



# ***Event Report***

**EPPA Workshop on the Implementation of the Marine Strategy  
Framework Directive and Marine Protected Areas**

**(Albania)**

**19 – 20 May 2020**

**Live video conference**



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by the European Union

**NIRAS** umweltbundesamt<sup>U</sup>

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- Annex 1: Agenda (provided as a separate document)  
 Annex 2: List of Participants (provided as a separate document)  
 Annex 3: Presentations (provided as a separate document)



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## 1 Introduction

### The national workshop

The national workshop for Albania on “the Implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Marine Protected Areas” took place on 19-20 May 2020 via live video conference. The workshop was organized in cooperation with TAIEX, and under the EPPA project work programme, activity 3.2 “Capacity building and technical assistance for managing marine litter and support to the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive”.

The participants of the workshop came from the relevant authorities of Albania. They represented the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the National Environmental Agency, the National Agency of Protected Areas, the Regional Administration of Protected Areas, the Water Resources Management Agency, and the Urban Research Institute.

Albanian civil society was represented by the NGO Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development.

The speakers represented both EU Member States experience and key Albanian stakeholders. From the Member States there were water and marine experts from Greece, Romania and Slovenia. From Albania, the speakers were from the Ministry of Tourism and Environment. In addition, the workshop was attended by the European Commission and the EU Delegation in Albania.

The presentations will be available at both the TAIEX website and the EPPA project website.

### The Marine Strategy Framework Directive

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) - Directive 2008/56/EC - establishes a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy. Within this framework, Member States (MS) shall take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status in the marine environment by the year 2020 at the latest. For that purpose, marine strategies shall be developed and implemented in order to protect and preserve the marine environment, prevent its deterioration or, where practicable, restore marine ecosystems in areas where they have been adversely affected. In addition, marine strategies shall prevent and reduce inputs into the marine environment, with a view to phasing out pollution (as defined in Art. 3(8) in the MSFD), so as to ensure that there are no significant impacts on or risks to marine biodiversity, marine ecosystems, human health or legitimate uses of the sea. The MSFD aims to contribute to the coherence between the different EU policies, including the EU’s maritime policy, Common Fisheries Policy and the existing water and nature directives, such as the Water Framework Directive, WFD (2000/60/EC), Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

One of the key requirements of the MSFD is that Member States must take a coordinated approach to implementation, cooperating with other states within the appropriate marine region or sub-region<sup>1</sup>, ensuring coherent and coordinated strategies. For the Mediterranean Sea, the key forum is the Barcelona Convention, implemented through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP). The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention<sup>2</sup> developed a set of ecological objectives, operational objectives, and indicators, which reflect Mediterranean priorities and are coherent with the MSFD.

The MSFD offers also through the Program of Measures the opportunity for the creation and implementation of effective management regimes of human activities within MPAs. Within this context, MPAs play a central role in supporting GES and achieving healthy seas by 2020.

### Marine Protected Areas

European seas are amongst the most productive in the world, offering a wide range of ecosystem goods and services which support the livelihoods of over 5 million people within the EU and generate a gross added value of almost €500 billion a year. Following a scoping document in 2015, a study on the socio-

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<sup>1</sup> The Mediterranean Sea region includes the Western Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Ionian Sea and the Central Mediterranean Sea, and the Aegean-Levantine Sea, while for the Black Sea no sub-regions is specified

<sup>2</sup> Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention include as well the maritime EPPA countries: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey.



economic benefits of EU marine protected areas was prepared in 2016<sup>3</sup> to help better understand the socio-economic benefits of the marine Natura 2000 network at EU level.

The EU has established a robust and ambitious policy framework to address the multiple challenges facing its marine environment and to ensure a more sustainable ecosystem-based approach to the use of its marine resources. The Habitats and Birds Directives, along with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, are the environmental pillar of the wider Integrated Maritime Policy. The total coverage of EU seas covered by marine protected areas has more than doubled in the last six years, primarily due to the expansion of the Natura 2000 network – the largest coordinated network of conservation areas in the world. The Habitats Directive lists nine marine habitat types and 16 species for which marine site designation is required, whilst the Birds Directive lists a further 60 bird species whose conservation requires marine site protection. To the end of 2018, more than 3150 marine Natura 2000 sites have been designated, which cover almost 10% of the total EU marine area (over 550,000 km<sup>2</sup>).

In the context of candidate and potential candidates for EU Membership, it is expected those countries adopt the same ambitious goals and contribute to the efforts of implementing ecosystem-based approach, preserving marine environments, their biodiversity and ecosystem services contributing to the European economy.

## 2 Objectives of the training and expected results

The aim of the workshop was to strengthen the national capacity of Albania for effectively addressing the large number of implementation challenges of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). In addition, the workshop also sought to provide guidance on 1) the designation of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and 2) the transboundary management of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

In order to build synergies among project activities, the workshop was organized in a way that it provided a consultation forum in which the EPPA project experts presented and discussed the study<sup>4</sup> being made to provide initial recommendations for the establishment of new marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Adriatic Sea basin (two MPAs in Albania).

## 3 Highlights from the workshop

### 3.1 Opening remarks and introductory notes

Ms. Mihaela Popovici opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and reporting on the scope of the workshop: the MSFD and the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). She gave the floor to the keynote speakers. (speakers?)

Ms. Madalina Ivanica noted the importance of MSFD for Albania as a country with a significant shoreline in the region. In addition, the new thrust towards alignment with the start of the screening process makes the work, such as the present workshop, an important milestone to support Albania. She therefore expressed satisfaction for the country's involvement in the workshop. On the one hand, the event will put Albania in contact with EU Member States experience regarding the MSFD implementation; on the other it will give the EC a forum to learn what are the country's challenges and priorities.

Mr. Edwin Pacara supported Ms. Madalina Ivanica in the importance of the workshop for Albania. MSFD implementation needs to be accelerated in parallel to the development of a legislative framework protecting and maintaining biodiversity in the marine environment, and the sustainable use of resources, now also in connection with the new circular economy package. In addition, the Albanian coast, rich in ecosystems like coastal lagoons and dunes, is under threat from climate change, wetland drainage, and urbanization. The creation of marine parks would not only be a gain for the country, but also to its screening process.

Mr. Mihail Dimovski took the opportunity to link the MSFG with the EPPA project activity that is seeking to suggest locations for potential designation as MPAs. He stressed the importance of MPAs for

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<sup>3</sup> [Available online](#)

<sup>4</sup> Activity 5.1.2 "Assistance for the identification of marine protected areas and exchange of best practices to achieve and/or to maintain the good ecological status of marine waters and preserve biodiversity"



biodiversity preservation, giving examples from the Mediterranean. He also noted that under commitments made to the Aichi Target 11, Albania should declare around 600km<sup>2</sup> of MAPs to comply. Ms. Ornela Çuçi expressed her gratitude to all the entities involved in the organization of the workshop, namely the EC, TAIEX, EPPA and all the Albanian institutions and its delegates. The post-coronavirus context will require reflection on environmental issues and their connection to public health. She expects that will put more pressure on states to have better environmental governance systems. Moreover, Albania just started the screening process, a challenging undertaking where topics are often cross-cutting and require inter-institutional coordination. For both these reasons, Ms. Ornela Çuçi counts on international assistance, mainly through projects, to support Albania in its policy objectives, such as the reduction of waste leakage into the marine environment.

After a round of introduction of all attendants, Ms. Mihaela Popovici explained the agenda components. She highlighted the goals of better comprehension of the Albanian situation, the exchange of experiences with Greece, Romania and Slovenia and the question of MPAs designation. Finally, Ms. Mihaela Popovici called attention to the synergies of MSFD with other policies areas like the WFD, marine litter issues, EUSAIR and EUSDR, and the role of landlocked countries in preserving marine environments through program of measures for addressing land based pollution sources.

### 3.2 EU actions against marine litter and for marine environment protection in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean

Ms. Madalina Ivanica, on behalf of a marine unit colleague, gave a presentation on the EU's actions against marine litter and for marine environment protection in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. The presentation was divided in 3 themes: marine litter, the MSFD implementation report and the pan-Med marine protection forum: the Barcelona Convention.

The EU is addressing marine litter from several angles. Although one of the main, most recognizable, tools is the MSFD, other policy sectors have complimentary regulatory capacity. Ms. Madalina Ivanica mentioned the waste legislation (waste FD, packaging and packaging waste, etc), the fisheries policy (abandoned fish gear is an important part of marine litter), and the strategy for plastics. The EU also has other tools to fight marine litter like international cooperation (for instance, the Barcelona Convention), funding for measures and promotion of adequate port facilities for shipping waste. It is important to note that the fight against marine litter is well framed within several goals of the EU Greed Deal.

In 2018, the new waste legislation put forward halting marine litter as one of its objectives. The MS were asked to identify sources of littering and take measures, to establish 6 years National Plans to fight littering and to create mechanisms for producers to financially contribute to reduce littering.

In parallel, a study on marine litter found on European beaches revealed that most of the litter was single use plastics (50%) and fishing gear (27%). Even more revealing, 86% of all single use plastics found were the same 10 items.

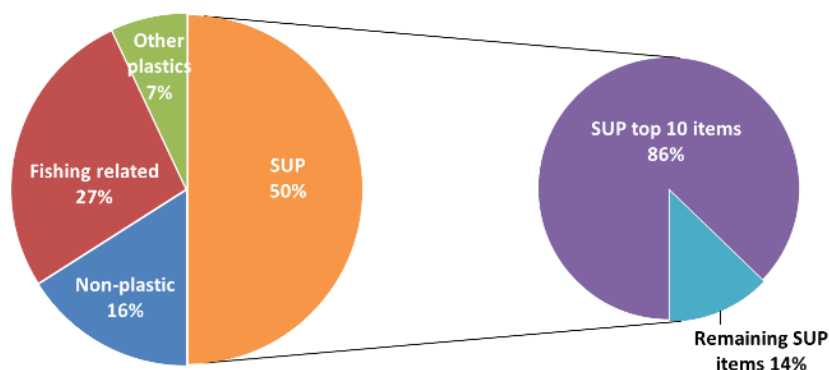


Figure 1 - Marine litter in European beaches



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In response, the EU adopted the SUP Directive<sup>5</sup>. The directive banned certain plastics and imposed consumption reduction, capture rates, and product design features. Furthermore, it required labelling on certain products and the establishment of extended producer responsibility.

