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Agenda Item 5: Conservation of Species and Habitats

5.1. Updating of the regional strategy and action plans for the conservation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal, Marine Turtles and Cartilaginous Fishes in the Mediterranean Sea

Draft updated Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

For environmental and cost-saving reasons, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies

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I. Introduction and rationale

The draft Strategy presented below, like the 2013 Strategy that precedes it, differs from the Barcelona Convention's "Action plan for the management of the Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*)" (UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003a) chiefly in terms of its method, considering that the old Action Plan continues to be valid as far as its contents and general principles are concerned¹.

In structuring the draft Strategy, guidelines were followed which are detailed in the manual for the construction of Species Conservation Strategies (IUCN/SSC 2008). Accordingly, this draft Strategy is structured with the following elements:

- a. **Vision**, with associated **Goals and Goal Targets** that are SMART²;
- b. the **Objectives** needed to achieve the Goal Targets within the stated time span, with associated **SMART Objective Targets**.

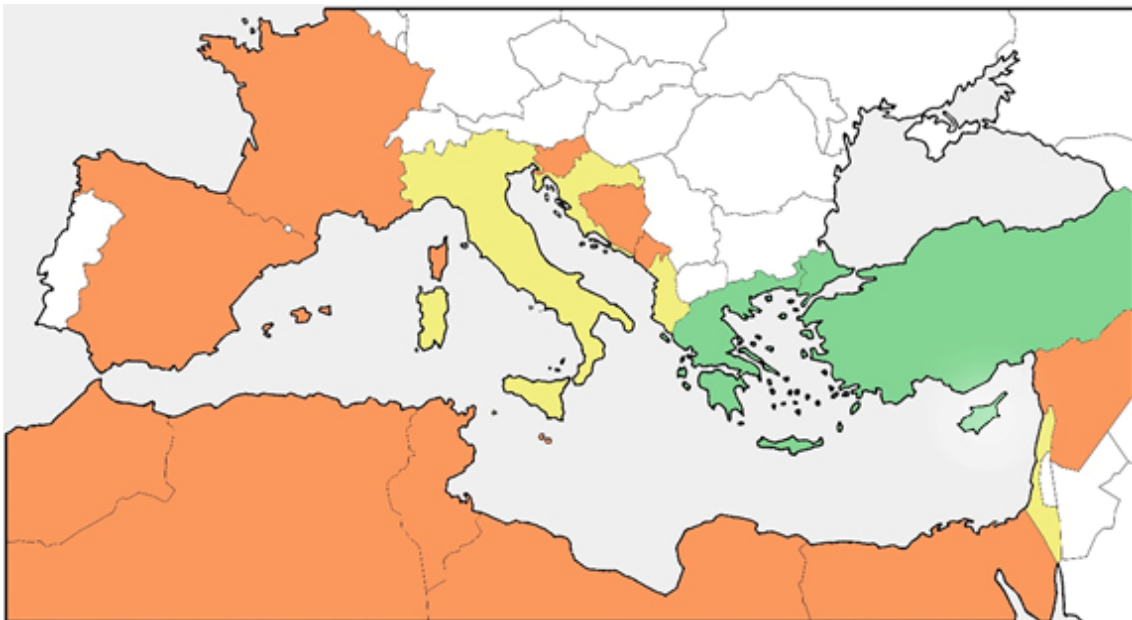


Figure 1. Monk seal conservation status by country (updated at 31.04.2019). Green: "Group A" countries (where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2010). Yellow: "Group B" countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2010). Tan: "Group C" countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤ 3) were reported since 2010).

The main problem encountered in envisaging a region-wide Strategy derives from the quite diverse conservation status of monk seals in the different portion of the Mediterranean and by

¹ With few exceptions; e.g., concerning knowledge of the species, which is no longer as poor as it was in 1988 (Art. 3), and the fact that scientific opinion is no longer divided concerning conservation strategies (Art. 4).

² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

consequence the quite different priorities and responsibilities saddled onto the various monk seal Range States.

To handle this challenge, it is here proposed to assign Mediterranean countries to three groups (Figure 1 and Table 1):

- A. Countries where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2010³;*
- B. Countries where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2010;*
- C. Countries where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤ 3) were reported since 2010.*

We realise that the above are rough indicators (e.g., monk seals can be present in a location even if they are not seen, as sightings depend on the presence of observers and the animals can have very inconspicuous behaviours; breeding may not occur in some countries because of lack of breeding habitat, but there may be a healthy presence of animals in that country; etc.). However, the above indicators are conceived to separate countries into major categories according to their current importance for monk seals, thereby involving different types of actions.

