and spatial governance in the implementation of nature and biodiversity policies in the Mediterranean. Together with the supporting documentation, they formed the following framework.

The analysis was concentrated on the above mentioned three interconnected topics:

- Protected Natural Areas (especially marine-coastal zones),
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and
- Climate Change Policies related to ecosystem services and biodiversity protection.

Legal Framework and Governance Challenges

Morocco has developed a comprehensive modern legal framework to meet international and regional principles regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, including key laws on protected areas (Law 22-07), environmental impact assessments (Law 12-03, soon to be replaced by Law 49-17), and coastal management (Law 81-12). These laws are aligned with international and regional conventions Morocco has ratified.

Morocco has recognised the challenge of sustainable development, and its legal framework clearly reflects this awareness, as evidenced by the promulgation of several texts relating to the protection and enhancement of the environment, including:

- 2011 Constitution: enshrines the conservation and sustainability of natural resources.



- Law No. 11-03 on the Environment: defines general principles for environmental protection, pollution prevention, and liability for environmental damage.

- Law No. 12-03 on Environmental Impact Assessments: introduces the obligation to assess project effects on the environment, including the marine environment, in advance.

- Framework Law No. 99-12 on the Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development: promotes the conservation of natural resources and harmonization with international standards.

- Law No. 25-10 (2010) on Marchica: regulates the development and management of the Marchica lagoon, including partnerships and funding.

- Decree No. 2-15-769 (2015): defines the composition and functions of commissions for integrated coastal management and national and regional planning.

- Dahir No. 1-73-255 (1973) and Law No. 15-12 (2014) on Fishing: regulate maritime fishing, including combating illegal fishing, techniques, permits, and product traceability.

- Law No. 29-05 on the Protection of Wild Flora and Fauna: establishes categories of protected species and regulates the collection, trade, and reintroduction of threatened species.

Moroccan legislation has been strengthened at a normative level with the adoption of two laws designed to establish the fundamental principles and general rules of national environmental protection and enhancement policy, with the aim of better meeting international criteria and adapting to developments in the protection of natural heritage at regional and international levels, in line with regional and international conventions and treaties to which Morocco has ratified. These include:

- Law No. 22-07 (2010) on Protected Areas: establishes the classification, zoning, and management of protected areas, both terrestrial and marine, promoting the involvement of local communities and allowing for delegated management.

- Law 81-12/2015 on the Coastline: sets rules for integrated and sustainable management of coastal zones.

These are land or sea areas of particular natural or cultural value within which imperative environmental protection and management measures must be taken.

The recognised integrated approach involves collaboration among institutions, participatory planning, ecosystem protection, and environmental responsibility. The regulations also provide for operational tools such as management plans, monitoring, adequate infrastructure, and the possibility of delegating the management of protected areas, aiming for sustainability and involving local communities.

Morocco's legal approach has strengths but faces challenges like overlapping departmental responsibilities and enforcement issues in coastal zones, for instance concerning issues with existing buildings.

Establishment of Marine Protected Areas



According to Article 9 of Law No. 22-07, the establishment of a protected area constitutes a 'project', initiated by the relevant administration or local authorities, and subject to their approval.

In January 2025, Morocco established the following five new natural parks-marine protected areas by government decrees (published in the Official Bulletin on March 4, 2025), marking significant progress in biodiversity conservation:

- Al-Baran Marine Protected Area: Decree No. 2-24-437 of 29 Rajab 1446 (30 January 2025) on the creation of the natural park "Al-Baran Marine Protected Area."
- Mogador Marine Protected Area: Decree No. 2-24-438 of 29 Rajab 1446 (30 January 2025) on the creation of the natural park "Mogador Marine Protected Area."
- Agadir Marine Protected Area: Decree No. 2-24-439 of 29 Rajab 1446 (30 January 2025) on the creation of the natural park "Agadir Marine Protected Area."
- Massa Marine Protected Area: Decree No. 2-24-440 of 29 Rajab 1446 (30 January 2025) on the creation of the natural park "Massa Marine Protected Area."
- Boujdour Marine Protected Area: Decree No. 2-24-441 of 29 Rajab 1446 (30 January 2025) on the creation of the natural park "Boujdour Marine Protected Area."

With regard to the national legal framework for marine and coastal protected areas, the following points highlight Morocco efforts to establish MPAs and thus achieve Aichi Target 11: which laws apply to MPAs, which authorities are responsible for their creation and management, what rules apply to MPAs once established, how national law helps achieve Aichi Target 11, and what challenges arise from the existing framework.

Environmental Assessments - EIA/SEA

Environmental impact assessments apply to projects within protected areas, noting upcoming changes with the future Law 49-17, which will broaden the scope of environmental evaluations.

Morocco is not a party to the UNECE legal instruments (Espoo Convention and its SEA Protocol). However, Morocco ratified the ICZM Protocol to the Barcelona Convention in 2012, which contains provisions on environmental assessments, including those conducted within a transboundary context.

Its legislation only covers the national aspects (and therefore not the transboundary ones) of the environmental impact assessments sector and of the strategic environmental assessments.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (**EIA**) was regulated by Dahir No. 1-03-60 enacting Law No. 12-03 of 12 May 2003 on environmental impact studies, and the subsequent implementing decrees 2-04-563 and 2-04-564 of 2008. The purpose of the Act is to lay down the rules governing environmental impact assessments and to establish a list of projects which, by their nature, size or location, are likely to have a negative impact on the biophysical and human environment and must therefore be subject to an impact assessment.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (**SEA**) was incorporated into Moroccan law by Law 49-17 on Environmental Assessments, published in the Official Gazette on 13 August 2020, in



accordance with the provisions of the Framework Law on the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Public participation

Morocco experience in terms of access to and sharing of information at the national and regional levels are expressed, in particular, through the implementation of legislative and institutional instruments, such as Law No. 12-03 on EIA and its implementing decrees, especially Article 9, which stipulates that each project subject to an EIA must be subject to a public enquiry. The purpose of this enquiry is to allow the affected population to know the possible impact of the project on the environment and to collect their comments and proposals. These comments and proposals are taken into account when the environmental impact study is examined.

Another legal instrument that should be mentioned is Decree No. 2-04-564 of 5 Kaada 1429 (4 November 2008), which establishes the procedures for organising and conducting the public enquiry into projects subject to an EIA; as well as the Governmental Ordinance on the exchange of environmental information and data at the level of the 12 regions and publicly accessible platforms.

Environmental assessments in marine-coastal areas

Law No. 12-03 on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) established a list of projects subject to EIA. Article 1 defines “the Project” as “all projects involving activities, works, developments, and facilities, undertaken by any natural or legal person, public or private, which, by their nature, size, and location in sensitive or protected areas, must undergo an environmental impact study.”

Thus, the creation of a protected area project is not mentioned in the list of projects subject to the EIA appended to the law, so it is not subject to the EIA. However, it will be subject to EIA with Law No. 49-17 on Environmental Assessment, which repeals Law No. 12-03 and is not yet in force, since activities carried out within a protected area will be regulated. To this end, Law No. 49-17 provides in its draft decree two lists with specific thresholds: the first concerns projects subject to EIA, and the second concerns projects subject to an Environmental Notice (NIE).

Section 9 of List I EIA includes, among activities related to agriculture and sustainable development, projects located wholly or partly within a protected area of more than 100 hectares.

Section 8 of List II NIE covers the preservation of protected areas, including among infrastructure projects, permanent race and test tracks for motor vehicles of length equal to or greater than 2 kilometres or located in areas protected under national legislation.

In turn, Law No. 81-12 on the Coastline provides a range of provisions on national and regional coastal planning, as well as measures for development, protection, conservation, and enhancement. Article 15 stipulates that projects to construct facilities or equipment necessary for public service or activities that, by their nature, must be located at the water edge must be



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

subject to an environmental impact assessment and an energy impact study, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Indeed, the list of projects subject to EIA under Law No. 12-03 includes infrastructure projects such as tourist complexes, including those located on the coast.

With the entry into force of Law No. 49-17, works, structures, and developments in coastal areas, as well as port, maritime, and river infrastructure, will be subject to EIA (Annex I: list of projects subject to EIA).

It is important to mention that even the management plans described in Law 22-07 and the national and regional coastal plans stipulated in Law No. 81-12 will be subject, with Law No. 49-17, to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for all policies, programs, plans, and sectoral and regional schemes (PPPs) prepared by the State, local authorities, and public institutions.

Assessment and Consideration of Energy Production and Transmission Infrastructure Projects Within Marine-Coastal Protected Areas

Currently, no projects, plans, or programs in the category of energy power production and transmission works and infrastructure are located wholly or partly within the perimeter of protected areas. Nevertheless, they are well regulated and, with Law No. 49-17, will be subject to SEA if they are PPPs, and to EIA and NIE if they are projects, especially since this law provides in its two annexes a whole section (Section 2 relating to the energy industry) on projects subject to EIA and NIE for construction, production, transport, storage, etc., with well-defined thresholds.

In Morocco, Law 12-03 on EIA imposes environmental acceptability on activities and projects, not on the area. In this sense, any project subject to EIA must have environmental acceptability. Law 49-17 on environmental assessment, which will replace Law 12-03, will impose EIA on both activities and areas.

With regard to environmental assessments, they consider planned activities wherever they are carried out; it is therefore irrelevant whether they take place inside or outside the perimeter of a protected area.

ICZM and MPAs

Morocco is adopting a well-advanced national plan for the coastline and environment. Some related amendments to the law on the coastline, regarding marine areas, are underway.

Sustainable development entered Morocco legal framework in 2003 with Law 11-03 on the protection and enhancement of the environment. In 2011, the new Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco recognized the right to a healthy environment and sustainable development and mentioned sustainable development several times, notably through the establishment of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

*Constitution - Article 136: « L'Organisation régionale et territoriale repose sur les principes de libre administration, de coopération et de solidarité. Elle assure la **participation de***



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

populations concernées à la gestion de leur affaire et favorise leur contribution au développement humain intégré et durable. »

(“Regional and territorial organization is based on the principles of free administration, cooperation, and solidarity. It ensures the participation of the populations concerned in the management of their affairs and encourages their contribution to integrated and sustainable human development.”)

*Constitution - Article 31: « L'État, les établissements publics et les collectivités territoriales œuvrent à la mobilisation de tous les moyens disponibles pour faciliter l'égal accès des citoyennes et des citoyens aux conditions leur permettant de jouir du droit: à l'accès à l'eau et à un **environnement sain; au développement durable.** »*

(“The State, public authorities, and local authorities shall mobilize all available means to facilitate equal access for citizens to conditions enabling them to enjoy the right: to access to water and a healthy environment; to sustainable development.”)

In 2014, the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development was adopted (Framework Law No. 99-12). It sets the fundamental objectives for Morocco action in environmental protection and sustainable development and emphasizes the need to coordinate with the international regulatory framework. In particular, it aims to strengthen the protection and preservation of natural resources and environments, biodiversity and cultural heritage, to prevent and combat pollution and nuisances; to integrate sustainable development in sectoral public policies and to adopt a national strategy for sustainable development; to harmonize national legal frameworks with international conventions and standards on environmental protection and sustainable development; to strengthen measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combat desertification; to carry out institutional, economic, financial, and cultural reforms in environmental governance; to define the responsibilities of the State, local authorities, public institutions and companies, private enterprises, civil society associations, and citizens regarding environmental protection and sustainable development; and to establish a system of environmental responsibility and control.

Among the principles set out as key elements to be respected in the development and implementation of policies, strategies, programs, and action plans by institutional and territorial actors—alongside the principles of precaution, prevention, solidarity, and the active participation of businesses, civil society associations, and the population in the process—reference is made to the **principle of territoriality** and the **principle of solidarity**. The former requires consideration of the territorial, especially regional, dimension to better coordinate measures taken by different levels of territorial decision and to encourage the mobilization of territorial actors for balanced, sustainable, and human development. The latter, solidarity, is an ancestral and deeply rooted value that contributes to national cohesion and, in its social, territorial, and intergenerational dimensions, increases the country's capacity to reduce vulnerabilities and promote rational, efficient, and balanced use of natural resources and spaces. Natural resources, ecosystems, and historical and cultural heritage are the nation's common property, to be protected, enhanced, and valued based on integrated and sustainable management through appropriate measures. These measures are aimed, among other things, at promoting sustainable and economical use of resources, combating pollution, and strengthening climate change adaptation measures.