Bans	Consumption reduction (including MS consumption reduction targets)	Capture rates (separate collection) and product design	Marking	Extended producer responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic cutlery, plates, straws</li> <li>• Cups, food containers in expanded polystyrene</li> <li>• Oxo-degradable plastics</li> <li>• Cotton buds sticks made of plastic, balloon sticks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic Food containers</li> <li>• Plastic cups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plastic bottles</li> <li>• 77% by 2025, 90% by 2029</li> <li>• PET bottles made with 25% (2025) and 30% (2030) recycled content</li> <li>• Tethered caps and lids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wet wipes and sanitary items</li> <li>• Cups</li> <li>• Cigarette filters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs of waste management, awareness raising, data gathering and clean up (food and beverage containers incl. bottles, cups, packets and wrappers, plastic bags, tobacco products with filters)</li> <li>• Wet wipes and balloons: same, except collection costs</li> <li>• Fishing gears – costs of collection based on National targets (EU later) + EU standards for design</li> </ul>

Figure 2 - SUPs components

The EU is also active in the governance of micro-plastics. Micro-plastics are currently regulated by a variety of tools depending on the source. Some measures being considered are prohibition for uses when release into the environment is inevitable; derogated uses when no microplastic is released; mandatory safe use information through which release of microplastics is minimized with user instructions; and mandatory reporting of producers, plastics function, tonnage and releases.

The EU, internationally, is also pressing its partners to adopt measures against plastics. Some of the EU's fronts are:

- Regional Action Plans against marine litter in all seas around Europe, developed and implemented with EU support
- G7 and G20 Action Plans against marine litter
- IMO (International Maritime Organisation) Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships, adopted in October 2018
- UNEA-4 (March 2019) resolutions on
- Plastic litter and microplastics
- Single-use plastic products
- Sustainable consumption and production

The second part of Ms. Madalina Ivanica presentation focused on the goals of the upcoming MSFD implementation report. The report is seeking to contribute to a future review of the Directive, to put the emphasis in lessons learnt from the first implementation cycle, to build on those lessons to make suggestions for improvement, within and beyond MSFD. It is expected the report will also contribute to the second cycle by providing more guidance for the implementation process, for the national marine strategies and their assessments, and for the operationalization of GES.

The third, and final, part of the presentation dwelt on the Barcelona Convention. The policy coherence with the MSFD is noticeable. The 11 descriptors of GES/ecosystem approached are mirrored between the MSFD and the Barcelona Convention. As such, the EU is financially supporting projects that further the Convention's objectives to foster biodiversity, the integrity of seabed habitats and marine food webs.

<sup>5</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/904 of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0904>





### 3.3 Overview of the policy response, actions, tools, initiatives - to strengthen the sustainable use of ecosystems and the MSFD implementation in Albania

Mr. Ornela Çuçi presented the policies and action in place to implement the MSFD in Albania. She started by characterizing Albania's coastal profile. Albania has access to the Adriatic and Ionian seas in the west, with a coastline of 476 km. 150 km of coastline borders the Ionian Sea. The breadth of the territorial sea is 12 nautical miles. The continental Shelf in the north extends up to 25 nm into the Adriatic Sea and 2-3 nm to the south in the Ionian Sea. Along its length there are 4 small islands and one big island, Sazani. Existing protected areas covers 18,16 % of the country (from 15,54% in 2015). Biodiversity monitoring network is extended and improved, and the national targets are in line with the global Aichi biodiversity targets for 2020.

Albania had its first marine spatial planning efforts with the Integrated Coast Zone Management of in 1995-1998. However, the document was not officially endorsed by the Government. In 2004 the country finally adopted a ICZM plan and in 2010 it became a Party to the Barcelona Convention ICZM Protocol as one of the first signatories.

In 2013 the Government initiated the process of drafting three national spatial planning documents: the General National Territorial Plan, the Integrated Cross-sectoral Plan for the Coast and the Integrated Cross-sectoral Plan for the Economic Zone Tirana–Durrës. These documents were approved by the National Territorial Council in June 2016. The General National Territorial Plan makes references to the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). Protection of the natural areas is also recognized as an important factor. Reference is also made to Natura 2000 and the European Green Belt. The Integrated Cross-sectoral Plan for the Coast makes a reference to the principles of integrated coastal zone management and to the Barcelona and Ramsar Conventions. The Plan is criticized for having no direct references to marine spatial planning.

Under a 2017-2020 UNDP/Italian Cooperation/NAPA project called “Improving coverage and management effectiveness of marine and coastal protected areas (MCPAs)”, the country is seeking to improve the coverage of marine and coastal protected areas. One of the outcomes is a pilot Marine Spatial Plan of Vlora Bay. NAPA and RAC/SPA, with RAPA Vlora, implemented the activity “Assessment of the Ecological Status and MSP preliminary initial assessment in Vlora Marine Area”. It was completed in late 2019 and discussed with stakeholders in early 2020.

Within this framework, the MSP Pilot project provides support to the MSP process in Albania and to an ongoing GEF Adriatic Project. The objectives of that GEF project consist in delivering a MSP preliminary initial assessment report of Vlora area, and delivering a preliminary MSP report related to Vlora Area based on collected and available data. The project is also facilitating the development of a national IMAP monitoring programme for EO1 Biodiversity (Habitat and species), EO2 NIS, EO5 Eutrophication, EO7 Hydrography, EO9 Contaminants and EO10 Marine litter.



Figure 3 - Vlora Bay



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There are other initiatives worth noting. Under the UNEP MAP Barcelona Convention 2019 saw a feasibility study for a Trans-boundary Coastal Area Management Program (CAMP) Project between Albania and Italy (Otranto Strait area). There is also GiZ project called “Integrated waste management marine litter prevention in the Western Balkans (MLP)” for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The overall program goal is to strengthen capacities for the prevention of waste in rivers, lakes and the Adriatic and Ionian Sea.

Mr. Ornela Çuçi concluded that in order to achieve GES, in line with MSFD requirements, Albania should develop a strategy for marine waters. The Marine Strategy will provide the initial assessment of the current environmental status of national marine waters and the environmental impact and socio-economic analysis of human activities in these waters programme. Mr. Ornela Çuçi stated the initial assessment has already started has explained previously.

### **3.4 Outcomes of the Strategic Plan for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (SPMCPAs) in Albania. Plan Design and Development**

Mr. Zamir Dedej presented the outcomes of the Strategic Plan for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (SPMCPAs) in Albania. He started by stating that Albania has a good percentage of protected areas resulting from a system being in place. Currently the coverage of 18+% with the plan to reach 20%.

A cornerstone of that system is the National Agency for Protected Areas (NAPA) created in 2015. NAPA has a central management and regional administrations covering the territory of Albania. The organization is staffed by 300+ and is responsible for the management of all protected areas.

The Strategic Plan for Marine and Coastal Protected Areas makes an assessment of the value and importance of the marine and coastal areas and proposes new MPAs to be designated in the future. The Albanian coast has important habitats such as posidonia meadows (*Posidonia oceanica*), coastal wetlands, underwater cliffs, and sandy dunes. There is also a variety of important species of fish, reptiles, mammals and birds. Human activities are a major threat to those habitats and species. Fisheries, tourism, shipping, marine litter, agricultural runoffs and lack of marine planning are the key vectors.

Currently there is only one marine protected area in Albania (Vlora bay), but many more coastal protection areas already exist, covering 40% of the total coast area. They are: the national Marine Park Karaburun-Sazan; Landscape protection of river Buna and the wetlands area around; Nature Managed Reserve Kune –Vaini-Tale; Nature Managed Reserve Patok-Fushekuqe; Nature Managed Reserve of Rushkull; National Park of Divjake-Karavasta; Landscape protection of river Vjosa; National Park of Butrint.





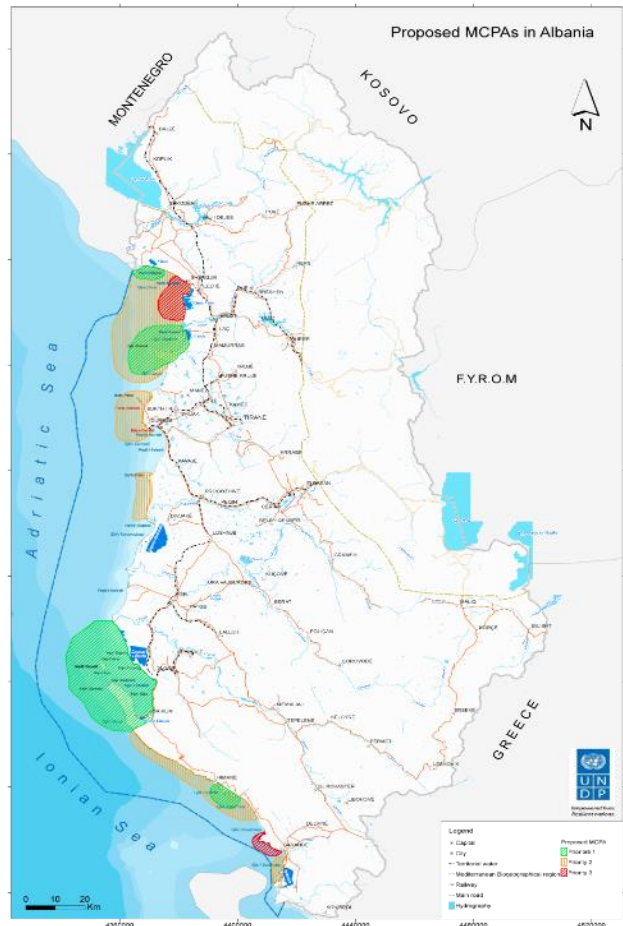


Figure 4 - Proposed MCPAs in Albania

There are eleven sites identified that fulfil the criteria to be MPAs. The sites were evaluated according to ecological, priority and practical criteria. The sites are:

- Bay of Porto-Palermos
- Rodonit Cape
- Marine area of Currila until Bishtpallë
- Turra Castel marine area
- North bay of Saranda city
- South bay of the Sarandë-Butrinti area
- Marine area of Buna river
- Himara marine area
- Vjosa river mouth and the Vlora Bay
- Marine area in front of the wetland system Kune-Vain

For the first 2 sites there is already work in progress including a social economic study, and a marine habitats and species study. The management plans for those 2 areas are also drafted and are being considered by the Government.

Albania has been supported by several projects in recent years. Mr. Zamir Dedej mentioned specifically the projects supporting the Marine Spatial Plan of Vlora Bay. He also mentioned the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programs (IMAPs) supported by GEF.

Mr. Zamir Dedej finalized listing the future steps already identified, namely:

- Designation of the Porto-Palermo area as the second MPA;
- Increase of knowledge and information about the marine area of Cape Rodoni;
- Development of the MSP and monitoring program;
- Development of the GIS database for all the habitats and species in the marine area;



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- Regulation and control of the tourism flow to the marine and coastal protected areas;
- Acquisition of better equipment and improvement of enforcement capacities for the Administration of PAs.