Group A countries is where action is most urgent, because at the moment these countries are our best hope for the survival of the species. These countries host monk seal resident breeding populations and the majority of the species population.

Group B countries are important, because current monk seal sighting records suggest the potential for the species' survival and expansion in areas beyond Group A country borders. Group B countries may contain different extensions of monk seal critical coastal habitat which is likely to be re-colonised, and may lead to resident breeding nuclei, if conditions are favourable (as demonstrated by the frequent appearances of monk seals in many locations).

Group C countries are also important because, although they are characterized by rare monk seal occurrence, they contain historical monk seal critical habitat. The reestablishment of monk seal presence will become more likely if actions in nearby Group B countries are successful and if environmental conditions in historical critical habitat become favorable. In the absence of sighting data collection mechanisms, some countries, known to host seals and suitable environmental conditions in the recent past, may currently qualify as Group C.

To fulfil the Vision, this draft Strategy identifies four Goals. The first Goal relates to the creation of a conservation support structure at the international level, whereas the other three Goals relate to each of the three Groups the various countries have been assigned to.

³ Year 2010 was selected as a criterion to separate the present from the country assessment described in the past regional strategy (UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA, 2013) .

Country	Group A	Group B	Group C	References / Data sources	Notes
Albania				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b, UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2005, Anon. 2012; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019; Bakiu and Cakalli 2018	Sightings of single and 2 individuals reported: 2000, 2003, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2017, 2019
Algeria				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2006	The seal pup reported in 2006 was not <i>M. monachus</i> (Bouderbala <i>et al.</i> 2007). No recent confirmed reports
Bosnia Herzego.					No recent reports.
Croatia				Antolovic <i>et al.</i> 2007; Gomercic <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019	2000-2014 : 300 individual sightings reported
Cyprus				Gucu <i>et al.</i> 2009 a; UNEP/MAP/RAC/SPA 2011; Marcou 2015	Evidence of breeding activities in the northern coast (2006-2007) and in the southern coast (since 2009).
Egypt				Notarbartolo di Sciara and Fouad 2011	Single individual observed in 2011. No recent confirmed reports.
France				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 1994	No recent reports.
France-Corsica				Data stored in Office de l'Environnement de Corse	Single individual sightings reported in 2007 and 2011
Greece				Notarbartolo di Sciara <i>et al.</i> 2009, Panou 2009	
Israel				Scheinin <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2016; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019; Roditi-Elasar <i>et al.</i> in prep	80 individual sighting records (2009-2019), 2 different individuals observed in 2010
Italy				Mo 2011, ISPRA database validated sightings, Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019	Individual sightings reported: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018; <i>In situ</i> coastal use; 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017
Lebanon				Anon. 2010; Khatib 2016; Data stored in Society for Nature Protection Lebanon	Single animal sightings reported: 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Dead pregnant seal observed in 2015
Libya				Sergeant <i>et al.</i> 1979, Hamza <i>et al.</i> 2003, UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA 2003b, UNEP-MAP RAC/SPA 2012; Alfaghi <i>et al.</i> 2013	25 sightings reported by fishermen between 1998-2002 1 dead juvenile seal in 2011

Country	Group A	Group B	Group C	References / Data sources	Notes
Malta				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b	No recent reports.
Monaco					No recent reports. Monk seal habitat no longer present.
Montenegro				Panou <i>et al.</i> 2017; Archipelagos - environment and development, database of validated sightings	Single individual sightings reported; 2004, 2005, 2008,2010 , 2015, 2017
Morocco				UNEP-MAPRAC/SPA 2003b, Mo <i>et al.</i> 2011; Bundone <i>et al.</i> 2019	More than 90 sightings reported by fishermen 2000-2005, 1 sighting 2006 (Chafarinas isl.)
Slovenia				UNEP-MAP-RAC/SPA 2003b	No recent reports.
Spain				Anon. 2008, Font and Mayol 2009	Individual sighted in 2008. More sightings in 2009.
Syria				Gucu 2004, Jony and Ibrahim 2006, Mo <i>et al.</i> 2003 Data stored in Tishreen University, High Institute of Marine Research	More than 25 sightings between 2001-2006, 1 dead pregnant seal observed in 2013, unconfirmed fishermen sightings 2014-2018
Tunisia				S. Guelloz ,pers. comm.	Single individual sightings reported: 2007, 2011 (La Galite archipelago)
Turkey				Güçlüsoy <i>et al.</i> 2004, Gucu <i>et al.</i> 2009b	

