

Western Mediterranean Roadmap on Marine Spatial Planning and Sustainable Blue Economy

Building on capacity development activities to foster knowledge exchange and dialogue, the MSPglobal Initiative guided its beneficiary countries towards the formulation of recommendations on transboundary Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Sustainable Blue Economy in the Western Mediterranean.

It is crucial to note that the set of recommendations below in no way represents a fixed list arranged in order of priority. Rather, it must be understood that the different thematic blocks are all interlinked and stand at the same level of importance.

I. Inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation

This refers to the interrelation and articulation between the different institutional, public policy and administration levels from the local to the national, as well as between neighbouring countries.

- Promote an integrated and multi-scale approach to governance: within countries, coordination is needed within and across layers of governments (from national to local scale) and planning should take into account local variations. At regional scale, supranational engagement mechanisms are required; these should be facilitated by recognised regional platforms (i.e., existing international/regional conventions).
- In compliance with national laws, provisions of UNCLOS, as well as relevant multi/bilateral agreements in place, transboundary MSP approaches should promote the principle of the Mediterranean as “Common Sea”, including the concept of “Common Goods”, through the shared and coordinated management of areas under one’s own jurisdiction and of resources that have no borders.
- Establish collaborative mechanisms through consultation and information sharing across institutions with maritime competence with a view to integrating MSP into public policies that have an impact on the use and management of national maritime space.

II. Blue economy

Sustainable and strategic development of maritime sectors in the context of planning.

- The definition of national blue economy strategies is essential in order to align MSP objectives and processes with the blue growth interests of the country (i.e., what sectors is MSP intended to promote) thus, establishing a clear path for collaboration in both aspects (blue economy and MSP) at the national and supranational level. The contribution of MSP to achieving socio-economic and ecological objectives should be reflected in these blue economy strategies.
- Introduce an environmental goods and services component in all projects planned in the maritime space and engage all key actors in the maritime and coastal space in the MSP processes along the entire value chain (planning, design, implementation, arbitration and evaluation).
- MSP can promote sustainable blue economy strategies by allocating space to a specific sector (e.g., renewable energy) for economic development, guided by the concept of good environmental status, environmental impact assessments, and inclusive consultation and acceptability (both administration and stakeholders).

III. Ecosystem approach

Planning from an ecosystem perspective to ensure ecosystem coherence, taking into account the possible effects of the distribution of maritime uses in the coastal and marine environment.

- At the national level, initially, the ecosystem approach should be embedded in the legal framework of MSP, so the objectives of the ecosystem approach are legally recognised. Thereafter, guidelines are needed to operationalise the ecosystem approach within the national maritime space in order to protect marine ecosystem goods and services.
- MSP plans should be aligned with the overall objectives and processes for environmental protection at the national and international level, in particular in the EU and Mediterranean context (i.e., MSFD and ecosystem approach) and including policies devoted to specific sectors (e.g. GFCM, MEDPOL, etc.). For this purpose, develop and apply at the national and (sub) regional level mechanisms and tools to ensure that a reasonable consistency is achieved.
- Promote increased knowledge (inventories) on species, habitats and their interaction as well as on the consequences of cumulative impacts on the marine environment.

IV. Research, development, innovation and training

Knowledge, techniques, data and products to support the development of marine spatial plans and the strengthening of stakeholders' capacities during the process.

- Countries should continue promoting and financing data collection and sharing, which, in addition to guiding decision-making for the design of plans, will be needed to evaluate and inform the plans' further improvements. MSP transboundary projects and international initiatives – whose outputs should be directly applicable by competent authorities in the countries – can play a catalytic role in generating knowledge through research.
- Encourage research, innovation and capacity development in the marine and maritime domains, particularly regional knowledge on cumulative impacts, land-sea interactions and the effects of climate change.



- Promote and implement transdisciplinary approaches, integrating knowledge on social, cultural and economic processes together with ecological, biological, geological and physical processes, and frame these three recommendations in the context of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030).

V. Participation and communication

Dissemination of knowledge on Marine Spatial Planning and involvement of stakeholders and the public.

- The level of public participation at the regional scale should be aligned with the level of cooperation established at the technical and administrative scales. In a transboundary context, this may require specific engagement mechanisms to share know-how and expertise between countries and should be approached on a case-by-case basis.
- Make general information about MSP and blue economy available to the public at different stages of the process, in an understandable “language” and attractive format, ensuring a balance among the various stakeholders represented.
- Effort should be invested to (a) establish mechanisms to achieve active participation of users of the marine space and (b) educate them and the public about the benefits of MSP and the role of stakeholders within the MSP process through initiatives such as participatory sciences, educational marine areas, nature protection activities, etc.