After the presentation, Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou commented the EPPA team reached similar results in its research regarding the potential of MPAs in Albania. He also asked about the availability of human resources in the country to manage the future MPAs. Mr. Zamir Dedej confirmed there are not many people with marine background available, nor there is a dedicated scientific institution to marine environments. Currently NAPA has 7-8 staff members dealing with the existing MPA. Capacities need to be increased significantly. A marine studies institute would be essential to complement and pursue scientific work on marine areas.

### 3.5 Management models and measures for effective management of MPAs: sharing knowledge, best practices and challenges

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou presented the management models and measures for effective management of MPAs. He started with an overview of the pressures to Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. Among the most noteworthy are industrial and chemical pollution, tourism, habitat and biodiversity loss, urban pollution, maritime activities, marine litter, eutrophication, coastal erosion, overfishing and aquaculture, and invasive alien species. All the pressures are compounded by the expected impacts of climate change. There are management tools, including EU legislation, but synergies, cooperation and a more holistic approach are needed across countries and regions to create meaningful impact.

In this regard, MPAs are recognised and proved to be a powerful tool for biodiversity protection and conservation of marine resources. In addition, public policy needs to rely on a better science and policy linkage to create awareness and promote knowledge-based actions.

Regarding the situation in the Adriatic, there is a loss of habitats due to coastal construction/ coastal defence structures (e.g. urbanisation, tourism), there is physical damage of benthic habitats (e.g. fishing pressure from bottom trawling, hydrocarbons extraction, discharge and dredging areas), and other causes of harm like the introduction of NIS (e.g. ports) and underwater noise (e.g. maritime traffic, military activities). Currently, 26% of existing MPAs in the Adriatic are located in low anthropogenic impact zone, while almost 8% of the existing MPAs are in high to very high anthropogenic impact zones. All in all, the Adriatic Sea has only 5.8% of its area as MPAs, whereas the Aichi Target 11 calls for at least 10%, and the potential new target will call for 30%.

The situation in the Mediterranean isn't much better. The Total MPA and OECM coverage is 6.81% of the Sea, with a majority of countries having areas less than 3% of their sea covered. Only 5 countries are above the 10% target. In addition, most of the MPAs are too small to sustain ecosystem services. EU Member States MPAs are often less than 30km<sup>2</sup>, whereas in the Adriatic 70% of MPAs are 5km<sup>2</sup> or less.

In the future, attention should be placed not only on MPAs but on their connectiveness. A network of MPAs can use the already protected spaces as “nodes” of networks covering coastal, offshore, and deep-sea systems, while the links would be the site of conservation and management measures, under MSFD, to achieve GES. This could create an effective network of marine protected areas instead of “paper parks”. The Barcelona Convention can be an important tool in achieving that goal as it sets ambitious policy goals, namely the 1) establishment an ecological network of MPAs which is representative and connected, 2) effective, efficient and sustainable management, 3) integration on a territorial level and with other sectors while promoting the sharing of environmental and socio-economic benefits, and 4) the increase of financial resources to establish and maintain such network.

Another important driver for MPAs is science-based management. Mechanisms are needed to monitor the ecological efficiency of the adopted measures in MSFD. In parallel, an assessment of human pressures (e.g. intensity, frequency and extent) is crucial to improve management measures inside/outside MPAs, and the conservation capacity of the existing MPAs. When associated with social and economic benefits for local communities, protection produces positive conservation outcomes, and has a higher acceptance and support by stakeholders.



Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou concluded with the best practice of Cabo de Palos–Islas Hormigas MPA (CPH-MPA- Spain). Established in 1995 as a reserve of fisheries interest, with a managed no take zone, a buffer zone, and regions of restricted access, it has been a tool for economic development. Due to the success of the fisheries reserve, the number of dives per year in Cabo de Palos (Spain) increased by 225% between 1998 and 2010, which led to local added value of EUR 870,000 per year and an additional 20 local jobs. He also mentioned the Torre Guaceto MPA, a 22km<sup>2</sup> coastal area where a fishing ban was implemented since 2001, allowing only artisanal fishing catch within the MPA buffer zone and in the external unprotected areas. Since 2008, catches within the buffer zone were always higher, when compared to unprotected areas (in some years with a 5-fold increase).

### **3.6 Links between MSFD and WFD. Interactions, overlaps and potential area for closer coordination. MPAs designation in Romania.**

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin presented on the interactions, overlaps and potential areas for closer coordination between MSFD and the WFD. He also reflected on lessons learnt from MPAs designation in Romania.

The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC (WFD) replaced traditional management practices predicated upon the command and control paradigm, moving to a holistic approach integrating all parts of the wider environmental system. Regarding the marine environment, the WFD explicitly aims to prevent and eliminate pollution from the marine environment. In its scope it also includes maritime waters to 1 nautical mile for ecological status and to 12 miles for chemical status. The MSFD enlarges governance, through the use of the concept “good environmental status”, to the full extent of Member States territorial waters over which they have or exercise jurisdictional rights.

The WFD aims at protecting and enhancing all waters – groundwater, rivers, lakes, transitional waters (estuaries) and coastal waters – and includes terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly dependent on aquatic systems. The river basin management plans (RBMPs) are the key tools for the implementation of the WFD. The planning process should include an economic analysis of all the water uses in each RBD, as well as determining the pressures and impacts on the water environment.

The MSFD aims to protect the marine environment across Europe while allowing the continuation of sustainable uses of the sea. It requires EU Member States to establish national marine strategies to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in their marine waters by 2020. Member States shall, in respect of each marine region or subregion concerned, identify the measures which need to be taken in order to achieve or maintain good environmental status in their marine waters, including spatial protection measures, contributing to coherent and representative networks of marine protected areas and report on the exceptions where environmental targets or good environmental status cannot be achieved by 2020.

The application of the WFD has direct impact on the quality of marine waters. The level of urban waste water treatment, the implementation of measures for reducing the agricultural pollution, the level of treatment for reduction/removing of priority substances, the reduction of pollution with plastic and microplastic and supplementary measures for bathing and shellfish waters are all areas in which the WFD can synergize with the MSFD to achieve good environmental status.

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin showed that the structure of both directives is similar, but the WFD is more prescriptive in terms of approach, baseline and targets. The geographical scale and topic scope are significant differences in the two Directives, but both provide an holistic approach for achieving GES of MS waters. WFD assessments should contribute to MSFD assessments. There is also a need to avoid duplication and ensure coherence on monitoring and reporting. The areas of overlap are: coastal waters, chemical quality, eutrophication and dangerous substances/contaminants.

There are, however, differences. The scope of GES under MSFD is broader, covering a greater range of biodiversity components and pressures which are not included for coastal water bodies. The assessment scales are also different, with MSFD requiring the achievement of GES at the level of the relevant subregions whereas the WFD assesses the chemical and ecological status of each individual coastal water body. MSFD is using an Ecosystem based approach, whereas the WFD is using an Integrated approach.

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin listed the potential areas for cooperation between professionals of both fields:



- correlate the monitoring and assessment between MSFD and WFD to identify and quantify land-based pressures for the marine environment
- improve the cooperation between the sea basin level and sea conventions
- Improve knowledge related to the river-delta and sea interaction
- involve landlocked countries in the MSFD implementation

The role of landlocked countries derives from the synergies between the WFD and the MSFD in relation to the conceptual relations between Good Environmental Status (MSFD) and Good Ecological Status (WFD). The existing cooperation structures implicated in the implementation of the WFD at river basin level, especially the international river commissions, should play a crucial role in relation to achieve the common targets of both the MSFD and the WFD.

Landlocked countries should pay particular attention when establishing WFD environmental objectives, MSFD environmental targets and associated indicators according to article 10, as well as the elaboration of the programmes of measures according to article 13. The consideration of the synergies between both directives in relation with the Programme of Measures: the WFD Article 11(6) has a similar goal as the MSFD Article 13 when stipulating that “Member States shall take all appropriate steps not to increase pollution of marine waters” and the respective measures are elements of the River basin management plans (RBMP) according to part A, point 7.11 of Annex VII of the WFD.

Finally, four key issues are of particular relevance to landlocked countries as highlighted in the EC Decision 2010/477/EU (which sets the criteria and methodological standards on GES of marine waters):

- The abundance/distribution of key trophic groups/species (RBMP - river continuity, etc) (Descriptor 4.3)
- Minimising human-induced eutrophication (N, P - UWWTD, ND, Phosphate –free detergents) (Descriptor 5)
- Concentration of contaminants (EQSD, REAC) (Descriptor 8)
- Marine litter (Descriptor 10)

The second part of Mr. Gheorghe Constantin’s presentation was devoted to MPAs designation in Romania. The designation of MPAs has been based on a combination of bio-ecological and socioeconomic criteria, ensuring long-term sustainability, but also considering and mitigating short-term costs. The first site proposals were submitted to the EC in 2007 and, due to shortcomings for certain types of habitats or species, new proposals have been submitted for the extension of the Natura 2000 network in Romania. Most of these sites overlap with the natural protected areas of national interest (national parks, natural parks and nature reserves). The network of MPAs was amended in 2016, by adding new protected sites and extending the area covered by the already existing ones. Over a coastline of 245 km, Romania now has 9 SCIs covering 85% of Romanian territorial sea and 21% of the EEZ and contiguous zone.







The Romanian approach was characterized by the amiable settlement of economic and conservation interests using compromise solutions. Romania reconciled the conflicts by modifying the shape of the designated protected areas, while maintaining the same surface (thus complying with the European requirements in this respect), to allow the deployment of fishing operations on traditional fishing grounds.

Mr. Sašo Šantl presented the Slovenian experience with MPAs designation. He started with a characterization of Slovenia. The country has a population of 2,094,060 (y. 2019) in an area of 20,273 km<sup>2</sup>. Despite its small area, the country has areas of Alpine (Triglav up to 2864 m), Dinarides (karstic type), Pannonia, and (Sub) Mediterranean types. Slovenia has a 58% coverage of forest area (beech, fir-beech and beech-oak sites). The country's natural richness is reflected in the abundance of NATURA 2000 sites, ecologically important areas, valuable nature features and protected areas.

Slovenia's territorial sea is cca. 213 km<sup>2</sup> with a cca. 45 km coastline. The natural part of Slovenian coast represents 24,6 % of total Slovenian coast, and the artificial coastline represents 75,4 % of total length of Slovenian coast. The most typical artificial structures that changed the natural coastline in Slovenia are: Breakwaters, Seawater/Revetments/Sea dikes, Jetties and Ports/Marinas. There are almost 90 000 inhabitants in four coastal municipalities. The number of tourists in summer period is cca. 130 000.