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Special mention must be made of the measure aimed at promoting the **protection of marine and coastal ecosystems and wetlands against the impacts of activities** likely to alter or deplete their waters and resources.

The **2015 Coastal Law adopted the concept of ICZM** (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) based on principles established by international conventions, particularly the Barcelona Convention and its ICZM Protocol. Morocco has ratified many international conventions, including, but not limited to, the Basel Convention, the Minamata Convention, the Climate Change Convention and the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and various sectoral protocols in other areas.

National legislation on protected areas follows a classification similar to that of international conventions. Each protected area therefore requires and has adopted a management plan for effective management and thus protection.

To combine biodiversity conservation with rational resource use, the Department of Water and Forests conducted a national study for “the **creation of a network of protected areas** and the development of management strategies in Morocco National Parks.” The main types of protected areas include national parks, nature parks, nature reserves, and biological reserves.

At the moment Morocco is updating its protected areas network.

National parks are created by decree in regions of great natural, biological, scientific, or social interest, with the aim of preserving them in their original state and protecting them against any threat. In national parks, all activities likely to alter or damage nature, including hunting and fishing, are prohibited in order to protect and, if possible, contribute to repopulation.

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are intertidal or subtidal areas and the overlying water, along with associated flora and fauna and historical and cultural features, which have been reserved by law or by other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment.

The Jebha-Martil region and the Massa on the Aglou-Sidi Ifni coast are two Mediterranean MPAs in Morocco.

With regard to MPAs under development, the benefits are strengthened. Considerable progress has been made in terrestrial areas, but more work remains in marine areas.

Climate change adaptation

The concept of climate change adaptation is now included in sectoral regulations, a topic at the forefront of Morocco protection and management policies, with the provision of financial and economic conditions and instruments, pending the adoption of a specific climate change measure.

Critical issues include coastal areas where construction is prohibited but where buildings already exist due to prior constraints. In this regard, it should be noted that many departments are competent for the same issue and do not always act and interact in an integrated manner.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

In terms of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Morocco, a maritime country whose coastline is a strategic resource for its socio-economic and human development, believes that such development cannot be achieved without adopting new governance systems as proposed by the ICZM approach. The strategy of Morocco Coastal Development Program (PAC) is based on the ICZM concept, which necessarily includes the management of marine areas and adjacent watersheds.

Morocco is actively involved in EU twinning projects covering all the aforementioned themes. To implement the ICZM approach, the five-year project for integrated coastal zone management in the eastern region is being implemented in cooperation with the World Bank. In the last two projects, Morocco has achieved very good results. There is also another ongoing ICZM project in the capital region.

International Commitments

Morocco environmental policies are harmonized with several major international agreements, including the Barcelona Convention, the Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Best Practices

The following are examples of successful policy implementations that have resulted in tangible outcomes:

- The “Coastal Law” of Morocco, entered into force in 2015, requires the development of regional coastal plans. In the framework **of the MedProgramme Child Project 2.1: Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Water Security, Climate Resilience and Habitat Protection**, a Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region was presented to the national stakeholders and international experts involved in the process on 12-13th March 2025 in Tanger, which is also the final product of a three-year cycle of participatory workshops. It provides actionable strategies to safeguard the region natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic vitality.
- As part of the **MedProgramme SCCF Project: Enhancing regional climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas**, Plan Bleu led the preparation of two climate risk assessments of the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Region, Morocco. The SCCF project integrates coastal climate change adaptation to Child Project 2.1’s Climagine workshops through activities related to the ecosystem-based adaptation, cost-benefit analyses for coastal adaptation solutions and engaging the private and financial sectors in Mediterranean coastal adaptation efforts.
- Morocco participated in the first edition of the Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER) edition which aims to facilitate the transposition, implementation and monitoring of the MSSD and SDGs at the regional and national level, improving effective coordination between governmental departments. SIMPEER has the potential to support the preparation and follow-up of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented by Contracting Parties at the UN High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF). SIMPEER helps Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to identify common obstacles in the implementation of their national strategies on sustainable development. Plan Bleu



coordinated the two first editions of SIMPEER with France, Montenegro and Morocco in 2016-2017, and Albania, Egypt and Tunisia in 2018-2019.

The **stakeholders** involved in the implementation and management of the identified examples include UNEP/MAP - PAP/RAC; Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of Morocco and its Regional Environment Directorate of the TTA Region (DRE TTA); TTA Regional Coastal Management Commission (CRGIL); UNESCO/HPI; GWP-Med.

Summary of Morocco Environmental Policies: Strengths and Weaknesses by the Key Points for Protected Natural Areas, ICZM, and Climate Change Policies

Protected Natural Areas (Especially Marine-Coastal Zones)

Strengths:

- Morocco has established a comprehensive legal framework for protected areas, including recent decrees (January 2025) creating five new marine protected areas.
- Legal provisions encourage participatory planning, community involvement, and delegated management for sustainability.
- Protected area management is aligned with international conventions, and management plans are required for each zone.

Weaknesses:

- Overlapping responsibilities between government departments lead to challenges in enforcement, particularly in coastal zones.
- Existing buildings and legacy development in restricted areas pose significant regulatory and ecological challenges.
- Marine areas, compared to terrestrial ones, require further progress for effective conservation.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Strengths:

- Morocco's 2015 Coastal Law is based on international principles and requires regional coastal management plans.
- The country has implemented successful ICZM projects with international partners (e.g., World Bank, EU twinning projects), particularly in strategic regions like Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima.
- ICZM is recognized at constitutional level as a pathway to sustainable, balanced, and integrated development.

Weaknesses:

- Fragmented institutional responsibilities result in coordination difficulties among agencies.
- Regulatory updates for marine zones are still in progress, and integration between terrestrial and marine governance can be improved.
- Existing unregulated developments in coastal areas complicate implementation of new policies.

Climate Change Policies Related to Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Protection



Strengths:

- Climate change adaptation is integrated into national and sectoral policy frameworks, supported by constitutional and legal reforms.
- Morocco actively participates in international conventions (e.g., Paris Agreement, Barcelona Convention) and climate adaptation projects.
- Recent laws require Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for relevant projects, including those affecting protected areas and coastal zones.

Weaknesses:

- A specific, dedicated national measure on climate change adaptation is still pending adoption.
- Institutional overlap and lack of integrated action can hinder effective implementation of climate-related measures.
- Enforcement and monitoring of new policies, especially in marine and coastal areas, face practical and administrative challenges.

Themes	Strengths	Weaknesses
Protected Natural Areas	Comprehensive legal framework, recent decrees creating new marine protected areas, participatory planning, community involvement, aligned with international conventions.	Overlapping responsibilities, existing buildings and legacy development in restricted areas, marine areas require further progress.
ICZM	Coastal Law, successful ICZM projects with international partners, recognized at constitutional level.	Fragmented institutional responsibilities, regulatory updates for marine zones in progress, unregulated developments in coastal areas.
Climate Change Policies	Climate change adaptation integrated into policy frameworks, participation in international conventions, recent laws require SEA and EIA.	Pending national measure on climate change adaptation, institutional overlap, enforcement and monitoring challenges.

Table 7. Strengths and Weaknesses of the key themes in Morocco

A SWOT Analysis of Morocco Environmental Policy Framework on the Key Themes (Protected Natural Areas, Especially Marine-Coastal Zones, ICZM, Climate Change Policies Related to



Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Protection) was also considered. The results are reported in the table here below.

	Description
Strengths	Robust Legal Framework: Morocco has established comprehensive, modern environmental legislation, including laws specific to protected areas, coastal management, and environmental impact assessments. These are aligned with international and regional conventions.
	Participatory and Integrated Approaches: legal provisions encourage participatory planning and community involvement in resource management and promote delegated management for sustainability.
	Institutional Commitment: the adoption of the 2011 Constitution and the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development affirms the nation's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable development.
	Recent Achievements: the creation of five new marine protected areas in January 2025 demonstrates ongoing progress in marine biodiversity conservation.
	International Engagement: Morocco actively participates in international agreements (Barcelona Convention, Paris Agreement, Convention on Biological Diversity) and regional projects supporting ICZM and climate adaptation.
	Public Participation: Environmental Assessment laws require public inquiries and access to information, fostering transparency and community buy-in.
	Practices Adopted: tangible outcomes achieved through projects such as the Tanger-Tetouan-Al Hoceima Coastal Zone Management Plan and climate risk assessments in collaboration with international partners.
	Weaknesses



	Regulatory Gaps and Legacy Issues: existing buildings and previous development in restricted areas create complex regulatory and ecological challenges.
	Implementation Gaps: despite robust legal frameworks, enforcement and effective on-the-ground management in marine areas lag behind progress achieved in terrestrial zones.
	Limited Transboundary Assessment: Environmental Assessments (EIA/SEA) are limited to national scope, with little provision for transboundary environmental effects.
	Pending Reforms: some critical laws, such as the updated environmental assessment law (Law 49-17), are not yet fully in force, delaying comprehensive application of new standards.
Opportunities	Expansion of Marine Protection: ongoing updates to the protected areas network and the establishment of new marine protected zones can further strengthen marine biodiversity conservation.
	International Cooperation: continued engagement with international conventions, regional projects, and peer review mechanisms (like SIMPEER) can enhance policy harmonisation, capacity building, and knowledge exchange.
	Climate Change Adaptation: integration of climate adaptation strategies into sectoral policies and coastal management offers potential for ecosystem-based adaptation and increased resilience.
	Public Engagement and Awareness: institutionalising participatory processes and public access to environmental information can foster stronger stewardship and community-led initiatives.
	Technological and Scientific Advancements: adoption of new monitoring, planning, and management technologies can improve enforcement, data collection, and adaptive management in protected and coastal areas.
Threats	Ongoing Environmental Pressures: urbanisation, unregulated construction, and legacy development



	threaten the ecological integrity of coastal and marine zones.
	Institutional Fragmentation: continued lack of coordination among agencies may undermine integrated policy implementation and weaken conservation outcomes.
	Climate Change Impacts: rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased frequency of extreme weather events pose systemic risks to marine and coastal biodiversity, as well as to livelihoods and infrastructure.
	Funding Constraints: limited resources for enforcement, monitoring, and capacity building can hamper the effectiveness of policy measures.
	Socio-Economic Pressures: balancing economic growth, tourism, and local livelihoods with conservation goals remains a persistent challenge, requiring ongoing dialogue and adaptive management.

Table 8. SWOT Analysis on the Key Themes in Morocco

5. Thematic focus, from a legal point of view, including policies, for marine-coastal areas on the identified themes

The four Project Working Groups were called to compile a questionnaire focusing on indications and suggestions on legal instruments and policies, experiences and examples, relevant for their respective WG. Coordinators were invited to present their WG overview and provide examples illustrating good practices.

5.1 Area-based Conservation

Question: What types of legal (but also policy) instruments are most commonly used by the EU and non-EU countries of the Mediterranean, to **design area-based conservation measures**? The term **'design'** in this question, referring to the legal context, also includes the concept of **'implementation'** and **'management'**.

When considering the legal and policy tools most frequently used to design area-based conservation strategies in Mediterranean countries, both within and outside the EU, it is important to recognize the diversity of approaches shaped by different governance frameworks.



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

Within the European Union, one of the cornerstone instruments is the Natura 2000 network, established under the Habitats and Birds Directives. This network integrates a vast array of protected areas across member states. In addition to Natura 2000, countries established National Parks, Nature Reserves, and similar management bodies. The creation and implementation of management plans for these protected areas, as well as targeted action plans, play a crucial role in turning conservation policy into effective management on the ground.

Marine and coastal zones within the EU are further supported by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), which provides a legal basis for comprehensive marine protection. For non-EU Mediterranean countries, the Barcelona Convention and especially its Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) serve as the primary regional legal instruments.