Table 1. Summary of monk seal presence in the different Mediterranean countries. Countries were subdivided as follows: Green: “Group A” countries (where monk seal breeding has been reported after year 2010). Yellow: “Group B” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, but where repeated sightings of monk seals (>3) were reported since 2010). Tan: “Group C” countries (where no monk seal breeding is reported, and where very rare or no sightings of monk seals (≤ 3) were reported since 2010). “Group C” includes countries where little or no data was collected at least since 2010, implying that monk seals could be occurring there more frequently, but no information is available

II. The Strategy

II.1 Vision

Over the next two decades, the ecological recovery of monk seals in the Mediterranean will be deemed to have occurred, when multiple colonies have become established within all major habitats in their historic range, interacting in ecologically significant ways with the fullest possible set of other species, and inspiring and connecting human cultures.

II.2 . Goals

Goal 1. Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

Goal 2. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal 3. Monk seal presence in sites where they are repeatedly seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

Goal 4. Monk seal presence is reported repeatedly in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

II.3 Goal Targets, Objectives and Objective Targets

Goal 1. Strategy implementation.

Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

Goal Target 1.1. A framework for the implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Conservation Strategy is established by the Mediterranean Range States. The framework will include the establishment of a Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC).

Objective 1.1.1. SPA/RAC establishes a **Monk Seal Advisory Committee (MSAC)**. Tasks of the MSAC will include:

- provide support to SPA/RAC in the implementation of the Strategy and its review and updating (e.g., by defining the Actions needed to attain the different Objective Targets);
- provide recommendations and advice on issues related to monk seal conservation;
- support SPA/RAC in the creation and maintenance of a forum for monk seal conservation practitioners, where relevant information and experience is shared, exchanges are facilitated, challenges are discussed, cooperative initiatives are enhanced, transparency and openness of procedures are safeguarded.

The MSAC is composed by a small number of experts, which should include professional profiles such as: marine conservation ecologists, marine veterinarians, fisheries experts, fisheries practitioners, socio-

economists, MPA practitioners, and representatives from relevant intergovernmental regional organisations.

The MSAC functioning is supported by SPA/RAC, and may benefit from relevant bodies within IUCN, the GFCM and other international organisations.

Objective Target 1.1.1.1. MSAC established by 2020. The Advisory Committee meets at least once a year to review the status of monk seals in the Mediterranean, and to support the implementation of the Actions foreseen in the Strategy.

Objective Target 1.1.1.2. First meeting of MSAC in June 2020. Recommendations are submitted to SPA/RAC for coordination with Contracting Parties as appropriate.

Objective Target 1.1.1.3. MSAC activities are harmonised, wherever appropriate, with prescriptions of the EU Habitats Directive, and with efforts by UNEP-MAP within the Ecosystem Approach process for the attainment of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean, i.e., to attain Ecological Objective EO1 “Biodiversity” and Operational Objectives 1.1 (“Species distribution is maintained”), 1.2 (“Population size of selected species is maintained”), 1.3 (“Population condition of selected species is maintained”), 1.4 (“Key coastal and marine habitats are not being lost”), as far as monk seals are concerned.

Objective Target 1.1.1.4. Member States establish a national multiannual program that draws from the Action Plan and the Strategy objectives, that incorporates monitoring, capacity building and conservation measures into relevant existing national programs involving monitoring of marine biodiversity and spatial protection measures that have been formulated for national and international policy implementation (i.e. monitoring as per ECAP region-wide programs and Habitats Directive and MSFD for EC Member States, MPA network development and marine Natura 2000 establishment for Mediterranean EC countries). The MSAC reviews the multiannual programs and reports to SPA/RAC, recommending content improvement so as to harmonise conservation efforts at a regional level with common objectives and comparable efforts. MSAC will provide support to SPA/RAC so national multiannual programs are defined by end of 2020.

Objective 1.1.4. The Parties to the Barcelona Convention ensure that the activities that the MSAC recommends are addressed.