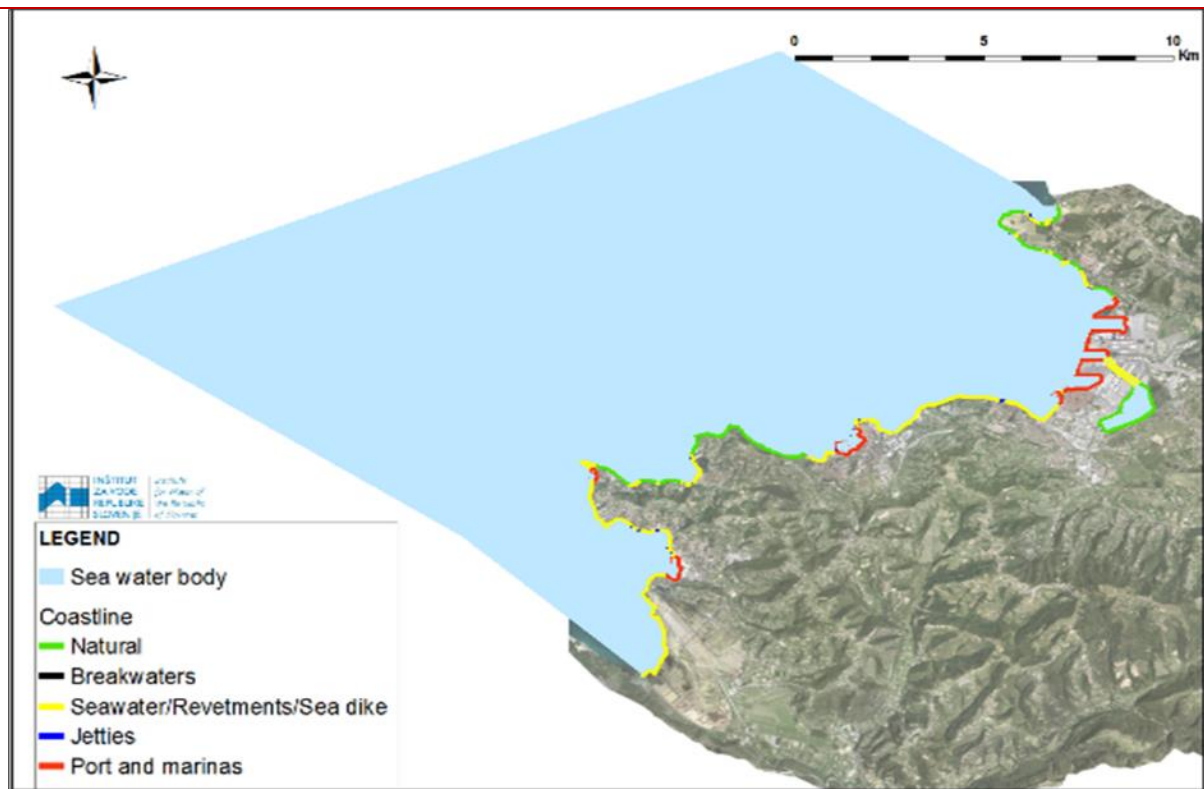


Figure 6 - The Slovenian coast

The coast is marked by constant pressure. There are many interests and little space. Below are some of the main uses and their negative consequences:

- Transport (cargo, cruisers, recreational vessels, ...): underwater noise, collisions with marine animals, air pollution, disturbances of a sea bottom, chemical pollution, exotic species, inter-sectoral conflicts
- Aquaculture (fish, shellfish): exotic species, excessive amount of nutrients, wastewaters, excessive catching of wild fish populations, plastic nets
- Fisheries: excessive catching, fishing nets
- Tourism: urbanization of coastal area, excessive use of fresh water sources, wastewater pollution risks

On the positive side, the coastal area was already rich in valuable nature features providing a good basis for the MPA designation. Nevertheless, the main challenge was to harmonize the MPA conservation goals with other pre-existing sea uses.



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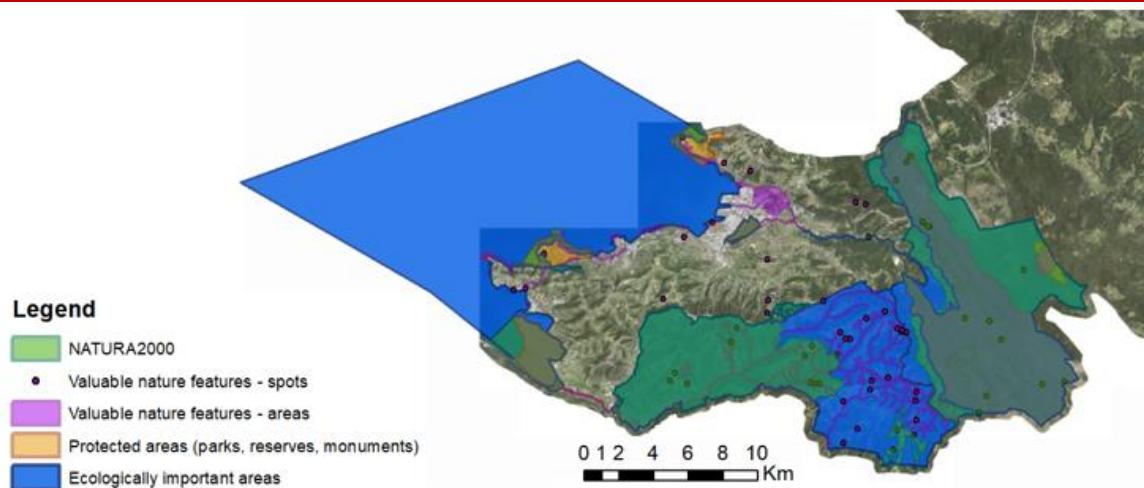


Figure 7 - Network of already protected ecosystems along the coast (pre-MPAs)

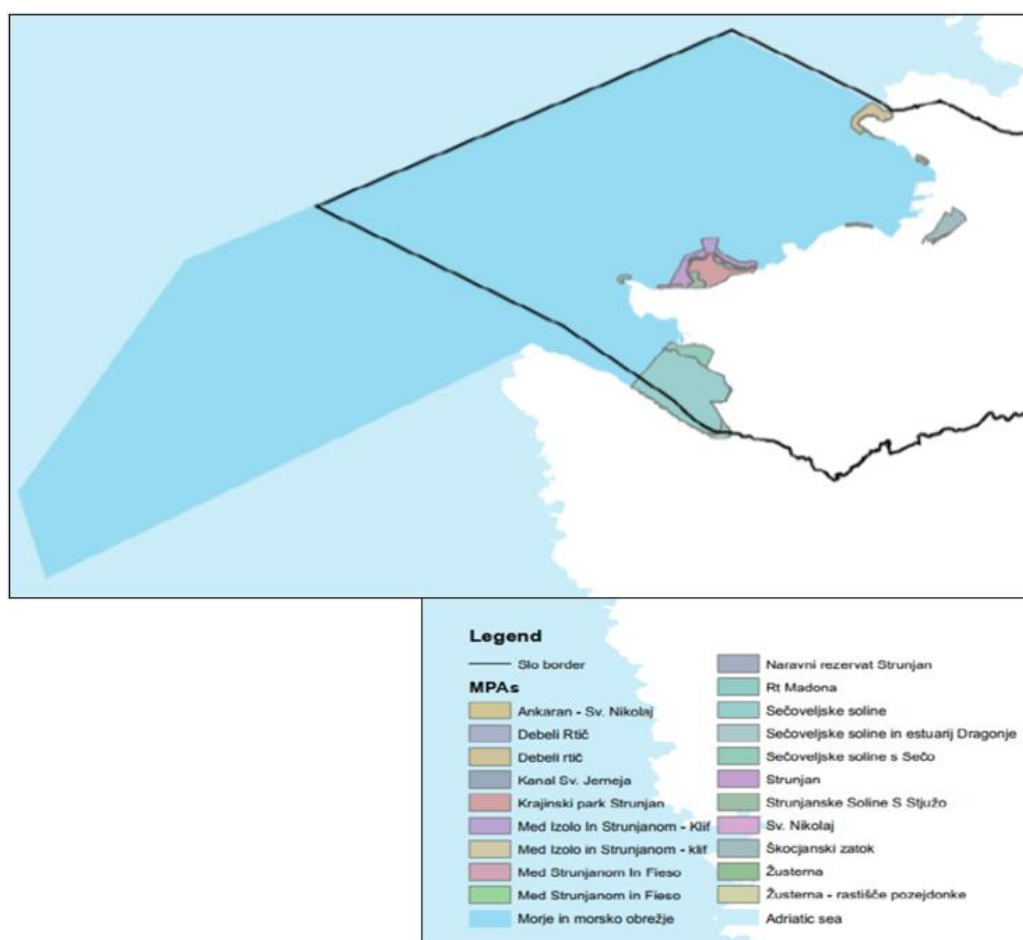


Figure 8 - Slovenian MPAs

Mr. Sašo Šantl then went through the results of the SUPREME project - Supporting maritime spatial Planning in the Eastern Mediterranean, which sought to support the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning in EU Member States, and to launch and carry out concrete and cross-border MSP initiative between Member States. That project resulted in the definition of different layouts for the Slovenian sea and coast, including marine traffic corridors across Slovenian waters that reduce impact on the coastal MPAs, mapping for fisheries and aquaculture sites, protection areas, both at sea and on the coast, and



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touristic use of the different coastal zones. Those layouts provided the needed harmonization of the main interests present and became the starting point for the elaboration of the National Maritime Spatial Plan.