In the realm of marine spatial planning, the EU relies on its Marine Spatial Planning Directive, whereas non-EU countries often use national Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plans to organize and regulate coastal and marine uses.

For marine areas beyond the EU, there are additional frameworks such as the Post-SAP BIO Protocol, while terrestrial conservation is typically shaped by national policies and plans. These varied legal and policy instruments—spanning from regional conventions to national strategies, collectively underpin the design, implementation, and management of area-based conservation throughout the Mediterranean.

5.2 Climate Change Adaptation

Question: Which legal (and therefore policy) instruments and related processes are the most promising drivers for climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Mediterranean region? What are the most important financial tools? Please, provide answers both for mitigation and adaptation.

Following a thorough examination of the pertinent issues, the Working Group 2 determined that it should concentrate its efforts exclusively on the issue of adaptation.

The most promising instruments for climate change in the Mediterranean region are:

- **The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**, which supports climate change mitigation by prioritizing nature-based solutions, such as restoring forests and ecosystems, which act as carbon sinks. It aligns with the Paris Agreement's goals by emphasizing the synergy between biodiversity and climate actions. Key actions include a strong focus on restoration (30% of degraded habitats) and protection (30% of land and sea), which not only helps biodiversity but also contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- **The EU Green Deal**, as a set of policy initiatives launched by the European Commission with the aim to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. To make this objective legally binding, the Commission proposed the European Climate Law.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

The strategy is comprehensive in nature, encompassing legally binding targets, including a 55% reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. The strategy aims to achieve these targets through investments in green technologies, modifications to consumption and production methods, and the protection of the natural environment across all sectors. Barcelona Convention and MSSD.

- **The European Union Nature Restoration Law (NRL)** and its overarching objective to address the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss by facilitating the restoration of degraded ecosystems throughout the European Union.

- **The Covenant of Mayors**, the initiative that unites local authorities of all sizes, democratically constituted and represented by elected officials, who are committed to taking action on climate and energy issues. This commitment is evident in both those who have recently initiated the implementation of their policies and those who have already advanced to a more advanced stage. The obligations of the parties that have entered into the Covenant are contingent upon the EU prevailing climate and energy policy framework, with a particular emphasis on the objective of achieving climate neutrality by the year 2050. Covenant signatories are obliged to adopt an integrated approach to climate change mitigation, adaptation and energy poverty.

The following financial instruments are indicated to be utilised to implement actions that extend beyond the scope of policy:

- **The European Union (EU)** financial support mechanisms that encompass a range of programmes, including the LIFE and Horizon initiatives.

- **The World Bank (WB)**, which employs a variety of financial instruments to address climate change, encompassing conventional methods such as grants and loans, as well as innovative tools including emission reduction payment agreements (ERPAs), concessional finance, sovereign green bonds, and risk transfer instruments such as catastrophe bonds (CATs). These instruments are utilised for both the mitigation (e.g., renewable energy, energy efficiency) and adaptation (e.g., disaster risk reduction, resilient infrastructure) of climate change, frequently employing a combination of public and private finance to promote climate-resilient development.

- **BIRD and BAfD.**

- Several national cooperation programs, managed by key national agencies, including: AFD (Agence Française de Développement – France), AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo – Spain), and AICS (Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo – Italy). Additionally, these programs may involve local development agencies such as regional governments, councils, and unions of municipalities.



5.3 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

Which policies and legal instruments effectively support and contribute to a proper **evaluation of the socio-economic benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services**?

The Green Deal constitutes a framework for the future sustainable development of the nation, with the principle of placing nature conservation at its core.

The issue of socio-economic benefits is not generally addressed directly. A plethora of peer-reviewed publications and reviews, including DasGupta (2024), have been published; however, a substantial gap remains. This lacuna may be addressed through the integration of conservation planning within a comprehensive marine spatial plan framework.

It is at this juncture that our collective attention should be directed engaging with commercial stakeholder groups and identifying where conservation actions can be monetised. In this manner the contribution of conservation actions can be attributed providing argumentation for inclusion in broader governmental policy.

5.4 Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions

Question: How **ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions**, linked to **sustainable economic opportunities**, are promoted together at Mediterranean level? Are there any **risks**?

The UNEP/MAP Barcelona Convention system has progressively adopted the Ecosystem Approach in recent years which refers to an overarching principle embedded in the work of the Convention. It also refers to a roadmap (with milestones and a timetable) leading to the fulfilment of the vision of "a healthy Mediterranean with marine and coastal ecosystems that are productive and biologically diverse for the benefit of present and future generations" under the Barcelona Convention. As part of the Ecosystem Approach roadmap, the Contracting Parties have adopted eleven Ecological Objectives that address key elements of the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment. These objectives constitute the backbone of a harmonized regional system that allows UNEP/MAP and the Contracting Parties to take the pulse of Mediterranean ecosystems: the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast and Related Assessment Criteria (IMAP). Introduced by UNEP/MAP and adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2016, IMAP has transformed the way in which monitoring and assessment of the status of the marine and coastal environment are conducted. Components of UNEP/MAP support Mediterranean countries in this endeavour by providing technical expertise and capacity building, as well as through the delivery of demonstrative projects that bolster national command of monitoring and assessment tools and methods.

Ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions in the Mediterranean are being promoted through key documents and strategies, such as the MSSD 2016-2025 (currently being revised for the next period), the MAP/MTS 2022-2027, the Post-2020 SAPBIO and specific action plans such as the Restoration Programme of Pinna Nobilis and the Guidelines for the



Assessment of Environmental Impact on Coralligenous and Maerl Assemblages. These documents all mention the need to invest in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development. There are also flagship initiatives that support the restoration of key Mediterranean ecosystems, contributing to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration such as the 'Restoring Mediterranean Forests' aiming to restore 8 million hectares by 2030 in Lebanon, Türkiye, Morocco and Tunisia.

6. A wider Mediterranean overlook: results of the quali-quantitative survey

6.1 Main results of the quali-quantitative survey

In order to have a wider vision of the governance processes around the Mediterranean countries, a qualitative-quantitative survey has been realized. Thus, a **questionnaire** (See Annex 2) has been submitted to a wide range of experts from the Mediterranean region as a survey on legal instruments and policies for conservation in the Mediterranean, aiming to explore the relationship between legal instruments and spatial governance processes at different levels that influence the implementation of policies for nature and biodiversity conservation in the Mediterranean region, as well as to build knowledge that supports nature conservation efforts across the Mediterranean community.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections:

1. Area-Based Conservation (Protected Areas – Planning and Management)
2. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
3. Climate Change Adaptation
4. Governance and Implementation

The questionnaire received 15 responses. The following important information is highlighted in relation to the main specific key questions.

What types of legal instruments are employed in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures?

In the respondent countries, all types of instruments are frequently used, from the Internationally derived legal instruments, such as Ramsar sites; the EU-derived legal instruments such as Natura 2000 network (for EU Member States); National law of establishment and management of protected natural areas; Regional/local law of establishment and management of protected natural areas. Some of the respondents indicated **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)**, such as in Slovenia sustainable use areas, traditional practices, private land conservation, marine spatial planning, and ecological corridors. In Croatia, in the Split-Dalmatia County, several spatial and sectoral measures function as OECMs, even if they are not officially designated as protected areas under national nature protection legislation. Examples include:



- Seasonal and permanent fishing bans in biologically sensitive marine areas, such as parts of the Jabuka Pit and selected coastal fish spawning zones.
- Zoning and use restrictions in municipal spatial plans (UPU, PPUZ) that protect *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, coastal dunes, and submerged habitats from construction or anchoring.
- Eco-mooring systems installed in marine tourist zones to prevent anchor damage to seabeds and reduce boat traffic in ecologically sensitive areas (e.g. Pakleni islands, Blue Lagoon).
- Mariculture-free zones established to preserve the quality of coastal habitats and reduce nutrient load in sensitive areas.
- Local initiatives and marine stewardship agreements by diving centers and ecotourism operators aimed at preserving underwater biodiversity and marine litter removal. These measures contribute effectively to biodiversity conservation, though they remain outside the formal protected area network and are yet to be systematically mapped as OECMs in Croatia.

What legal instruments are used in your country to promote, plan, and implement nature restoration actions?

In the respondent countries, national legislation aligns with EU directives, particularly the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). These directives are commonly transposed into national laws to ensure effective implementation. For example, in Portugal, a comprehensive legal architecture supports nature restoration. This includes the National Strategy for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity 2030, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedures, as well as river basin management regulations that promote ecological restoration of aquatic systems. Specific programmes, such as the “Programa de Transformação da Paisagem,” also support landscape-scale restoration.

Croatia legislative landscape is similarly robust, with the Nature Protection Act and Water Act forming the foundation of conservation law. The legal requirement to integrate nature protection into spatial planning ensures that restoration actions are considered early in development processes. Slovenia, Cyprus, and Albania also report strong reliance on EU legislation, supported by national environmental laws and forest management policies.

Does your administration have tools to assess the management effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)?

Most of the respondents replied that in their country there are such tools, even if not always regularly applied and used to guide management or used irregularly or without strong influence on decisions. Croatia specified that all tools are available for monitoring the Natura 2000 sites, environmental impact assessments, reports on the state of biodiversity, reports on the management of protected areas, fisheries.

In **Slovenia** are utilized tools and methods such as management plans for protected areas; protected areas monitoring and reporting system; site-based monitoring programs; environmental assessments (EIA/SEA); Natura 2000 reports Slovenian biodiversity monitoring system.



Spain indicated the Living Planet Index, used since 2020 at Catalan level.

Albania utilizes several tools to assess the management effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) and OECMs. One widely used tool is the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), developed by WWF and the World Bank. This tool has been regularly applied in Albania since 2015 to evaluate the effectiveness of protected area management. Additionally, Albania has conducted assessments using methodologies aligned with the IUCN Framework for Evaluating Protected Area Management Effectiveness, which provides structured indicators to measure conservation success, helping in identifying gaps, improving governance, and ensuring adaptive management strategies for biodiversity conservation.

Most of the respondents replied that in their country there are coordination mechanisms between different authorities or levels/sectors of government responsible for implementing conservation and planning measures.

Are there specific financial instruments in relation to marine and coastal areas' nature and biodiversity conservation? If yes, provide examples.

Portugal has specific financial instruments aimed at the conservation of marine and coastal nature and biodiversity. These mechanisms support the implementation of Marine Protected Areas, promote a sustainable blue economy and ensure effective management of marine ecosystems. The main instruments are:

- National Financial Instruments. Fundo Ambiental (Environmental Fund) to finance environmental policy, including marine and coastal biodiversity projects.
- Blue Fund: public financial instrument created by the Portuguese Government to support the transition to a sustainable blue economy;
- Portugal Blue: an initiative by the European Investment Fund (EIF) in partnership with the Blue Fund;
- InvestEU: EU program that supports sustainable investments across various sectors, including the blue economy;
- Sustainable Financing Instruments and Green/Blue Bonds: instruments issued by governments or financial institutions to finance projects related to ocean conservation and sustainability;
- Supports actions like marine protected area (MPA) management, habitat restoration, monitoring, and public awareness;
- Annual or thematic calls for marine conservation initiatives;
- Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência (PRR) – Componente Bioeconomia Sustentável

Slovenia cited the following main instruments:

- EU financial instruments - EMFAF funds and LIFE programme;
- National such as Eco Fund (Eko Sklad);
- Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). For example, Slovenia has implemented public-private partnerships to manage protected coastal areas, such as the Sečoveljske soline Landscape Park.

Croatia listed the following main instruments:



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

- EU funding (LIFE program);
- National and Regional Funds;
- Projects supported by international NGOs.

Egypt referred to the resources provided by the Government and international donors.

Albania has several financial instruments supporting marine and coastal biodiversity conservation. Some key mechanisms include:

- EU for Nature Initiative. Funded by the European Commission and Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), this project aims to protect at least 25% of Albania's land and sea by 2030 through effective management of protected areas;
- Enhancing Financial Sustainability of Protected Areas. A UNDP-led initiative that helps secure long-term financial resources for protected areas, including marine ecosystems. It focuses on reducing funding gaps, improving management, and mobilizing diverse financial strategies;
- MAVFA Foundation Support. Albania receives funding from the MAVFA Foundation for Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity conservation, supporting ecological assessments and conservation planning;
- National Budget Allocations. The National Agency on Protected Areas (NAPA) operates with funding from the state budget, donors, and other legally determined sources to ensure sustainable conservation efforts.