Objective Target 1.1.4.1. The Parties to the Barcelona Convention adopt resolutions in support of specific MSAC recommendations concerning the implementation of this Strategy.

Goal Target 1.2. Based on this Strategy, the MSAC provides support to SPA/RAC in the development and implementation of specific conservation actions having a regional scope.

Objective 1.2.1. The first task of the MSAC is to support SPA/RAC on supervising the attainment of Goals 2, 3 and 4.

Objective 1.2.2. Capacity building and awareness activities are planned by the MSAC, and promoted in monk seal Ranges States by SPA/RAC so that monk seal protection and recovery is effectively embraced at the national level. This will include the preparation of a dedicated website and the regular

issuing and widely distributed monk seal information newsletter in an adequate number of different languages.

Objective Target 1.2.2.1. Capacity building: the main groups of stakeholders in monk seal conservation are identified by the MSAC, taking stock of national frameworks pertaining to the relevant sectors, tailored to each different monk seal Range State (with first priority given to “Group A Countries” and second priority given to “Group B Countries”), and training courses are prepared and planned (see Goal Targets 2.2. and 3.5). Preferably, training events will be developed *in situ* at selected locations having special relevance to monk seal conservation, in collaboration with the local groups, and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full and long-lasting advantage derives from the effort.

Objective Target 1.2.2.2. In order to facilitate collaboration and communication amongst monk seal conservation experts throughout the region, the MSAC provides support to SPA/RAC for organizing periodical workshops on best practices of monk seal monitoring and conservation techniques, preferably taking advantage of other meetings being periodically organised (e.g., CIESM Congresses, ECS Annual meetings). Proceedings are edited and widely diffused (e.g., by pdf through the Internet) in formats that will serve as “best practice guidelines”.

Objective Target 1.2.2.3. In consultation with MSAC awareness actions are promoted by SPA/RAC, with first priority given to “Group A Countries” (with the exception of Greece) and second priority given to “Group B Countries”, in cooperation with local groups, targeting special-interest stakeholders such as fishermen and local coastal communities.

Objective Target 1.2.2.4. An electronic monk seal newsletter will be issued yearly by SPA/RAC based on the recommendations from the MSAC (e.g., by resuming the *Monachus Guardian*), starting in 2020.

Objective 1.2.3. Monitoring of monk seal distribution and abundance, as well as advances in knowledge important for monk seal conservation, are promoted and supported by SPA/RAC through training, workshops and the facilitation of research and monitoring programmes. The monitoring process is made to coincide with the similar monitoring requirements within the framework of the Ecosystem Approach process by UNEP-MAP, and (where appropriate) with the Marine Framework Strategy Directive and Habitats Directive of the EC.

Objective Target 1.2.3.1. MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the completion of monk seal breeding site inventories in “Group A Countries” by 2025.

Objective Target 1.2.3.2. MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the yearly monitoring of monk seal population parameters (e.g., population abundance, trends, pup production) in breeding sites in “Group A Countries”, starting in 2025.

Objective Target 1.2.3.3. MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the monitoring of monk seal parameters (e.g. species distribution, population abundance, mortality levels and causes) in areas of “Group B countries” with recurrent sightings, habitat availability, and spatial protection measures for the species.

Objective Target 1.2.3.4. MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the set-up of common databases (e.g., photo-id catalogues).

Objective 1.2.4. The MSAC will provide support to SPA/RAC in facilitating the definition of a region-wide protocol for rescue and rehabilitation centres and programmes, and will provide support and advice, as required, to such centres and programmes supported by the different Range States.

Objective Target 1.2.4.1. Region-wide protocol for rescue and rehabilitation centres and programmes defined by the MSAC by 2022, taking stock of the successful initiatives developed during the last 30 years

Objective 1.2.5. MSAC supports SPA/RAC in the development of contingency plans for disastrous events (e.g., lethal epizootic outbreaks, massive oil spills within monk seal habitat), and for emergency conditions which may derive from catastrophic environmental change. Ideally, this should be done in cooperation with equivalent bodies dealing with the conservation of Mediterranean monk seals in the Atlantic, with the conservation of cetaceans in the Mediterranean (i.e., within the ACCOBAMS framework), and with the appropriate bodies within the “Barcelona System” (e.g., REMPEC). The contingency plan will include the collection and safe storage of Mediterranean monk seal germplasm which may support in the future the recovery of the species, should it become necessary.