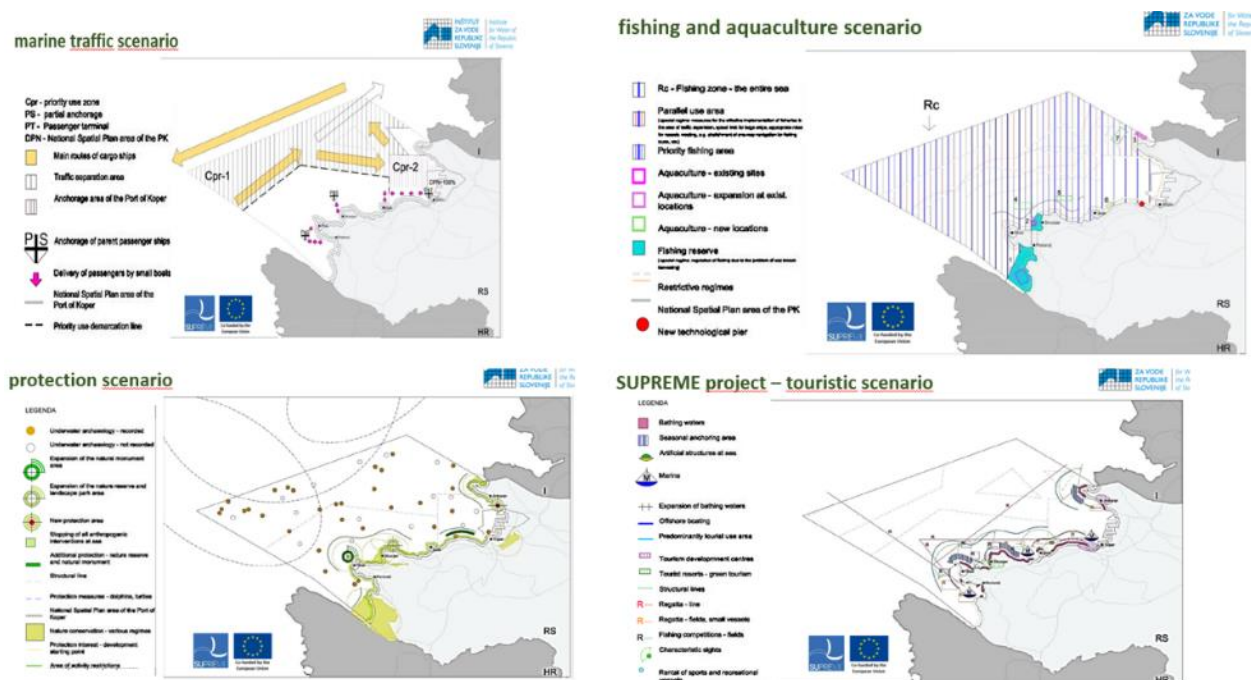
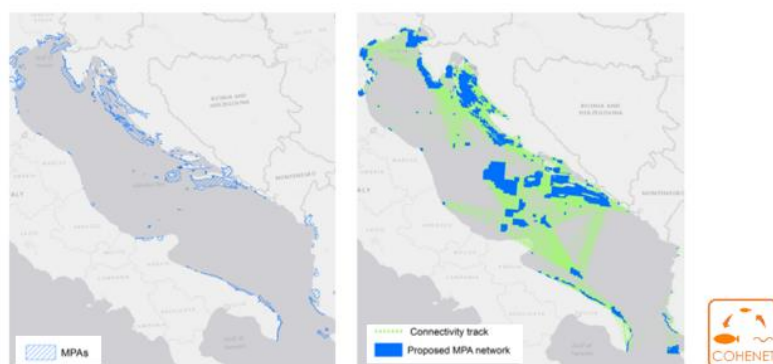


Figure 9 - Multiple scenarios for the maritime spatial planning

The Slovenian MPAs are relatively small due to country's available coastline. Considerations on that led Mr. Sašo Šantl to reflect on the fact that small MPAs can only be sustainable for habitats and species if they are connected by corridors to other MPAs. Such corridors should also fall under some type of protection, for instance, fishery restrictions. In order to strengthen the argument, he showed the map of Adriatic MPAs, a result from the COHENET project, showing the existing MPAs and proposed new MPAs, including connecting corridors.

#### MPAs of Adriatic Sea - result from COHENET project



[https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/publications/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/publications/index_en.htm)

Figure 10 - Existing and proposed Adriatic MPAs and connectivity

Among the recommendations of the COHENET project, Mr. Sašo Šantl highlighted some important recommendations for the designation and management of MPAs:

- Improve data collection and its availability on the distribution of marine biodiversity (from surfaces to volumes, including time), because effective management should be based on efficient observation systems
- Include the full range of biodiversity and ecosystem functioning into the analysis and assessment. For this there is a need to define common criteria on MPA categorization and their requirements



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for protection and improving the scientific background of targets and methodology for coherence assessment

- Implement common objectives, targets and measures under Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to reach ecologically coherent networks. Effective management should contribute to the achievement of good environment status (GES) by tackling the main pressures
- Improve the knowledge on the status of other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and their potential added value towards protection. In parallel, better knowledge of the socio-economic and cultural values, and the potential benefits for and from protection, is also needed
- Enhance 'ownership' by the public through communication and outreach

### 3.8 Proposed methodology for identification of two possible MPAs with high biodiversity values and introduction of the outline of the report containing the methodology and recommendations

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou presented EPPA activity 5.1.2 – a study that aims to recommend to possible sites for the designation of MPAs. The Study will be based on the available scientific information on the marine biodiversity from national or international sources, and relevant projects/programmes such as:

- The analysis of the MPAs network in the Adriatic of the project "Achieving coherent networks of marine protected areas: analysis of the situation in the Mediterranean Sea - COHENET (EC)
- MedMPAnet (Regional Project for the Development of a Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Protected Areas Network through the boosting of MPAs Creation and Management)
- AdriPan (ADRIatic Ionian maritime spatial PLANning)
- The work already done in the framework of the Barcelona Convention and by IUCN

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou explained the methodology consists of 3 phases. In the first phase the project team will review existing literature and examine the priority areas for MPA designation in Albania. In addition, it will assess the legal and institutional arrangements relevant to the establishment and management of the MPAs. For this purpose, the project engaged a local expert, Mr. Abdulla Dikou.

The second phase will define a clear set of objectives for MPAs management that would cover requirements of marine biodiversity conservation, economic development, recreation or species recovery objectives, all driven by both the management agency and the interested stakeholders and elaborate recommendations regarding legal, institutional, management, socioeconomic, communications and reporting requirements, and stakeholder's involvement. The criteria proposed is as follows:

Factors	Criteria
Naturalness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the extent to which the area has been protected from, or has not been subject to human-induced change</li> </ul>
Biogeographic importance (distribution of species and ecosystems)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• either contains rare biogeographic qualities or is representative of a biogeographic "type" or types</li> <li>• contains unique or unusual geological features</li> </ul>
Ecological importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributes to maintenance of essential ecological processes or life-support systems, e.g. source for larvae for downstream areas integrity</li> <li>• the degree to which the area either by itself or in association with other protected areas, encompasses a complete ecosystem</li> <li>• contains a variety of habitats, also for rare or endangered species</li> <li>• contains nursery or juvenile areas, and feeding, breeding or rest areas</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains rare or unique habitat for any species preserves genetic diversity i.e. is diverse or abundant in species terms.</li> </ul>
Social importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>existing or potential value to the local, national or international communities because of its heritage, historical, cultural, traditional aesthetic, educational or recreational qualities</li> </ul>
Scientific importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>value for research and monitoring</li> </ul>
International or National – significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is or has the potential to be listed on the World or a national Heritage List or declared as a Biosphere Reserve or included on a list of areas of international or national importance or is the subject of an international or national conservation agreement.</li> </ul>
Practicality/ feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree of insulation from external destructive influences social and political acceptability, degree of community support</li> <li>accessibility for education, tourism, recreation compatibility with existing uses, particularly by locals ease of management, compatibility with existing management regimes</li> </ul>
Network Assessment Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representativity of functions and features of marine biodiversity (depth zones, ecoregions, habitats and species, including aspects of geographic distribution)</li> <li>Replication of sites and features</li> <li>Connectivity between sites and protected features, and</li> <li>Adequacy of individual MPAs as parts of the network (e.g. MPA size, level of protection) – Overall it is the main criterion which describes the qualitative aspect of single MPA</li> </ul>
Adequacy targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size: Individual MPAs should be large enough to accommodate the large-scale movement of adults and include enough habitat space for ecosystem protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should be consistent with MPA conservation objectives;</li> <li>Size of MPAs for conservation of mobile species &gt; than MPAs protecting benthic habitats</li> <li>Generally proposed 30Km<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Baltic) in Adriatic 20Km<sup>2</sup> – (a semi-closed basin- from COHENET)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Shape: Compact shapes are considered most appropriate for establishing conservation efficiency; easier to manage!</li> <li>Threats: MPAs should be designed in a way that minimize the impacts of pressures occurring within their boundaries and in their vicinity; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threats Indicator: assessment of the proportion of areas within the MPA that is not impacted by threats</li> </ul> </li> <li>Level of protection: the protection provided by an MPA should be consistent with both conservation objectives and pressures affecting the MPA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e.g. for <i>Pinna nobilis</i> protection: measures should be taken either to forbid or regulate anchoring</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

*Table 1 - MPA identification criteria*

The third phase will recommend two new MPAs in Albania, that would be designated under regional or global agreements and would comply with the relevant designation criteria.

The final study shall be submitted for approval to the EC DG ENV and relevant beneficiaries. The study will be followed by a regional workshop on the establishment and management of the proposed marine protected areas for the 3 countries involved (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania) and 5 proposed MPAs.

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou presented the timetable for the report's completion and delivery.





Months	Deliverables	Tasks
Jan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data and information collected,</li> <li>Exchange of information with Local expert &amp; consultation with the EPPA team</li> </ul>
Feb		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data and information for the proposed MPA location &amp; Consultation with the EPPA team</li> </ul>
Mar		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compilation of the results</li> <li>Start writing of the Study report &amp; Consultation with the EPPA team</li> </ul>
Apr		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elaboration of the Study Report &amp; Consultation with the EPPA team</li> </ul>
May		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of the Report</li> <li>Consultation with the EPPA team</li> </ul>
Jun	1st Draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the Report to EPPA for Comments</li> <li>Comments on the 1st Draft from the EPPA team</li> </ul>
Jul	2nd Draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address comments and create the 2nd Draft of the report</li> <li>2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of the Report to EPPA for comments</li> <li>Incorporate comments on the 2nd Draft from the EPPA team</li> <li>Organisation of the Regional Workshop; communication with EPPA team</li> </ul>
Aug		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address comments</li> <li>Send draft to stakeholders in the countries for comments</li> <li>Preparation of Final Draft</li> </ul>
Sep	Final Draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation of the Regional Workshop &amp; Presentation of the Report</li> <li>Address comments and create the Final Draft to be sent to the countries</li> </ul>

Table 2 - Report timetable

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou concluded his presentation by giving an overview of the COHENET project. The project objectives were to develop a coherence assessment methodology that could be applied in other (sub) regions, take stock of the present situation of the MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) in the Mediterranean Sea, and provide recommendations for applying an MPA network approach in the region.