Are there specific examples of the principles and objectives of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) being taken into account in your regional and national strategies and plans? Are there specific examples of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) adoption and implementation in the management policies of marine and coastal protected areas in your country?

The answers of the respondents are given below.

Although the **Republic of Cyprus** has not yet ratified the ICZM Protocol, there are examples of ICZM principles and objectives being taken into account. For instance, a specific chapter on the ICZM Protocol is included in Local Development Plan preparation. These principles and objectives are also considered in environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs), particularly with regard to the environmental impact on coasts, coastlines, habitats, and protected species on land and at sea, as set out in the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The principles and objectives are also considered in the development of the Maritime Spatial Plan (MSP), which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on 20 December 2023 and which takes into account interactions between land and sea (Land-Sea Interactions, or LSI).

It should be noted that **Portugal** is not a party to the Barcelona Convention System as it is not a Mediterranean country; however, it is a Member State of the European Union. Examples of



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

ICZM principles and objectives taken into account include: Portugal's National Strategy for the Sea Economy; National Spatial Planning and Coastal Zone Policies; and Coastal Zone Programmes, which are regional spatial management plans designed specifically for the mainland coast and which fully reflect ICZM principles. Other examples include Marine Spatial Plans (MSPs); the Azores Marine Protected Areas Network; and the Alentejo and Algarve Coastal Management Plans.

Furthermore, **Portugal** incorporates ICZM principles into its management policies for marine and coastal protected areas by employing ecosystem-based management, encouraging multi-stakeholder participation, coordinating across sectors, and practicing adaptive governance. These policies help to balance biodiversity conservation with sustainable socio-economic development in coastal zones such as the Natural Park of the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast (Parque Natural do Sudoeste Alentejano e Costa Vicentina). This park integrates land and marine components within a single protected area and coordinates the protection of biodiversity, as well as the sustainable management of fisheries, agriculture, tourism and erosion control across land-sea interfaces. The park's management plan includes zoning and the regulation of fishing, aquaculture, tourism and traditional activities — all of which are key elements of ICZM. Other examples include the Berlengas Nature Reserve, the Azores Marine Protected Areas Network, the Lisbon Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve, and Portugal's Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management Programmes.

Slovenia is an EU Member State (MS) and party to the Barcelona Convention System and has ratified its ICZM Protocol on 1 December 2009. Examples of ICZM principles and objectives being taken into account include: the Strunjan Landscape Park pilot project. The goals of this project were to contribute to the sustainable development of Strunjan Landscape Park (located on the Slovenian coast in the municipalities of Piran and Izola); test MSP on a local scale; reduce pressure on the area's natural resources, environment, landscape quality, and cultural heritage; harmonise marine and land uses; eliminate conflicts between different uses at sea and on land; improve the quality of the area's landscape and architectural design; and raise public awareness of spatial planning and development issues. Slovenia incorporates ICZM principles into its management policies for the marine and coastal protected areas of the Strunjan Landscape Park and the Sečovlje Salina Nature Reserve.

Albania is a candidate country for European Union membership and a party to the Barcelona Convention System, having accessed its ICZM Protocol on 4 May 2010. ICZM principles are incorporated into various national and regional strategies to promote sustainable coastal development and biodiversity conservation. Some key examples include: The EU for Nature Initiative, which aims to protect at least 25% of Albania land and sea by 2030 by balancing conservation with economic activities; the Albania Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean-up Project, a World Bank-supported initiative focusing on coastal protection, pollution control, and sustainable land use; the Coastal Zone Development and Clean-up Programme addressing urbanisation, infrastructure development and biodiversity conservation, while ensuring compliance with environmental safeguards; the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2012–2020), which defines directions for coastal habitat preservation and integrates



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

ICZM principles into Albania's environmental policies. These efforts highlight Albania's commitment to balancing environmental protection with sustainable coastal development.

Furthermore, Albania has incorporated ICZM principles into its policies for marine and coastal protected areas. Key examples include the Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Project, which is supported by the UNDP and focuses on preventing coastal erosion, conserving biodiversity, and managing resources sustainably; the Karaburun-Sazan National Marine Park, Albania's first Marine Protected Area, where ICZM principles guide habitat restoration, pollution control, and sustainable tourism; and the conservation of Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity in Albania, which is a long-term strategy that aligns with ICZM principles in order to protect marine ecosystems and address the impacts of climate change.

Which policies and legal instruments effectively support and contribute to a proper evaluation of the socio-economic benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services in your country?

Respondents highlighted several frameworks that facilitate the integration of biodiversity into economic planning and decision-making. In **Portugal**, the evaluation of ecosystem services is embedded within the National Strategy for Biodiversity and the Action Plan for Ecosystem Services, aligned with the EU MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services) initiative. These instruments encourage valuation methodologies in public policy and climate adaptation projects, particularly in vulnerable areas such as coastal zones.

Croatia has mandated Strategic Environmental Assessments for national policy strategies since 2013. These assessments include biodiversity and nature impact evaluations, laying the groundwork for better appreciation of nature's contributions to human well-being. The Marine Strategy Framework Directive further supports the integration of marine ecosystem services into environmental status assessments.

Albania has taken significant steps toward mainstreaming biodiversity value in governance. Its legal tools, such as Law No. 81/2017 on Protected Areas and the Environmental Impact Assessment Law, require the economic valuation of biodiversity impacts. Complementing this, national studies—such as the Albanian Development Fund's biodiversity baseline and research by the Albanian Ornithological Society—help quantify the economic importance of protected areas, like Divjaka-Karavasta National Park. Practical monitoring tools like the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) are being used to assess the ecological and economic performance of protected areas, ensuring that conservation delivers tangible socio-economic returns.

Has your country adopted a climate change adaptation strategy or plan?

The majority of respondents reported that their countries had adopted climate change adaptation regulations, at least at a national level, with a focus on marine and coastal areas.



Spain has adopted a climate change adaptation plan or the “Plan Nacional de Adaptación al Cambio Climático (PNACC 30)”. There are also regional plans and strategies in order to adapt to climate change impacts. For instance, Catalonia has created the “Estratègia Catalana d’Adaptació al Canvi Climàtic (ESCACC 30)”. Spain has also adopted other specific policies and normative regulations in relation to climate change adaptation, in particular the following ones:

- Ley 7/2021, de 20 de mayo, de cambio climático y transición energética. The Law dedicates its title V to adaptation to climate change. In it, it identifies the National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change as the basic planning instrument to promote action against the effects of climate change in Spain, defining its objectives and contents. It also establishes indications to consider climate change in water planning and management, the protection of biodiversity, the planning and management of the maritime terrestrial public domain, territorial and urban planning and management, or transportation, among others.
- Plan Estratégico de Salud y Medio Ambiente 2022-2025. This plan is structured into 14 thematic areas; one of them is “climate change.” In addition, there are others closely related to climate change: “air quality”, “water quality”, “extreme temperatures” and “disease transmitting vectors”.
- Plan Nacional de Actuaciones Preventivas de los Efectos del Exceso de Temperaturas Sobre la Salud (2021). This plan establishes measures to reduce the effects associated with excessive temperatures and to coordinate the State Administration institutions involved. Likewise, it proposes actions that can be carried out by the Autonomous Communities and the Local Administration.
- Plan Nacional de Preparación y Respuesta frente a enfermedades transmitidas por vectores. 1. Dengue, Chikungunya y Zika (2016). This plan aims to reduce the risk and minimize the global impact of this type of emerging diseases, favoured by climate change.
- Real Decreto 1159/2021, por el que se modifica el Reglamento de la Planificación Hidrológica. The preliminary assessment of flood risk is developed following a methodology that integrates climate change projections.
- Normas técnicas de seguridad para las presas y sus embalses (2021). The technical standard on the classification of dams establishes that the licensee will review the adequacy of the recognized classification of the dam to the existing conditions and the influence that the effects of climate change could have on this classification. The dam safety technical standard establishes that the construction project of a new dam must include a study of the impact of climate change on the climatology and hydrology of the basin. The technical standard on safety for the exploitation, establishes the need to take into account the possible future variation in the seasonal distribution of floods as a consequence of climate change.
- Estrategia Nacional de Infraestructura Verde y de la Conectividad y Restauración Ecológicas. This strategic document identifies the close link between connectivity and climate change. On the one hand, the impacts of climate change can raise “climate barriers” between populations and communities, favouring diffuse fragmentation processes and can also affect connectivity due to its habitat alteration effect; on the other hand, the document recognizes the great importance of green infrastructure as a mechanism for adaptation to climate change and opens an intense path of work for its development.



- Estrategia Nacional Para la Conservación de Polinizadores (2020). This strategy is based, regarding the effects of climate change, on the study “Impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change of Mediterranean beekeeping” from 2017. The document includes the need to consider actions to adapt to climate change and actions that favour the sustainability and resilience of beekeeping activity.
- Plan de acción sobre las vías de introducción y propagación de las especies exóticas invasoras en España. As the document states, climate change is consolidated as one of the main threats to be taken into account in management plans for invasive exotic species, which sometimes find favourable conditions for their development in the country, referring to Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1143/2014 of 22 October 2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species, and the need to carry out a thorough risk analysis of the introduction, establishment and spread of invasive alien species in the relevant biogeographic regions under current and foreseeable climate change conditions.

Are ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions (NbS), linked to sustainable economic opportunities, promoted in your country?

Most of the respondents' countries promote ecosystem restoration and NbS linked to sustainable economic opportunities.

Portugal takes action as part of its national strategies for biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and sustainable economic development, as well as through EU-funded programs, and local initiatives. These actions are aligned with EU priorities, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU Nature Restoration Law, and the European Green Deal.

- Portugal takes action as part of its national strategies for biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation and sustainable economic development, as well as through EU-funded programmes and local initiatives. These actions align with EU priorities, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU Nature Restoration Law and the European Green Deal.
- The National Strategy for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity 2030 (ENCNB 2030) integrates ecosystem services (ES) and natural capital valuation into public policy. It promotes the restoration of degraded ecosystems, encourages the use of nature-based solutions (NbS) to enhance climate resilience and biodiversity, and links restoration with green jobs, ecotourism, and sustainable rural development.
- The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (ENAAAC 2020/ENAAAC 2030) encourages the inclusion of ecosystem services in cost-benefit analyses for adaptation projects, particularly in water and coastal zones. It integrates NbS as core measures for adapting to the impacts of climate change and focuses on restoring coastal wetlands, reforesting burned areas and improving watershed management. All of these measures support the sustainable economic use of resources.
- The Recovery and Resilience Plan (PRR) Component 11, Bioeconomy, which provides direct funding for rewilding, reforestation, and green job creation.
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development Programmes provide financial incentives for farmers and landowners to adopt nature-positive practices and support ecological restoration aligned with biodiversity and productivity goals.
- Blue Natural Capital and Marine Restoration Projects: Restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems (e.g. seagrasses and salt marshes) contributes to fisheries, tourism and



climate regulation. These projects are aligned with the EU's Biodiversity Strategy and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

- The Portugal Green Growth Commitment (Compromisso para o Crescimento Verde) links ecosystem restoration and green infrastructure with economic innovation and encourages Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for urban resilience, such as nature-based urban drainage and green roofs.

Economic opportunities from NbS in Portugal include ecotourism in restored natural parks and coastal zones, sustainable forestry and agriculture based on restored soils and habitats, and fisheries recovery through marine habitat restoration. Other opportunities include carbon credits and ecosystem service markets (both emerging areas), and local employment in conservation, land stewardship and NbS project management.