### 3.9 European Green Deal action - implementing the Green Infrastructure concept: Connecting Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

Mr. Sašo Šantl introduced the concepts of green infrastructure and ecosystem services within the EU Green Deal as a way of connecting biodiversity to sustainable development.

Green infrastructure is 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 such as water purification, air quality, space for recreation and climate mitigation and adaptation. This network of green (land) and blue (water) spaces can improve environmental conditions and therefore citizens' health and quality of life<sup>6</sup>. It also supports a green economy, creates job opportunities and enhances biodiversity. The Natura 2000 network constitutes the backbone of the EU green infrastructure.

Mr. Sašo Šantl listed a wide range of ecosystem services within four categories: provisioning (crops, plant resources, drinking water, etc), regulation and maintenance (retention of nutrients, flood risk mitigation, regulating temperature, etc), cultural (education, science, recreation, etc), and abiotic natural capital (hydropower, navigation, sediments). In the case of Slovenia, the marine environment provides multiple ecosystem services, including salt production, erosion prevention, water purification, tourism, education, fisheries, among others.

Mr. Sašo Šantl explained the diminishing gains of ecosystem services to make a point about stewardship and sustainability. The hypothetical relationships between land use intensity, Mean Species Abundance Index (MSA) and the output of ecosystem services seem to suggest that if the intensity of use of ecosystem services goes up beyond a certain point, what follows is a immediate and rapid deceleration of nature outputs towards human wellbeing – resulting in collapsing ecosystems.

<sup>6</sup> Watch a Swedish EPA video explaining the concept: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwa5mWotLA>



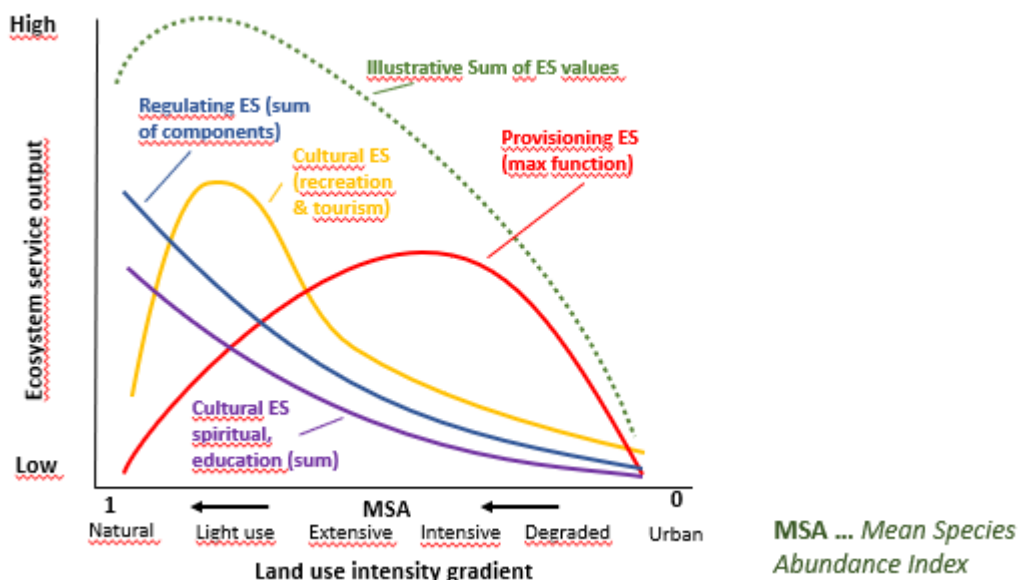


Figure 11 - Ecosystem services

For Green Infrastructure to be recognized and valued, it is important to make sure it is recognized as an area for biodiversity and/or the source of important ecosystem services for the communities relying on it. Policy makers and communities must also recognize that a balance must be achieved between extraction and preservation in order not to tip the scales towards ecosystem collapse. A possible way forward to use both concepts in support of MPAs, and other nature protection, is to include them in multiple scale spatial planning and to harmonize them with developmental objectives, thus promoting sustainable development.

Mr. Sašo Šantl exemplified how Slovenia did its green infrastructure mapping and development. It started by identifying all existing sources of biodiversity and ecosystem services based on existing policy and legislation (Natura2000, protected areas, bathing waters, protection forests, cultural heritage, etc) and described its current use versus existing use plans. This led to the definition of spatial subunits with different layers according to use, determination of value for each layer and subunit and scoring that into a final analysis that originated a Slovenian Green Infrastructure map and further plans for development.

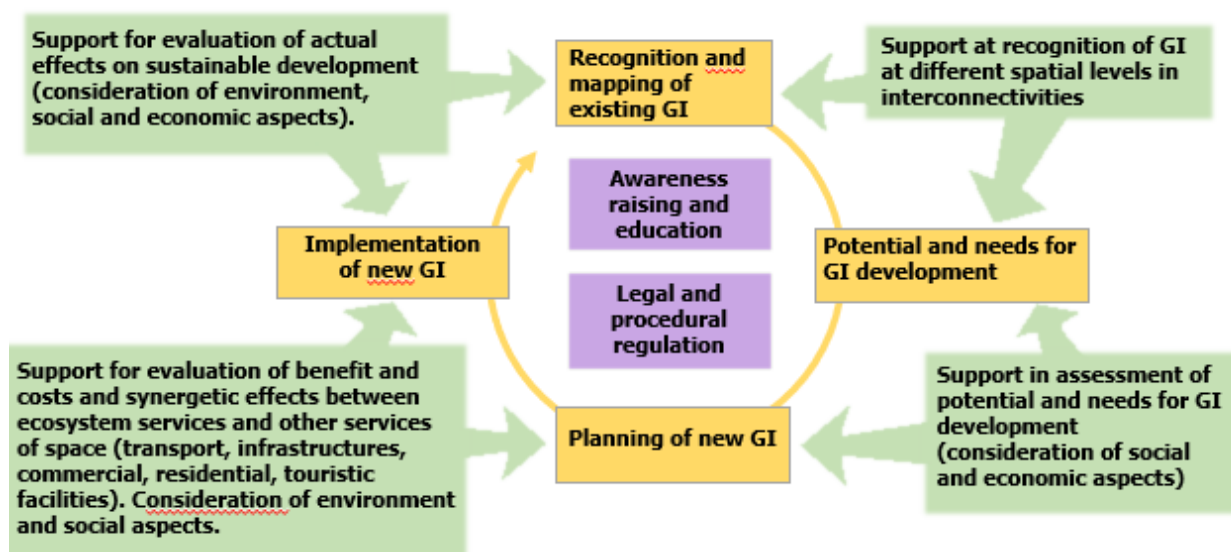


Figure 12 – Green infrastructure mapping and development

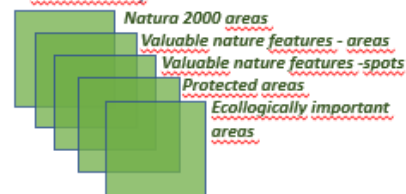




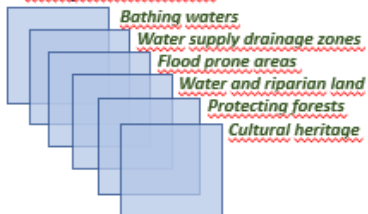
## METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT– SLOVENIAN & CROSSBORDER CASE:

Adopted legislation (protection regimes) for:

- biodiversity:



- ecosystem services:



Actual land and sea use



Adopted land use plans



- Determination of spatial sub units by their coverage with all used spatial layers
- Determination of values by each used spatial layer for each spatial sub unit
- Scoring method selection

Communication,  
discussion and  
harmonization  
among experts  
and stakeholders.

Results analysis

Support to GI mapping and development

Figure 13 - Green infrastructure mapping and development: the Slovenian case

The planning exercise resulted in the recognition of GI's potential for improved biodiversity, tourism, recreation, low CO2 emission mobility, wind and noise barriers, better microclima, etc. Some important notes to the process were also made. Only official data and existing legal basis was used. An inter sectoral bottom – up approach was taken and a logic of connecting local, national, and regional development permeated the approach.

Mr. Sašo Šantl gave the example of planning a new piece of GI in Slovenia: connecting two MPAs: Škocjan Inlet and Žusterna coastline with a green belt. The green belt required the closure of an old coastal road and the construction of a tunnel for traffic and the capture of land for the corridor where there is already a dense use of space. However, by highlighting that the corridor provides a wind barrier to reduce soil erosion, it improves the microclimate, reduces noise, enhances mobility and recreation values, and improves bathing water quality, the cost/benefit ratio in planning was drastically altered in favour of the green corridor.



Figure 14 - connecting two MPAs: Škocjan Inlet & Žusterna coastline



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Mr. Sašo Šantl called attention to the challenges of using a green infrastructure approach, namely the need for extensive spatial data analyses, the need to invest in improving GI development (corridors, systems) within dense urban, commercial areas, the transboundary nature of GI corridors requiring cross border cooperation and potential changes to agricultural changes in certain areas (green belts, semi natural farming etc.). Finally, GI has the potential to become a guarantee for human wellbeing and long-term resilience for the global environment, but changes in social and economic thinking are needed.

In the discussion that followed the presentation Mr. Gheorghe Constantin made note of a case in Romania where the forest management authority requested from the water authority payment for ecosystem services provided by a certain protected forest for flood protection. There is currently no framework in Romania to deal with such a system: no way to assess values, nor identify who are the paying users and the recipients. Romania is however starting to recognize the value of green infrastructure for flood protection in the Danube. In addition to the problems mentioned above, there is also a gap on funding for the initial developments.

Mr. Sašo Šantl replied that ecosystem services should in general follow a user pays principle. Each country should set up a system to identify the benefits and the beneficiaries and frame the necessary legal provisions for payments to be able to take place. Mr. Mihaela Popovici complemented the idea saying that it is important that such payments reflect the balance of costs and benefits.

An expert of the Ministry of Tourism and Environment asked how a small country can convince stakeholders to take a greener approach especially because greener alternatives will be perceived as more expensive. Mr. Sašo Šantl replied that awareness raising is a must. And it will be for a long time, as mentalities change slowly. It is also important that the benefits of a certain green project be clearly listed, with their monetary benefits as well, and communicated to all interested parties in an efficient way.

### 3.10 Coordination between MSFD and other EU directives and policies.

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin presented the coordination opportunities between MSFD and other directives. He started by explaining the main features of the MSFD. The MSFD Establishes a framework to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment. Its aim is to protect, preserve, prevent deterioration or, where practical, restore Europe's oceans and seas where they have been adversely affected and to prevent and reduce inputs in the marine environment. It seeks to achieve the aim by applying an ecosystem-based approach to management of human activities whilst ensuring sustainable use of marine goods and services. It addresses all aspects of biodiversity within the marine waters of EU Member States (excluding WFD transitional waters) and takes a regional approach to delivery of the Directive.

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin highlighted the centrality of GES, and its 11 indicators, within the directive. GES is defined as "the environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive within their intrinsic conditions, and the use of the marine environment is at a level that is sustainable, thus safeguarding the potential for uses and activities by current and future generations".

In order to clearly point the importance of the directive, Mr. Gheorghe Constantin talked about the main pressures over the marine environment: noise, harmful algal blooms, synthetic substances, ocean acidification, eutrophication, invasive species, decreasing fish sizes, microplastics, habitats destruction, climate change effects on plankton, among others.

Tackling such challenges effectively and consistently requires recognition the intersectoral nature of any environmental policy. The MSFD has links with many other EU Directives. Those links can help create synergies for a better environment.



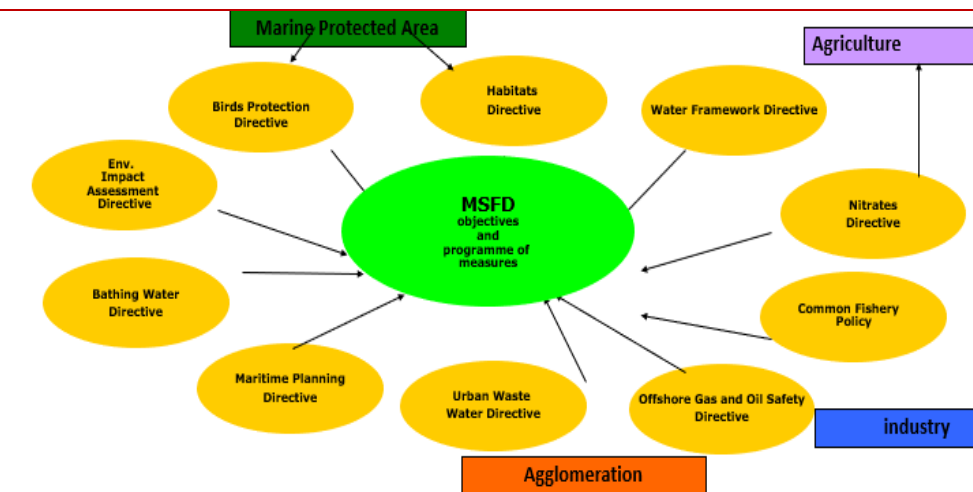


Figure 15 - MSDF connections with other directives

The Habitats directive aims to protect the biodiversity of the EU by taking measures to maintain or restore a favourable conservation status of a selected number of species and habitats of Community interest. It also aims to contribute towards ensuring biodiversity of the EU, including in the marine environment through measures designed to maintain or restore, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora. The Birds directive requires the protection of all naturally occurring wild bird species in the EU. A number of these habitat types and species occur in the marine environment and should be covered by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). A major measure to help achieving the targets of the HBDs is to designate and protect sites for the species and habitat types by SCI (Site of community importance) and Special Area of Conservation.

The 3 directives are concerned with aspects of biodiversity conservation in the marine environment, including a requirement to achieve good status for the elements of biodiversity covered by each Directive. The concepts of good environmental status (MSFD) and favourable conservation status (HD) or status of population (BD) are not necessarily equivalent but can be mutually supportive. Conservation measures under the Habitats Directive (HD) should be part of any programme of measures to meet the requirements of MSFD and therefore help deliver more integrated policy and planning.

The directives are concerned with protection, maintenance and management of specific elements of biodiversity, but also the restoration and recovery of habitats and species. They require measures which should contribute to the achievement of good environmental status, as well as monitoring and periodic assessment and reporting. There is a need for coordination in order to achieve their objectives by creating synergies between the measures proposed.

Regarding maritime planning, the respective directive sets out policies aimed at contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the marine area. It sets up plans which will contribute to meeting the objectives of the MSFD, particularly in relation to any measures which have a spatial dimension by applying an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. It can shape activities within the marine area to support the goals of the MSFD, as well as those of other relevant pieces of EU legislation.

When it comes to the Safety of Offshore Oil and Gas Operations Directive it requires risk assessment and an emergency response plan before operation of the off shore oil and gas facilities can start. It ensures that companies are well financed and have the necessary technical expertise and it requires verification of safety provisions, environmental protection measures, and the emergency preparedness of rigs and platforms. Companies are fully liable for environmental damages caused to protected marine species and natural habitats.

Strategic planning and assessment of a marine development will contribute, at a generic level, towards the achievement and maintenance of GES by avoiding unintentional and irrevocable consequences for the marine environment. Strategic environmental assessment seeks to provide a high level of protection



of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Environmental impact assessment applies a procedure for the assessment of the environmental effects of projects which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

The Common Fishery Policies is the principal legal mechanism for managing fish stocks in EU waters and its implementation will play a critical role in supporting the achievement and maintenance of GES and ensuring consistency across European waters, promoting sustainable stocks and fishing practices. It includes technical measures on gear selectivity, eliminating discards, spatial restrictions and limits on landings. Measures will be focused both on achieving targets for Maximum Sustainable Yield in commercial fisheries and on achieving sustainable use of the marine environment outside the Marine Protected Area network.

The Water Framework Directive's main objective is to achieve good water status/good chemical status/maximum ecological potential for all waters (surface, underground, coastal, transitional). It brings together in a common framework a diversity of previous directives dealing with water issues (Shellfish Waters, Bathing Waters Nitrates, Dangerous Substances, Urban Wastewater Treatment). It requires water management at the River Basin level in the understanding that rivers discharging into the sea/ocean affect its environmental status.

There are strong links between the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the MSFD. They have comparable objectives, with MSFD focused on the achievement of GES in marine waters, and WFD aiming to achieve Good Ecological and Good Chemical Status in all waters including transitional and coastal. There is an overlap between the waters covered by the WFD and the MSFD. Successful implementation of the WFD will essentially contribute to good environmental status in the marine waters. MSFD will define the level of ambition for the WFD.

Mr. Sašo Šantl asked, once the presentation ended, how does Romania address cooperation with other Black Sea countries to ensure MSFD goals are achieved. Mr. Gheorghe Constantin replied that Romania cooperated with the other countries based on the Bucharest convention. The parties meet every year in working groups, one for biodiversity. However, there is no agreement to implement the MSFD. In the Danube region, all countries, including non-EU members, agreed to implement the WFD. Romania does its best to negotiate with the partners, but Mr. Gheorghe Constantin believes it is not possible to reach GES in the Black Sea under the current conditions.

### 3.11 Discussion on key topics

The workshop agenda foresaw a plenary session to discuss topics related to the creation of MPAs in Albania. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou and guided by 5 questions.

#### 1) Does the dense use of the Adriatic Sea pose on a potential threat on existing or new MPAs? What can be done?

Mr. Gheorghe Constantin called to attention the potential use conflicts when establish MPAs. He mentioned fisheries, transport, and tourism. In his view the establishment of MPAs should allow pre-existing uses. Negotiation with the stakeholders is essential to achieve a level of agreement on rules that allow the establishment and management of the MPAs without significant conflicts.

Mr. Zamir Dedej believes the dense use of the Adriatic poses a general threat, but with reservations. Albania has its coast both on the Adriatic and in the Ionian seas (richer in biodiversity), where maritime pressures are different. In addition, Albania has less maritime traffic than other countries. According to him, there are not many indicators that show serious maritime threats over the potential MPAs, although fisheries and transport are of course important risks. The main threats are urban pressures on coastal zones and tourism.

Ms Alba Zhori added that wastewater also poses a risk for Albania's marine environments. She believes wastewater treatment plants will be essential tools to mitigate risks to MPAs.

#### 2) What do we lack for effective management of MPAs (considering that MPAs management is weak in most of the Med countries at the moment)?



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Mr. Zamir Dedej stated that in the existing MPA there are problems. Albania is new to marine environment management and is on a learning curve. Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj intervened to say that everything the regional admin of Lora does sets a precedent for the future MPAs. One of the problems she identified was coordination with other institutions whose policies or actions are sometimes not in line with MPA management requirements. She mentioned in particular the tourism, military and transport stakeholders as priority targets for improved cooperation.

Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj added that the lack of marine spatial planning is another problem. The lack of data is a major obstacle. The NAPA has been working for 5 years to build trust and a cooperation network with other data holders (projects, ministries, research institutions, etc.). However, sometimes it is difficult as some institutions have a strict vision of the legal competencies assigned to them. Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj concluded calling for more emphasis for marine spatial planning to resolve these difficulties.

Mr. Zamir Dedej commented that the creation of NAPA led to a competency's reallocation, which might have caused some competition as to who does what. However, the trust building is in progress and he expects the situation to improve gradually. He took the opportunity to note that very little is known of Albania's maritime areas, because of a weak scientific sector. The Lora administration is advancing research work within the existing MPA, which also contributes to raising the prestige of NAPA as the key player for the topic.

Mr. Abdulla Diku suggested that ecosystem services should be included in MPAs management plans.

### **3) What actions could be done to reach both the conservation and socio-economic values in MPA**

Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj offered that better planning, based on scientific data, is needed. Moreover, planning should be participatory in order to ensure that the conservation objective of MPAs and social-economic interests within and around it can be balanced.

### **4) How can we overcome gap in knowledge or of lack of data at national level to decide and declare new MPAs?**

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou suggested that a key response in marine countries is to establish a marine science institute. However, he recognized that for relatively small countries this can pose quite a challenge.

Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj thought that the creation of data and research hubs within universities can start to address the problem. For example, the regional administration of Lora is trying to identify how the local university can assist the conservation goals of the MPA. Another avenue are internationally funded projects. If properly coordinated they can assist the country by delivering data for scientific monitoring. In this regard, NAPA is trying to position itself as a coordination point/ info clearing house. Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj has the ambition to develop a unified database of scientific and monitoring information on the MPA.

Mr. Abdulla Diku suggested that networking is also important. Albania does not have much experience, so it needs to learn from its partners.

Ms. Rovenka Metoja took the opportunity to inform the audience that the Water Resources Management Agency just published a RBMP for consultation on its website. She expected the development of RBMPs will contribute to a better marine environment.

### **5) From the listed questions/topics which are those that can be further examined as specific topics for tailor-made training for one country or during regional workshops under EPPA?**

Mr. Zamir Dedej thinks there is plenty of training available. Most of technical assistance budgets go to capacity building. Mr. Zamir Dedej is concerned in focusing that training offer in appropriate audiences (technical staff) and seeking better learning outcomes (detailed programmes on specific matters instead of talking about directives in general).