Slovenia is actively promoting ecosystem restoration and NbS through various initiatives that combine these measures with sustainable economic opportunities. The country is preparing a National Nature Restoration Plan with the aim of restoring degraded ecosystems, improving biodiversity, and enhancing ecosystem services by 2030. In the capital, Ljubljana, urban NbS projects such as the establishment of ecological zones and the restoration of the Ljubljanica River have been implemented to improve ecological connectivity and residents quality of life. Furthermore, Slovenia is collaborating with Italy on cross-border projects to assess the economic feasibility of biodiversity conservation and improve resilience and biodiversity through the restoration of forest ecosystems. These efforts support sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and urban planning, and demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainable economic development through nature-based solutions.

It should be mentioned for **Croatia**:

- The DesirMED project, which focuses on applying Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) to adapt the coastal region of Split-Dalmatia County to climate change, particularly in Kaštela Bay and the surrounding cities of Split, Solin, Kaštela, and Trogir. Nature-Based Solutions for Coastal Adaptation', which focuses on applying NbS to help the Split-Dalmatia coastal region adapt to climate change, with a particular focus on Kaštela Bay and the surrounding cities of Split, Solin, Kaštela and Trogir. A workshop held in February 2025 brought together various stakeholders to develop a shared vision for the future of Kaštela Bay. Proposed solutions included installing floating pontoons to prevent flooding, constructing a 'green wall' on the slopes of Kozjak Mountain, promoting permeable surfaces to reduce excessive concrete use and expanding protected natural areas.
- The Marjan Forest Park Ecosystem Service Assessment. Marjan Hill, often referred to as the 'green lungs' of Split, has been the subject of an ecosystem service assessment conducted by the environmental organisation Sunce. The assessment aims to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the park and its role in providing services such as air purification, carbon sequestration and recreation.
- The EU-funded Horizon 2020 GrowGreen project is based in Zadar, a coastal city in northern Croatia. This initiative focuses on integrating nature-based solutions to address climate and water resilience challenges.
- The Re-Enforce Project for Forest Restoration, led by the Croatian Forest Research Institute (CFRI) and focusing on restoring degraded forests in Central Europe. In Croatia, this includes a pilot project near Jastrebarsko.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

- The Coastal Adaptation Plan in Šibenik-Knin County integrates climate change adaptation into coastal planning.
- The Coastal Adaptation Plan for the City of Kaštela.

Albania is actively promoting ecosystem restoration and NbS as part of its environmental and economic strategies. These efforts are linked to sustainable economic opportunities, particularly in eco-tourism, sustainable agriculture, and coastal resilience.

Key Initiatives Supporting Ecosystem Restoration & NbS:

- EU for Nature Initiative: aims to protect 25% of Albania's land and sea by 2030, integrating NbS to combat climate change and enhance biodiversity conservation.
- Albania Blue Economy Development Project: supported by the World Bank, this initiative strengthens marine and coastal resource management, promoting sustainable fisheries, eco-tourism, and coastal resilience.
- EU4Nature Project: focuses on restoring degraded habitats and implementing NbS to enhance biodiversity and support local economies.
- Economic Benefits of Nature-Based Solutions.
- Eco-tourism Growth: protected areas and restored ecosystems attract visitors, boosting local economies.
- Sustainable Agriculture: NbS improve soil health, water retention, and crop resilience, benefiting farmers.
- Coastal Protection: restored wetlands and mangroves reduce flood risks, protecting infrastructure and communities.

Nature restoration represents an important opportunity to support nature conservation and restore the already degraded ecosystems. Do you see any risk of misuse of the ecosystem restoration? What prevention measures could be identified to face these risks?

Some of the risks associated with misusing nature restoration are recognised by the respondents and are listed below, along with proposals for preventive measures to address these risks.

Portugal.

Using non-native or fast-growing species (e.g. eucalyptus) for reforestation can reduce biodiversity and increase the risk of fires.

Restoration projects may be used for green branding by entities without achieving meaningful ecological recovery.

Restoration plans that exclude local stakeholders may lead to ineffective or socially unjust outcomes.

Prioritising carbon sequestration can overshadow the restoration of native ecosystems, which provide richer ecosystem services and biodiversity.

Restoration projects are often funded as one-off initiatives with no follow-up, which can lead to rapid degradation or failure.

Prevention measures



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Use ecologically appropriate species and emphasise native biodiversity.

Integrate restoration with local livelihoods (e.g. ecotourism);

Involve communities and stakeholders in planning and governance.

Balance biodiversity, climate and socio-economic goals, avoiding single-issue approaches.

Ensure long-term funding, monitoring and adaptive management.

Slovenia

Misguided or inadequate restoration practices. Ecosystem restoration efforts are sometimes poorly designed, focusing on immediate successes or quick fixes rather than addressing the causes of degradation.

Commercial exploitation. There is a risk that restoration projects, particularly in valuable ecosystems such as forests or wetlands, are used to justify exploitation, e.g. for unsustainable logging or development disguised as "restoration".

Exclusion of local communities. If restoration projects are not inclusive, local communities may be excluded from benefits such as sustainable land use or access to ecosystem services. Mismanagement in this regard could lead to social tensions or the loss of traditional knowledge that could otherwise support restoration efforts.

Concentration on a few species or habitats. Restoration efforts sometimes focus on a limited number of species or ecosystems, ignoring broader biodiversity needs.

Greenwashing. Some institutions or organisations may advertise ecosystem restoration in order to create a "green" image, when in reality these measures are minimal or superficial. This may distract from the urgent need for large-scale restoration efforts to improve the health of the environment in general.

Prevention measures

The legal framework should be strengthened with rigorous environmental impact assessments and independent oversight to ensure ecological integrity.

Local communities should be involved.

Taking a holistic approach that promotes biodiversity and ecosystem functions rather than focusing on individual species or habitats.

There should be transparency, clear objectives and accountability mechanisms.

Croatia

Misalignment with local needs. If not properly integrated with community needs, restoration efforts might conflict with local economic activities such as fishing or tourism.

Greenwashing. Some projects may claim to restore ecosystems for funding purposes without delivering any real benefits, so strong monitoring and accountability are required.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Overemphasis on 'ideal' ecosystems. Restoration efforts may aim for unrealistic pre-human conditions, ignoring the impacts of long-term human activity and climate change.

Unintended environmental consequences. Restoring ecosystems can have unintended effects, such as disrupting existing species or ecological functions, if not carefully managed.

Inadequate funding and long-term management. Without sustained investment and proper management, restoration projects may fail over time.

Prevention measures

To mitigate these risks, Croatia suggests adopting a participatory approach, setting realistic goals, ensuring long-term funding and monitoring projects to ensure both ecological and socio-economic success. Other measures include adaptive management, networking all key stakeholders and taking a holistic, ecosystem-wide approach with a clear monitoring and accountability framework.

Albania

Although ecosystem restoration is a powerful tool for conserving biodiversity, there is a risk of its misuse or incorrect implementation. Some key concerns regarding the potential misuse of ecosystem restoration include:

Greenwashing. Some projects may claim to restore ecosystems, but actually prioritise public relations over conservation efforts.

Monoculture plantations. Rather than restoring natural biodiversity, some initiatives may promote single-species plantations, which can harm local ecosystems.

Infrastructure expansion under the guise of restoration. Some developments may exploit restoration projects to justify the expansion of tourism or commercial activities in sensitive areas.

Displacement of local communities. Poorly planned restoration efforts may restrict local communities' access to natural resources, thereby affecting their livelihoods.

Failure to address root causes. Restoration efforts that do not address pollution, deforestation, or unsustainable land use may only lead to temporary improvements.

Prevention measures:

The country approach to avoiding misuse involves activities designed to strengthen its environmental governance through initiatives like the EU for Nature Project. These initiatives focus on the effective management of protected areas and nature-based solutions. Tools such as the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) help to ensure scientifically sound restoration projects are aligned with conservation goals.

Some effective prevention strategies to prevent the misuse of ecosystem restoration include:

- 1 Strengthening environmental governance. Clear legal frameworks: establish strict regulations to prevent greenwashing and ensure that restoration projects align with scientific conservation principles. - Independent monitoring and evaluation:



- Use tools such as the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) to assess the actual impact of restoration projects. Public accountability and transparency: require regular reporting on restoration outcomes to prevent the misuse of funds and ensure genuine conservation efforts.
2. Promoting science-based restoration. Avoid monoculture plantations: ensure that restoration efforts prioritise biodiversity over single-species plantations. Implement ecosystem-based approaches that restore natural habitats while supporting local economies. Climate adaptation integration: align restoration projects with climate resilience strategies to ensure long-term sustainability.
 3. Safeguarding local communities and livelihoods. Community engagement involving local stakeholders in restoration planning to ensure that projects benefit both nature and people. Implement sustainable land-use policies to prevent land grabs and ensure that restoration does not displace communities or restrict access to natural resources.
Promote economic opportunities linked to restoration, such as ecotourism and sustainable agriculture.
 4. Strengthen cross-sector collaboration. Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs) to invest in genuine conservation efforts rather than profit-driven greenwashing. Regional and international cooperation to align Albania restoration policies with the EU Nature Restoration Law and global biodiversity targets. Capacity building and training to provide education and training for environmental authorities to ensure effective restoration management.

Spain

In Spain, the question is what we should restore and to what extent. For example, would a traditional mosaic landscape of forests, extensive pasture and crops be considered restoration from intensive agriculture? Which areas are prioritised, and how? How is effectiveness assessed?

Prevention measures:

Effective monitoring and the integration of traditional land use types within national restoration policies, as well as multi-stakeholder evaluations of regional prioritisation, complementing top-down approaches with bottom-up ones.

Have participatory processes been used in the design, drafting or implementation of the above legal or policy instruments? Please list who was involved and how long the process lasted, specifying what form of participation was used.

Cyprus

Public consultation was held in accordance with the provisions of the legislation. Participants were asked to share their opinion.

Spain

Stakeholder involvements are open to groups of interest and individuals and usually last 1-2 years from the start to the end.

The form of participation used depended on the influence of the actor.

Italy



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Participants were only informed or had some control over decisions.

Portugal

Several regional entities had participated in the development of PIAACBA such as managing authorities, municipalities, ONG, academia and research institutions, among several others.

Sustainable Development Strategy / Agenda 2030 Localization: public consultations were held during the alignment of Portugal's development strategy with the 2030 Agenda.

The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the UN (2017, 2023) were developed through multi-stakeholder dialogue, involving: Government ministries, civil society organizations, private sector, academia, youth platforms (e.g. Portuguese youth council).

National Biodiversity Strategy (ENB 2030): designed with input from scientific bodies, environmental organizations, and landowners. Integrated consultation workshops and online feedback mechanisms.

Marine Spatial Planning and Protected Areas Management: participatory planning processes are a legal requirement under the EU Marine Spatial Planning Directive.

Coastal management plans (POOC) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) involve local fisheries, community representatives, tourism operators, and academic experts.

Participants had some influence on the outcomes and/or some control over decisions.

Croatia

In the development of the Coastal Plan a total of 80 stakeholders were identified and invited to participate. In addition, the academic community was involved through the work of students, and with the mentorship of experts from the project team of this plan. Communication with stakeholders was maintained through workshops. A total of five participatory workshops were organized, where key topics were addressed, and a draft of the Coastal Plan was presented. The workshops were organized in such a way that the introductory speaker briefly explained the topic, followed by a discussion with stakeholders who shared their own knowledge and wishes regarding local circumstances. The whole process lasted 30 months, while the Plan was drafted and produced within 10 months.

Participants were asked to share their opinion.

Slovenia

Participants had some influence on the outcomes.

Egypt

Participatory processes have been used, involving Government authorities, local authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the private sector. Participants were asked to share their opinion.

Albania



Albania has incorporated participatory processes in the design, drafting, and implementation of several legal and policy instruments, ensuring civil society engagement and public consultation. Some key examples include:

1. EU for Nature Initiative. This project was cooperatively conceived by government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and the private sector to ensure broad participation in nature conservation efforts.

2. National Council for Civil Society (NCCS). Albania has established the NCCS to institutionalize government-CSO cooperation in policy-making and EU integration. The 2019-2023 Roadmap includes strategic directions to enhance civil society participation in policy development and monitoring.

3. Civil Society Participation in Decision-Making. Reports indicate that Albania has strengthened transparency and public engagement in policy-making, particularly in environmental governance. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) framework has been used to increase citizen involvement in policy drafting and implementation.

4. Urban Planning & Environmental Policies. Albania has integrated citizen participation in urban planning and land development policies, ensuring that local communities have a voice in decision-making.

Participants were asked to share their opinion.

6.2 Key findings from the survey

Area-Based Conservation: Various legal instruments are employed across the Mediterranean countries, including international, EU-derived, national, and regional/local laws. Examples from Croatia highlight measures like seasonal fishing bans, eco-mooring systems, and mariculture-free zones.

Nature Restoration Actions: National legislation aligns with EU directives, such as the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive. Countries like Portugal and Croatia have robust legal frameworks supporting nature restoration.

Management Effectiveness: Tools to assess the management effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) are available but not always regularly applied.

Financial Instruments: Various financial instruments support marine and coastal biodiversity conservation, including national funds, EU programs, and international NGO projects.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM): Examples from countries like Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, and Albania show the incorporation of ICZM principles into national and regional strategies.

Climate Change Adaptation: Most countries have adopted climate change adaptation strategies, focusing on marine and coastal areas.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions (NbS): Countries like Portugal, Slovenia, Croatia, and Albania promote ecosystem restoration and NbS linked to sustainable economic opportunities.

Risks and Prevention Measures: Potential risks of misusing ecosystem restoration include greenwashing, monoculture plantations, and exclusion of local communities. Prevention measures involve strengthening legal frameworks, promoting science-based restoration, and ensuring community engagement.

Participatory Processes: Various countries have used participatory processes in the design, drafting, and implementation of legal and policy instruments, involving stakeholders such as government authorities, local communities, and civil society organizations.

7. Focus on governance at regional level in Sardinia: a participatory workshop

7.1 Goal of the workshop and selection of participants

Legal and Policy Instruments for Natural Heritage Conservation in the Coastal Areas of Sardinia were analysed in Sardinia throughout a participatory half-day workshop, held on 11 June 2025 in Cagliari, organised in close collaboration with the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (ARS). It aimed to analyse regional-level governance policies and strategies relating to nature, biodiversity and climate change. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the topics covered by the Legal Study with local public administrations and to conduct an in-depth analysis of these topics. The workshop aimed also to highlight critical issues and bottlenecks, the results achieved and encourage the exchange of good practices and governance assessments, including identifying needs and opportunities for improvement.

The Autonomous Region of Sardinia (ARS) managed the identification of participants. Stakeholders from local administrations were invited to provide informed feedback due to their expertise and experience in their roles and mandates. The involvement of local stakeholders at different sub-national governance levels (from regional to municipal) enabled to highlight gaps, criticalities, and achievements, and fostered the exchange of good practices.

7.2 Methodology and description of activities

Activities and topics discussed were developed to facilitate the elicitation of information. Specific questions for stakeholders and thematic groups were drafted to guide participants to provide competent and expert answers.

The agenda of the workshop and its contents were defined based on the results of Phase 1 (Definition of the methodology and work plan). At this meeting, the methodology and



preliminary results of Phase 2 (Drafting of the Study and presentation to the Working Groups) were presented, highlighting governance strategies on nature, biodiversity and climate change. Three good practices were also identified in accordance with ARS, based on the results of the meetings held during Phases 1 and 2, and were presented by the three implementing actors.

Two discussion tables were organized for governance assessment, including identification of needs in reference to governance itself, with respect to the working groups identified in the project:

Group 1:

- Area-based Conservation (corresponding to WG1, coordinated by IUCN)
- Ecosystem Restoration and Nature-based Solutions (corresponding to WG4, coordinated by Plan Bleu)

Group 2:

- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (corresponding to WG2, coordinated by MedCities)
- Evaluating the Socio-Economic Value of Biodiversity (corresponding to WG3, coordinated by Marine Institute).

The workshop was divided into the following phases:

- Introduction to the EuroMED Dialogue4Nature project;
- Presentation of the Legal Study, including an explanation of how the information derived from the workshop will be used;
- Goal of the workshop and description of activities;
- Self-presentation of all participants who, in addition to describing their roles, clarified what the expectations were with respect to the day's work;
- Presentation of three cases by participants;
- Group discussion enabling contributions from all participants, who voiced their informed opinion; participants were first given time to reflect and compile a form, which was used to gather information, then were invited to present their opinions and discuss with other participants;
- A summary of the two group discussions was presented, highlighting gaps and critical issues, achievements to encourage the exchange of good practices, and proposals that have emerged;
- To close the meeting words of thanks were expressed to all participants for sharing their opinions.

7.3 Summary of presentations

Three presentations were given at the beginning of the workshop to introduce the topic, the project and the Legal study, by Matteo Muntoni, (Director General Department of Environmental Defence, ARS), Emanuela Manca (General Directorate for Environmental Defence - Svasi Division- ARS), Daniela Addis (Director of the Addis Law Firm "Ambiente&Mare - Environment&Sea"; Operative Responsible for the Legal Study for D4N).

Regional cases were then presented by three chosen workshop participants.



Silvia Serra (Head of the Regional Ecological Network Sector (RER) - Directorate General for Environmental Protection - TNPF Division - ARS) gave an overview of the Natura 2000 network and MPAs in Sardinia. She presented the added values of the environmental protection measures and the management challenges that still need to be addressed.

Davide Urrai (Director of the Forestry and Environmental Surveillance Service - ARS) in his presentation outlined that, due to local culture, the conservation of non-protected areas requires specific legal instruments, control and fines. The management of areas outside MPAs or Natura 2000 sites is shared among local administrators, but coordination can be difficult and unclear. His concrete proposal involves creating a volunteer association operating within the protected area, with the aim of supporting institutions in conservation efforts and of raising awareness in citizens.

Valeria Masala (Capo Carbonara-Villasimius Marine Protected Area Managing Director) presented the Capo Carbonara-Villasimius Marine Protected Area, established in 1998 and since 2012 also recognized as a SPAMI (Specially Protected Area of Mediterranean Importance). It covers 42 km of coastline, including the bigger islands of Cavoli and Serpentara and smaller ones. Managed by the Municipality of Villasimius, the MPA overlaps with several Natura 2000 sites, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The Capo Carbonara Marine Protected Area for over a decade has been implementing projects for the protection of the coastal and marine environment based on research findings and in collaboration with other institutions.

Sandro Demuro (Professor from University of Cagliari – Medcoastlab) in his presentation highlighted three main critical issues affecting the protection and sustainable management of coastal and marine environments, in relation to the importance of *Posidonia Oceanica*: without *Posidonia* we would not have beaches in the Mediterranean. The use of mechanical vehicles on beaches and dunes causes habitat degradation and beach erosion, undermining the resilience of coastal ecosystems. The anchoring of boats and trawling damages the marine habitat, including *Posidonia* meadows. Pebbles, shells, sea urchins and other natural materials should not be removed from the sea and beaches.

7.4 Findings from the workshop

The exchanges undertaken during the workshop highlighted a shared understanding of the pressures currently facing marine and coastal ecosystems and offered a number of concrete recommendations structured around three thematic areas: beach use, concession and sanction management, and the roles of institutions.

Use of Beaches

Participants emphasized the importance of raising awareness among all relevant stakeholders—residents, property owners, beach managers, and tourists—about responsible beach use and environmental stewardship. Public information campaigns were seen as a critical step in changing behaviors and fostering a culture of respect for coastal ecosystems.



The use of mechanical vehicles on beaches was identified as a critical issue requiring clear regulation, given the potential for damage to both natural features and biodiversity. In line with this, participants agreed on the importance of the administrative regulation prescribing that natural elements such as sand, stones, and shells should not be removed from the beaches, as their extraction can degrade habitat quality and contribute to erosion.

The management of *Posidonia oceanica* was another focal point. Several participants advocated for allowing naturally deposited *Posidonia* to remain on beaches, recognizing its ecological role in preventing erosion and supporting biodiversity. Moreover, a shift in the marketing narrative around beaches was suggested: rather than advertising pristine, artificially "white Caribbean" sand, promotional efforts should highlight beaches in their natural state and emphasize their environmental richness. Messaging around good ecological status and nature-based solutions could help to shift expectations and promote sustainable tourism.

Concessions and Sanctions

On the topic of beach concessions and enforcement, participants pointed out the need for clearer regulations around the removal, storage, and repositioning of *Posidonia*, ensuring that environmental considerations are fully incorporated into all related decisions.

It was agreed that any commercial concessions granted for activities such as kiosks or leisure services should take into account the ecological sensitivity of the area. These concessions must be monitored effectively, and tools like GPS tracking could support enforcement efforts. Furthermore, there was a strong consensus that non-compliance should lead to the revocation of concessions to reinforce the seriousness of environmental obligations.

Participants expressed support for existing procedures such as the Incidence Assessment (*Valutazione di Incidenza Ambientale*, or VIIncA), the preventive administrative procedure that must be applied to any intervention, plan, or project that may have significant impacts on a site or proposed site of the Natura 2000 network, individually or collectively with other plans and projects, taking into account the conservation objectives of the site itself (pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC "Habitats" and Legislative Decree 357/97); but noted that these tools are not always applied properly. When assessments are missing or poorly executed, effective sanctions must be imposed to restore credibility and ensure compliance.

Institutional Roles and Support

Finally, the discussions turned to the roles of institutions in supporting and enforcing sustainable coastal management. Cooperation among key actors—municipalities, the Demanio (State Property Agency), Forest Service, and Coast Guard—was deemed essential. Such collaboration could help streamline concession granting processes and compensate for the current shortage of human and financial resources to monitor activities.

The idea of developing environmental protection pacts was introduced as a means to mediate between conflicting uses of coastal spaces and to promote a more integrated governance approach.

At the regional level, several forms of support were proposed. Participants suggested that the Region should allocate dedicated funds to enhance local capacity for environmental protection. Moreover, regional authorities could take the lead in developing consistent



guidelines for *Posidonia* management, ensuring that practices are harmonized across the territory. Another topic flagged for discussion was the management of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), which, due to its upstream-downstream dynamics, calls for coordinated action among different municipalities sharing the same river basins.

Overall, while the session was not meant to deliver a final set of policy decisions, it served to uncover a wide consensus on priority actions and responsibilities. The shared insights and proposals laid a strong foundation for future cooperation and more effective governance of beach and coastal ecosystems.

8. Priorities for proposed actions in the Mediterranean

A prioritized proposal of actions to be pursued to overcome the obstacles encountered is provided.

8.1 Identification of proposals and priorities for action

Based on the legal and policy instruments analyses, identifying implementation obstacles or strengths, and highlighting legislative or governance gaps; consultations with national and regional authorities on the main themes of protected areas, ICZM, climate change policies in selected Mediterranean Countries and Regions; a survey of conservation experts; and the results of the Regional Workshop, the following recommendations address key points raised as prioritized action proposals to overcome these obstacles:

Protected areas

- **Recommendation for Enhanced Management of Protected Areas:** Prioritize the management of Natura 2000 sites within established protected areas overseen by active authorities with clear regulations and robust monitoring systems. Furthermore, management responsibilities should be delegated to local authorities or existing territorial entities through formal agreements and funding contracts. This approach avoids unnecessary bureaucracy, such as the creation of new bodies, and ensures the effective implementation of conservation measures.

River and Coastal Contracts

- **Recommendations for future prospects:** Establishment of long-term technical secretariats to support the implementation and monitoring of river and coastal contracts, ensuring strong links to existing funding mechanisms and alignment with the EU Nature Restoration Law. To ensure sustainability and effective management, a win-win governance model should be promoted: public institutions would provide oversight and ensure regulatory compliance, while private stakeholders would benefit from active stewardship and the co-management of local ecosystems.