Ms. Tatjana Mehillaj recommended to involve other stakeholders in the training activities with the objective to create professional networks. In addition, trainings need to target the needs of specific MPAs and the reality of Albania.



Mr. Abdulla Diku recommended the Albanian authorities to prepare a shopping list of needed training that can be shared with donors. He also supported the need for topic-specific, technical trainings, for instance, how to design Natura 2000 sites.

### 3.12 Current status of the report

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou presented the current state of development of the report previously alluded to in “3.8 Proposed methodology for identification of two possible MPAs with high biodiversity values and introduction of the outline of the report containing the methodology and recommendations” of this document.

He highlighted the strategy for addressing the identification of potential conservation areas in Albania is to integrate the scientific information and align the potential political/national decisions and plans. By integrating these different efforts, the candidate conservation areas can be identified and prioritized in order to represent a consensus of the future planning of key areas.

He informed the participants of the data sources being used for the study. In order to perform the comparative analysis in ecologically important areas in Albania, biodiversity data from the sources was collected on sensitive habitats, species richness, Presence of species of conservation concern, etc. GIS data are not available thus the criteria to select the sites will be mostly based on this procedure.

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou informed the audience about the 3 new candidate MPAs from the Albanian Government: The Kipe I Rodonit or Cape of Rodoni, Porto Palermo and Rushkull, as an extension of an already existing MPA. They constitute a total of 7,015 ha. The new proposed MPAs have high biodiversity values, well developed Posidonia beds, marine mammals and turtles and in Rushkull the monk seal. Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou provided a detailed analysis of the characteristics of each site, including the main threats (urbanization, tourism, water pollution, fishing, a weak legal and institutional framework, an inappropriate implementation of the environmental laws and regulations and a low level of public awareness).



Figure 16 - Proposed MPAs in Albania by the Government

Mr. Vangelis Papathanassiou recommended that the next steps for the selection of the next MPAs in Albania should be:

1. Knowledge of existing situation at political level for new MPAs



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2. Perform a Comparative Analysis to define the core areas of protection according to the assessment criteria for MPAs, depending on the available information (e.g. presence of sensitive habitats, presence of species of conservation concern, species richness, uniqueness, and important areas for the regeneration of fish stocks).
3. GIS analysis on biodiversity data to identify other micro-reserves with a view to be included in larger marine parks, achieving the Adequacy criterion.

### 3.13 Final remarks

Ms. Madalina Ivanica thanked all the speakers and participants for their engagement in the topic. She informed the audience that the EC was just adopting, at the moment of speaking, a new biodiversity strategy. The present workshop fits in and contributes to the EU's biodiversity goals. Albania is one of the EU's partners in the endeavour to protect biodiversity globally. Ms. Madalina Ivanica recalled that work on the subject will continue under EPPA with the MPAs study. All documents produced under the project will be used in the screening process and future accession negotiations. She expressed gratitude for the Albanian engagement and for the EU MS experts sharing their knowledge.

Mr. Edwin Pacara informed that a first draft of IPA3 has been completed. Green infrastructure will be present in connection with the circular economy, the green agenda and biodiversity. The EU support will be there. It is up to the Albanian authorities to maximize that support.

Ms. Mihaela Popovici observed that Albania is showing drive by proposing many MPAs. This approach shows Albania is serious about its environmental governance, which will be an advantage for its negotiations with the EU. There will be many challenges, but also opportunities for important reforms during the next decade. Ms. Mihaela Popovici concluded the workshop by thanking everyone's engagement and efforts to make the event a success.

## 4 Conclusions

The workshop resulted in an important debate on the *status quo* of designating and managing marine protected areas in Albania. The information shared by the participants, and the accompanying recommendations, will be taken into account while implementing EPPA Activity 5.1.2 "Assistance for the identification of marine protected areas and exchange of best practices to achieve and/or to maintain the good ecological status of marine waters and preserve biodiversity".

Albania has one established MPA, Vlora Bay, and is in the process of developing the first marine spatial planning tools, with international support, for it. The establishment of the National Agency for Protected Areas was an important step to create the capacities to effectively perform nature conservation, including for marine areas. It is worth noting that 40% of the Albanian coast is under some regime of protection. In addition to that, Albania has 11 sites identified that can be designated MPAs, with priority to the Bay of Porto-Palermos and the Rodonit Cape. There is already work in progress for these two sites, including a social economic study, and a marine habitats and species study. The management plans are also drafted and are being considered by the Government.

The main threats to Albanian present and future MPAs are fisheries, shipping, tourism, and coastal urbanization (including its related problems like wastewaters). The experience of managing the first Albanian MPA has flagged some issues that need to be addressed.

First, coordination with other institutions with domain or influence over the maritime environment (agriculture, military, tourism, shipping) must be improved. Second, marine spatial planning must be developed in parallel with the improvement of data sources for such planning. Better marine spatial planning can also have synergetic impacts in inter-institutional cooperation.

Any planning efforts should be participatory and engage the communities in order to ensure that the conservation objectives of MPAs and social-economic interests within and around them can be balanced. A possible approach to that is to include ecosystem services schemes/approaches in the MPAs management plans.

Third, scientific research and monitoring over the Albania coast and seas needs to improve. There are efforts to improve the situation, but further action is needed. Given the impossibility of creating a marine



science institute, Albania is seeking to turn NAPA into a data and research hub by coordinating efforts of other institutions like universities and international projects. In this regard, NAPA's human capacities should grow significantly, also for better MPA management. A stop gap measure is to invest time in networking to learn from partners. A medium-term solution is to direct capacity building funding to trainings that are specific, technical and well-targeted. To achieve this, Albanian authorities can formulate a "training wish list" to make available to international donors.

Based on the discussion, and other research work, the EPPA project team will propose a first draft study with recommendations for further action on the identification and designation of two marine protected areas in Albania. The study will be followed by a regional workshop on the establishment and management of the proposed marine protected areas. All activities are expected to be accomplished by the end of 2020.

In conclusion, the workshop contributed to the implementation of MSFD and the improvement of marine governance in Albania.

### **Workshop outputs**

The workshop's main outputs were:

- Review of existing work and documentation relating the establishment of Marine Protected Areas in Albania
- Enhanced understanding of the challenges and tasks connected with MSFD implementation and the establishment of Marine Protected Areas
- Encouraged dialogue between the multiple stakeholders in Albania regarding the establishment and management of MPAs
- Enhanced exchange of experiences between Albania and EU Member states on MSFD and MPAs
- Identified key challenges to the implementation of MPAs in Albania
- Established contacts and information exchanged between the relevant stakeholders in Albania and the EPPA project team responsible for the development of a study with initial recommendations for establishment of new marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Adriatic Sea basin (project activity 5.1.2)

## **5 Evaluation**

The participants were asked to evaluate the workshop by TAIEX using an online survey after the event. The evaluation results are presented below in a summary table.



Evaluation Type	Question / Expert name / Comment	No. Responses	Expert Score	Yes / Excellent	No / Good	Partially / Satisfactory	Do not know / Poor
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	1. Was the workshop carried out according to the agenda	10		10 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	2. Was the programme well structured?	10		10 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	3. Were the key issues related to the topics addressed?	10		10 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	4. Did the workshop enable you to improve your knowledge?	10		8 (80%) Yes	No	2 (20%) Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	5. Was enough time allowed for questions and discussions?	10		9 (90%) Yes	No	1 (10%) Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	7. Do you expect any follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach, etc.)?	10		10 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - A. Questions	8. Do you think that further TAIEX assistance is needed (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of this workshop?	10		9 (90%) Yes	1 (10%) No	Partially	Do not know
Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Mr. Santl, Saso - Speaker MS	10	97.5%	9 (90%) Excellent	1 (10%) Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Ms. Çuçi, Ornela - Speaker CC	10	90%	7 (70%) Excellent	2 (20%) Good	1 (10%) Satisfactory	Poor
Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Mr. Dedej, Zamir - Speaker CC	10	100%	10 (100%) Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Ms. Popovici, Mihaela - Speaker MS	10	97.5%	9 (90%) Excellent	1 (10%) Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Mr. Papathanasiou, Evangelos - Speaker MS	10	97.5%	9 (90%) Excellent	1 (10%) Good	Satisfactory	Poor



<b>Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings</b>	Mr. Constantin, Gheorghe - Speaker MS	9	97.22%	8 (89%) Excellent	1 (11%) Good	Satisfactory	Poor
<b>Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	1. Conference venue	6		4 (67%) Yes	1 (17%) No	1 (17%) Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	2. Interpretation	3		3 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	3. Hotel	2		2 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	4. Flight	2		2 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	5. Catering	2		2 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - participant - D. Comments</b>	It was a pleasure to hear the presentations from the speakers. I hope that the knowledge I gained from this presentation will apply to my work. We need to exchange more experiences with each other. Other meetings should be held in conference halls, talking about these very important topics.						
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	1. Did you receive all the information necessary for the preparation of your contribution?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	2. Has the overall aim of the workshop been achieved?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	3. Was the agenda well structured?	5		4 (80%) Yes	No	1 (20%) Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	4. Were the participants present throughout the scheduled workshop?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	5. Was the beneficiary represented by the appropriate participants?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	6. Did the participants actively take part in the discussions?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know



<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	7. Do you expect that the beneficiary will undertake follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach etc.)	5		4 (80%) Yes	1 (20%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	8. Do you think that the beneficiary needs further TAIEX assistance (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of this workshop?	5		4 (80%) Yes	1 (20%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - A. Questions</b>	9. Would you be ready to participate in future TAIEX workshops?	5		5 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	1. Conference venue	2		2 (100%) Yes	No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	2. Interpretation	1		Yes	1 (100%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	3. Hotel	1		Yes	1 (100%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	4. Flight	1		Yes	1 (100%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings</b>	5. Catering	1		Yes	1 (100%) No	Partially	Do not know
<b>Workshop - speaker - D. Comments</b>	My concern is related to the format of the workshop, too much time for listening to other experiences and not enough time for discussing the problem related to the beneficiary country.						
<b>Workshop - speaker - D. Comments</b>	It has been a webinar, quite successful in spite of the current restrictions. The whole large group of participants (48) and we, as the Project Team are extremely grateful for the high class professional assistance offered by Ms Madalina Ivanica (DG Env), Mr Edwin Pacura (EU Delegation AL), Ms Eva Debinski (IBF), and Mr. Dominguez Mendoza Jose Nicolas (NEAR). thanks						
<b>Workshop - speaker - D. Comments</b>	Nice Workshop gave a lot of input for a very nice collaboration in the future.						





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