Protected Natural Areas and Climate Change Policies

- **Proposal for institutional strengthening and policy alignment:** Establishment of a permanent regional technical secretariat dedicated to coordinating Natura 2000 (RN2000) activities and ensuring their alignment with the EU Nature Restoration Law



(Regulation 2024/1991). This body should be based within the relevant National or regional environmental agency (such as ARPAS for Italy-Sardinia) and supported by external experts as needed. Its mandate would include integrating climate variables into conservation policy design, developing financing tools, and promoting participatory governance models. This approach will ensure that restoration efforts are consistent with national and EU-level plans and will boost the long-term resilience of Regional natural heritage.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

- **Proposal for integrated coastal and sediment management framework:** Regional authorities develop a comprehensive and integrated coastal management framework along with Regional sediment strategies to restore coastal balance. This framework should prioritize the restoration and long-term resilience of coastal ecosystems through coordinated planning, robust monitoring systems, and participatory governance involving public institutions, scientific experts, and local communities. Establishing permanent technical secretariats and fostering dialogue platforms between local communities and regional administrations will improve cooperation in the management of coastal areas and ensure sustainable outcomes and alignment with regional, national, and EU restoration policies.
- **Promote Integrated Approaches:** Encourage the integration of ICZM principles and climate change adaptation strategies into national and regional policies.

Sustainable Beach Use and Management

- **Raising Awareness and Responsible Use:** Launch targeted public information campaigns to educate residents, property owners, beach managers, and tourists about responsible beach use and the importance of environmental stewardship. This strategy aims to foster lasting behavioral change and cultivate a culture of respect for coastal ecosystems.
- **Regulating Mechanical Vehicle Use:** Develop and implement clear regulations on the use of mechanical vehicles on beaches to prevent environmental damage and protect biodiversity. Administrative rules should strictly prohibit the removal of natural elements such as sand, stones, and shells, as their extraction degrades habitat quality and accelerates erosion.
- **Posidonia Management:** Encourage the practice of leaving naturally deposited *Posidonia oceanica* on beaches, recognizing its key ecological functions in protecting against erosion and supporting coastal biodiversity.
- **Shifting Communication and Promotion:** Rethink the marketing approach to coastal tourism by promoting beaches in their natural state, moving away from artificial images of "pristine white" sand. Highlight the ecological richness, good environmental status, and nature-based solutions in promotional materials to align public expectations with sustainable tourism goals.

Sustainable Coastal Concessions and Enforcement

- **Clarify Regulations on Posidonia Management:** Establish clearer guidelines regarding the removal, storage, and repositioning of *Posidonia oceanica*, ensuring that all decisions are made with environmental considerations at the forefront.
- **Granting and Monitoring of Concessions:** Ensure that any commercial concessions (such as kiosks or leisure activities) are awarded with due regard to the ecological



sensitivity of coastal zones. Implement rigorous monitoring measures, including the potential use of GPS tracking, to support compliance.

- **Enforcement and Sanctions:** Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to non-compliance, including the revocation of concessions for repeated or serious violations. This will reinforce the importance of respecting environmental obligations.
- **Strict Application of Environmental Assessments:** Reaffirm the necessity of applying the Incidence Assessment (Valutazione di Incidenza Ambientale, VIInCA) procedure to all interventions, plans, or projects potentially impacting Natura 2000 sites. Assessments should be comprehensive and properly executed in line with Directive 92/43/EEC ("Habitats").
- **Effective Penalties for Non-compliance:** Where environmental assessments are missing or poorly conducted, impose meaningful sanctions to restore credibility and ensure proper adherence to environmental regulations.

Sustainable Coastal Management

- **Enhance Institutional Collaboration:** Foster effective cooperation among key institutions - such as municipalities, State Property Agency (such as the Demanio in Italy), the Forest Service, and the Coast Guard - to streamline concession processes and address current shortages in human and financial monitoring resources.
- **Develop Environmental Protection Pacts:** Encourage the creation of agreements that mediate between competing uses of coastal areas and support integrated governance approaches.
- **Provide Regional Support:** Advocate for regional authorities to allocate dedicated funds and develop consistent guidelines, particularly for Posidonia management, ensuring harmonized practices across all territories.
- **Promote Coordinated Management of River Basins:** Address issues such as the management of common reed (*Phragmites australis*) by promoting collaboration among municipalities that share the same river basins.
- **Build Consensus for Future Action:** Use broad stakeholder engagement to establish priority actions and shared responsibilities, laying the groundwork for enhanced cooperation and more effective governance of coastal and beach ecosystems.

Legal instruments

- **Enhance Legal Frameworks:** Strengthen and harmonize legal instruments across the Mediterranean region to ensure effective implementation of conservation policies.

Financial Support

- **Increase Financial Support:** Secure long-term funding and financial instruments to support marine and coastal biodiversity conservation.

Community Engagement

- **Foster Community Engagement:** Involve local communities and stakeholders in the planning and implementation of conservation and restoration activities and projects to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

Monitoring Tools

- **Implement Monitoring Tools:** Regularly apply and utilize tools to assess the management effectiveness of PAs and OECMs, and ensure that the results guide decision-making processes.

Science-Based Restoration



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

- **Adopt Science-Based Restoration:** Prioritize ecosystem restoration projects that are based on scientific principles and promote biodiversity, avoiding monoculture plantations and greenwashing.

Cross-Sector Collaboration

- **Encourage Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Foster collaboration between government authorities, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector to enhance the effectiveness of conservation efforts.

Sustainable Economic Opportunities

- **Promote Sustainable Economic Opportunities:** Link ecosystem restoration and NbS to sustainable economic opportunities, such as ecotourism and sustainable agriculture, to ensure long-term benefits for both nature and people.



ANNEXES

Annex 1 - In-Depth Interview Outline

In depth interviews throughout online meetings were held with institutional representatives of **Montenegro, Morocco, Sardinia** for Italy and **Crete** for Greece.

The analysis focuses on the following three interconnected main topics,, which were discussed during the meetings and agreed upon:

- (a) Protected natural areas, particularly marine and coastal areas, which are established in accordance with national legislation and included in the nature protection network, as well as their management plans;
- (b) Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), in terms of its principles and objectives as envisaged and applied in practice, particularly in cases referred to in (a); and
- (c) Climate change policies, particularly with regard to ecosystem services, and therefore the importance of protecting biodiversity and restoring nature, as well as energy policies.

List of meetings participants

MONTENEGRO (21.01.2025)

Working Group Experts

- Daniela Addis - Director of the Addis Law Firm “Ambiente&Mare - Environment&Sea”; Operative Responsible for the Legal Study for D4N
- Martina Bocci - Scientific advisor

Autonomous Region of Sardinia

- Emanuela Manca - Environmental Sustainability and Information Systems Service (SVASI)
- Marcella Sodde - Regional Ecological Network Sector (RER)

Montenegro

- Djurdjina Bulatović - Chief of the Cabinet at Ministry of Science of Montenegro

MOROCCO (18.02.2025)

Working Group Experts

- Daniela Addis - Director of the Addis Law Firm “Ambiente&Mare - Environment&Sea”; Operative Responsible for the Legal Study for D4N

Morocco

- Bouzekri Razi - Director of Environmental Assessment and Control and Legal Affairs - Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development // Director of Environmental



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Assessment and Control and Legal Affairs - Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development

- Rachid Ech-Chokri - Head of Environmental Assessment Division - Directorate of Environmental Assessment and Control and Legal Affairs - Department of Sustainable Development - Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development
- Abdelkader Ajir – Head of the Legal Affairs Division and Sworn Environmental Inspector - Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development
- Salma Ed Dahmani – Legal Officer in the Environmental Assessment Division – Directorate of Environmental Assessment and Control and Legal Affairs – Department of Sustainable Development – Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development

SARDINIA (ITALY) (11.02.2025, 19.02.2025, 25.02.2025, 04.03.2025)

Working Group Experts

- Daniela Addis - Director of the Addis Law Firm “Ambiente&Mare - Environment&Sea”; Operative Responsible for the Legal Study for D4N
- Martina Bocci - Scientific advisor

Autonomous Region of Sardinia

- Emanuela Manca - Environmental Sustainability and Information Systems Service (SASI)
- Luisa Mulas – Environmental Sustainability and Information Systems Service (SASI)
- Silvia Serra - Nature Protection and Forestry Policy Service (TNPF), Head of Regional Ecological Network Sector (RER)
- Marcella Sodde - Regional Ecological Network Sector (RER)
- Mario Deriu - Nature Protection and Forestry Policy Service - Soil and Coastal Defence Sector
- Giovanna Chessa - Soil Protection and Forestry Policy Service (STSPF)
- Filippo Arras - Environmental Sustainability, Strategic Assessment and Information Systems Service (SVASI)
- Nicoletta Contis - Basin Authority - River Contracts - Regional Agency of the Hydrographic District of Sardinia (ADIS)
- Elisa Carboni - Basin Authority - River Contracts - Regional Agency of the Hydrographic District of Sardinia (ADIS)



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

ANNEX 2 - Questionnaire for the qualitative - quantitative online survey

Survey on legal instruments and policies for conservation in the Mediterranean

The questionnaire is divided into four sections: 1. Area-Based Conservation (Protected Areas – Planning and Management) 2. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) 3. Climate Change Adaptation 4. Governance and

Implementation This survey is intended for a wide range of experts from the

Mediterranean region. We kindly ask you to answer the questions that are relevant to your area of expertise - in all the closed answers you'll find the option "Not

Applicable (N/A)" so that it's easy to skip. We also ask you to focus on one specific country, region, or local area, even if your experience is broader.

"*" indicates required fields

General Information

The data will be used exclusively for research purposes and published only in an aggregated and anonymous form. For any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at: emamanca@regione.sardegna.it

Name *

a) First name b) Last name

c) Email *

d) Organisation name *

Please, specify your specific department, e.g. Autonomous Region of Sardinia, Environmental department, Climate change Adaptation Sector

e) Country of organisation *

f) Region of organisation *



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

g) Organisation type *

h) Position/Job title *

i) Your main expertise *

Area-based conservation (Protected areas - planning and management) Integrated
Coastal Zone Management - ICZM

Climate Change Adaptation

Governance and implementation Other

j) Please specify if "Other"

k) Your activities are within *

International level National level

Regional level Local level

l) To which area are your answers referred to? *

Even if your expertise is wide-ranging, please reply by referring to one single specific country, region or local area. Specify which one (ex.: Italy, Sardinia or Cagliari).

A. AREA - BASED CONSERVATION (Protected areas - planning and management)

1. The G20 Leaders' Declaration in Rio de Janeiro of November 18-19, 2024 clearly states that oceans and seas are of critical importance for sustainable development. Does your country fully recognize adequate funding, efforts, planning and management to support this vital goal? * *

Yes No N/A

Other



1.1 To what extent has your country, through legal instruments, recognized and implemented measures to protect the marine environment and to conserve and sustainably use marine resources and biodiversity? *

Please, indicate the degree of the recognition and implementation on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 the maximum

1 Minimum degree of recognition 2

3

4

5 Maximum degree of recognition

2.a What is the percentage of marine and coastal areas protected by your National legislation *

2.b What is the percentage of marine and coastal areas protected by your Regional legislation *

2.c What is the percentage of marine and coastal areas protected by your Local legislation *

3. What percentage of the marine and coastal protected areas are fully or partially included in the Natura 2000 network? *

For EU member states only. Non EU-member states, please tick N/A

Less than 10%

Between 10 and 30%

Between 30 and 50%

Between 50 and 70%

Over 70% N/A

Other

4. What types of legal instruments are employed in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures? *

Please indicate how frequently legal instruments are used in your country to design,

implement and manage area-based conservation measures? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently.



1 - rarely

2

3

4

5 - frequently N/A

4 What legal instruments are employed to implement and manage area-based conservation measures? 4.a Internationally derived legal instruments, such as Ramsar sites

*

Please indicate how frequently Internationally legal instruments are used in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently.

1 - rarely

2

3

4

5 - frequently N/A

4.b EU-derived legal instruments such as Natura 2000 network (for EU Member States only)

Please indicate how frequently EU-derived legal instruments are used in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures?

1 - rarely

2

3

4

5 - frequently N/A

4.c National law of establishment and management *

Please indicate how frequently national law legal instruments are used in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently.

1 - rarely

2

3

4



5 - frequently N/A

4.d Regional/local law of establishment and management of protected natural areas *

Please indicate how frequently regional/local legal instruments are used in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently.

1 - rarely

2

3

4

5 - frequently N/A

4.e Please specify if there is Other effective area-

4.f Other effective area-based conservation measures *

Please indicate how frequently other effective area-based conservation measures are used in your country to design, implement and manage area-based conservation measures. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates rarely and 5 indicates frequently.

1 - rarely

2

3

4

5 - frequently N/A

5. What legal instruments are used in your country to promote, plan, and implement nature restoration actions? *

5.1 Which authorities are responsible for implementing the above-mentioned legal instruments related to nature restoration actions? *

6. Does your administration have tools to assess the management effectiveness of Protected Areas (PAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)? *

Yes, regularly applied and used to guide management



Yes, but used irregularly or without strong influence on decisions No, not yet available or not applied

N/A Other

6.1 If yes, please specify the tools or methods used

6.2 If not, do you think having a management effectiveness monitoring system would be useful? Why yes or why not?

7. Which authorities or levels of government are responsible for implementing these conservation and planning measures? *

National government ministries (e.g. Environment, Fisheries, Planning) Regional or autonomous governments

Municipal or local authorities

Environmental agencies or protected area authorities

Inter-municipal or basin-level coordination bodies Other

7.1 Are there coordination mechanisms between different levels/sectors? *

Yes – formally established and functioning Yes – informal coordination exists

No – coordination is limited or lacking N/A

Other

7.2 Has the competent authority formally recognized or started identifying Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)? *

Yes – OECMs are formally recognized in national or regional legislation Yes – we have initiated the identification or mapping of potential OECMs

Not yet – but we are considering integrating OECMs into our conservation strategy

No – we are not currently considering OECMs

We are not familiar with the concept of OECMs and would need technical support to identify them

N/A Other



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

8. What percentage of the total number of marine and coastal protected areas have adopted and implemented management plans in your country? *

Less than 10%

Between 10 and 30%

Between 30 and 50%

Between 50 and 70%

Over 70% N/A

Other

9. What percentage of coastal-marine protected areas effectively established and managed meet the global Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Strategy Targets,

referring to Target 3 that by 2030 at least 30% of marine and coastal areas are effectively conserved and managed? *

10. Are there specific financial instruments in relation to marine and coastal areas' nature and biodiversity conservation? *

Yes No

10.1 If yes, provide examples

11. Which institutions are the main providers of the financial instruments

adopted in your country in relation to nature and biodiversity conservation in marine and coastal areas? *

International (GEF, World Bank...)

European (EU funded projects, Cooperation programmes) National

Regional / Local

Other

11.1 What are the main sources of the financial instruments adopted in your country in relation to nature and biodiversity conservation in marine and coastal areas? *

Private Public

Private and public

Other



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

11.2 Are financial instruments adequate? *

Please, define the degree on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 the maximum

1 - Not adequate 2

3

4

5 - very adequate N/A

11.3 Would you like to add some more comments about the financial instruments related to marine and coastal areas' nature and biodiversity conservation?

B. INTEGRATED COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT - ICZM

12 Are there specific examples of the principles and objectives of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) being taken into account in your regional and national strategies and plans? *

Yes No N/A

Other

12.1 If yes, which ones?

Please provide examples

13. Are there specific examples of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) adoption and implementation in the management policies of marine and coastal protected areas in your country? *

Yes No N/A

Other

13.1 If yes, which ones?

Please provide examples



C. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

14. What is the degree of implementation of climate change adaptation policies in your country? *

Please indicate the degree of implementation in your country on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the minimum and 5 the maximum.

1 - Not implemented 2

3

4

5 - very well implemented N/A

15. Has your country adopted a climate change adaptation strategy or plan? *

Yes No N/A

Other

15.1 If yes, at what level?

Regional Local

Other

15.2 Could you please provide the links to the strategies or plans?

16. Has your country adopted other specific policies and hence regulations in relation to climate change adaptation? *

Yes No N/A

Other

16.1 If yes, please list and describe them

17.a What are the main financial instruments adopted in your area in relation to the above-mentioned instruments? *

Based on INTERNATIONAL sources. Please put "N/A" if not applicable.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

17.b What are the main financial instruments adopted in your area in relation to the above-mentioned instruments? *

Based on NATIONAL sources. Please put "N/A" if not applicable.

17.c What are the main financial instruments adopted in your area in relation to the above-mentioned instruments? *

Based on REGIONAL sources. Please put "N/A" if not applicable.

17.d What are the main financial instruments adopted in your area in relation to the above-mentioned instruments? *

Based on LOCAL sources. Please put "N/A" if not applicable.

18. Are these financial instruments adequate for their objectives? *

Yes No N/A

Other

19. In synergy with the above-mentioned climate change adaptation policies and legislation, has your country adopted specific energy policies and

regulations at national and local/regional level to mitigate climate change (win- win measure)? *

Yes No N/A

Other

National Regional Local

Other

19.2 Could you please provide the links to the strategies or plans?

20. Does your country have specific climate change adaptation regulations in place at national and local/regional levels with a focus on marine and coastal areas? *



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

Yes No N/A

Other

20.1 If yes, at what level?

National Regional Local

Other

20.2 Could you please provide the links to the strategies or plans?

21. Has your country adopted specific nature and biodiversity protection

policies and regulations at national and local/regional level to reduce climate change impacts, particularly for marine and coastal areas? *

Yes No N/A

Other

21.1 If yes, at what level?

National Regional Local

Other

21.2 Could you please provide the links to the strategies or plans?

22. Has your country adopted specific energy policies and regulations at national and local/regional level to reduce climate change impacts, particularly for marine and coastal areas? *

Yes No N/A

Other

22.1 If yes, at what level?

National Regional Local

Other



22.2 Could you please provide the links to the strategies or plans?

D. GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

23. Which policies and legal instruments effectively support and contribute to a proper evaluation of the socio-economic benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services in your country? *

If not applicable, please mark "N/A" so you can continue.

24. Are ecosystem restoration and Nature-based Solutions, linked to sustainable economic opportunities, promoted in your country? *

Yes No N/A

Other

24.1 If yes, how?

25. Nature restoration represents an important opportunity to support nature conservation and restore the already degraded ecosystems. Do you see any risk of misuse of the ecosystem restoration? *

Yes No N/A

Other

25.1 Which ones?

25.2 What prevention measures could be identified to face these risks?

26.a Environmental protection legislation has not led to the recovery of important ecosystems and habitats. *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2



3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.b The establishment of marine and coastal protected areas currently provides adequate protection *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.c There is effective cooperation among competent bodies responsible for the same protected natural area *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.d Coordination between climate change policy and marine protection policy is successfully practiced *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.e Renewable energy development ensures both environmental and social sustainability *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3



4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.f Budgetary resources for nature conservation measures meet the needs *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.g Responsible officials and experts possess the necessary expertise to carry out conservation tasks effectively *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.h An emergency-based approach is commonly used in the day-to-day management of activities *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.i There is a direct connection between the management of marine-coastal protected areas and the principles, objectives, measures, and processes of

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4



Natural
heritage

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.j The climate change strategy and ecological protection network are fully implemented, supported by a coherent and coordinated set of measures. *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.k Research is planned to support broad-based knowledge. It is not sectoral, dependent on limited funding or tied to individual projects *

Please, indicate the degree of implementation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 represents "Not implemented" and 5 represents "Fully implemented"

1 - not implemented 2

3

4

5 - fully implemented N/A

26.l Please specify what OTHER difficulties, if any - have you encountered in implementing the legislation and policies listed in the previous sections?

27. Has your area adopted a Sustainable Development Strategy - localising the 2030 Agenda? *

Yes No N/A

Other

27.1 If yes, at what level?

National Regional Local

Other

27.2 Can you please provide the link to the strategies or plans?



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

27.3 Which of the following areas in the Sustainable Development Strategy have you implemented? *

Area-Based Conservation (Protected Areas – Planning and Management) Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

Climate Change Adaptation

Governance N/A

28. Have participatory processes been used in the design, drafting or implementation of the above legal or policy instruments? *

Yes No N/A

Other

28.1 If yes, please list who was involved and how long the process lasted. *

Please describe or write "N/A" so you could continue.

28.2 If no, please explain why no participatory process was implemented. *

Please describe or write "N/A" so you could continue.

29. What form of participation was used? *

Participants were only informed

Participants were asked to share their opinion

Participants had some influence on the outcomes

Participants could negotiate or veto some outcomes Participants had some control over decisions

Participants were given responsibility for decisions

N/A Other

Consent privacy notice *

I agree to the privacy notice.



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by
the European Union

ANNEX 3 - Agenda of the Participatory Workshop on Regional Governance in Sardinia



**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by
the European Union

	LAVORO DI GRUPPO
11:20-12:00	<p>Divisione in due gruppi di lavoro che discuteranno sui seguenti temi:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conservazione di tipo "area-based" (AMP, Natura 2000, altro); Ripristino degli ecosistemi e Soluzioni Basate sulla Natura. Coordina: Martina Bocci 2. Cambiamenti climatici (Mitigazione e Adattamento); Valore socio-economico della biodiversità. Coordina: Valentina Giannini
12:00-12:10	PAUSA
12:10-13:00	Proseguimento lavoro in gruppo
13:00-13:20	<p>Presentazione in plenaria della sintesi delle attività svolte e discussione</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tematiche n. 1: rapporto Gruppo A (5 min.) e Gruppo B (5 min.) 2. Tematiche n. 2: rapporto Gruppo A (5 min.) e Gruppo B (5 min.)
13:20-13:30	<p>CONCLUSIONI E CHIUSURA DEI LAVORI Daniela Addis e Matteo Muntoni</p>

Contesto di riferimento

Nell'ambito del progetto di governance Dialogue4Nature, cofinanziato dal Programma Interreg Euro-MED e della [Missione per il Patrimonio Naturale](#), si inserisce la realizzazione di uno studio giuridico di analisi delle relazioni tra gli strumenti legislativi e i processi di governo del territorio ai diversi livelli (sovrannazionale, nazionale e regionale) che influenzano l'adozione delle politiche ambientali nell'area mediterranea.

La regione mediterranea si trova infatti ad affrontare sfide complesse e interconnesse legate alla protezione e conservazione della biodiversità costiera e marina, all'efficacia degli strumenti giuridici, alla governance e alla pianificazione territoriale. Nonostante l'esistenza di un articolato quadro di accordi internazionali e regionali che orientano gli obiettivi di tutela, la loro attuazione risulta spesso disomogenea data la frammentazione dei livelli di governance, delle risorse finanziarie e tecniche.

Per rispondere a queste criticità, il Laboratorio partecipativo si propone di analizzare le interazioni tra strumenti giuridici e processi di governance territoriale, ai diversi livelli, che incidono sull'attuazione delle politiche sia di protezione e conservazione della natura e della biodiversità, sia di adattamento ai cambiamenti climatici in Sardegna e quindi nel bacino del Mediterraneo.

Obiettivi del laboratorio

Nell'ambito della redazione dello Studio giuridico, il laboratorio partecipativo costituisce un'importante occasione di confronto con il territorio e di approfondimento dei temi oggetto dello stesso.

Attraverso il coinvolgimento degli attori regionali e locali, si intende far emergere le principali criticità e carenze, valorizzare i risultati conseguiti, promuovere lo scambio di buone pratiche e favorire una valutazione approfondita della governance esistente, anche in termini di fabbisogni e opportunità di miglioramento.

Durante l'incontro sarà facilitato il confronto con e fra i partecipanti per raccogliere informazioni riguardo a:

- le rispettive esperienze in merito all'attuazione delle politiche e degli strumenti giuridici sui temi individuati,
- l'identificazione delle reti di relazioni fra i partecipanti ed eventuali altri soggetti, inclusa l'identificazione di potenziali interrelazioni attualmente deficitarie e/o assenti.





**Natural
heritage**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by
the European Union

CONTACT US:

natural-heritage@interreg-euro-med.eu

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.natural-heritage.interreg-euro-med.eu

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[@Gov4Nature](https://www.facebook.com/Gov4Nature)



[@Gov4Nature](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Gov4Nature)



[@Gov4Nature](https://twitter.com/Gov4Nature)



[@Gov4Nature](https://www.instagram.com/Gov4Nature)



[@Gov4Nature](https://www.youtube.com/channel/Gov4Nature)