Objective Target 1.2.5.1. Contingency plan coordinated by SPA/RAC with support of MSAC in 2023, and adopted by the subsequent Barcelona Convention CoP.

Goal 2. “Group A” countries.

Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMAs) identified by the IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force⁴, with special attention to the following locations: a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyaros; d) Kimolos and Polyaigos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus. Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Objective 2.1.1. Current legislation prohibiting to carry firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus is enforced, with a special attention in locations listed in Goal Target 2.1.

Objective Target 2.1.1.1. Compliance with existing laws concerning firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus is routinely enforced everywhere, to come into effect with immediate urgency. Appropriate statistics of infringements are kept and publicised. Infringements are prosecuted with penalties appropriate to address the destruction of an endangered, highly species. Current illegal fishing practices are eradicated.

Objective 2.1.2. Locations listed in Goal Target 2.1, and other equally important locations that may be eventually discovered in the future, are geographically delimited and legally protected/managed. The

⁴ See <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-eatlas/>

resulting MPA network should be ecologically coherent and effectively managed in order to guarantee favourable conservation status.

Objective Target 2.1.2.1. A monk seal MPA (or an MPA network) encompassing the most important monk seal habitat in the area is formally established in the Greek Ionian islands by 2024.

Objective Target 2.1.2.2. The current Natura 2000 site around the island of Gyaros is formally established as a monk seal MPA by 2020.

Objective Target 2.1.2.3. A monk seal MPA is formally established in Kimolos - Polyaigos by 2024.

Objective Target 2.1.2.4. A monk seal MPA is formally established in Karpathos - Saria by 2024⁵.

Objective Target 2.1.2.5. Monk seal MPAs are formally established along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Turkey by 2024, to protect monk seal critical habitat as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee.

Objective Target 2.1.2.6. Monk seal MPAs are formally established in Cyprus- Davlos, Karpasia Peninsula, and to the west of Limnidis and in any other area where suitable critical monk seal critical habitat has been identified, and established by 2024.

Objective 2.1.3. Areas in locations listed under Goal Target 2.1 are effectively protected through a) appropriate management actions, and b) the involvement of the local communities, which will both ensure the good conservation status of monk seals found there. A management framework is in place and implemented, defining the spatial, temporal and specific measures needed in the species' critical habitats (e.g., regulating access to caves), thereby affording effective protection to haul out and pupping sites.

Objective Target 2.1.3.1. Until formal protection of the areas listed under Goal Target 2.1 is established and enforced, patrolling of the most important haul out and pupping locations and caves is organised at least during the summer and breeding season, starting in 2020. Patrolling can be done by volunteers, well-trained and possibly local, who could also be performing awareness actions *in situ*, as well as solicit the intervention of law enforcers in case of need.

Objective Target 2.1.3.2. All monk seal MPAs established under Objective 2.1.2, as well as the National Marine Park of Alonissos – Northern Sporades, are endowed with an operant Management Body and a management plan that is adaptive, ecosystem-based and fully implemented by 2024.

Objective Target 2.1.3.3. Management in monk seal MPAs established under Objective 2.1.2, as well as the National Marine Park of Alonissos – Northern Sporades, is conducted in a participatory fashion, with the full involvement of local artisanal fishermen and local communities at large, and in cooperation with the fisheries sectors (e.g., see GFCM 2011). All proposals and decisions aiming at establishing or modifying conservation and protection measures must be based on sound and indisputable scientific data and evidence. Elements of participatory approach will include awareness campaigns as well as the

⁵ Greece has already established the protected area Management Body in Karpathos in 2007, however the MPA has not been legally declared yet.

experimentation/adoption of innovative mechanisms to address opportunity costs, damage mitigation and the generation of alternative sources of income (e.g., ecotourism).

Goal Target 2.2. Implementation of Goal Target 2.1. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

Objective 2.2.1. Training sessions are organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 2.1, with the support of the MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1). Training will concentrate, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglements), and will target stakeholders identified by the MSAC (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges). Training will be developed together with the local groups, and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.

Goal 3. “Group B” countries.

Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes in areas characterised by sufficient and suitable coastal habitat. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

Monk seal presence in “Group B” countries must be verified with appropriate methods so as to define the actual species’ use of the coastal seas and identify the areas in which priority monitoring, awareness and protection actions need to be carried out. This implies that priority areas of usage be identified thorough sighting collection campaigns, habitat surveys in areas of hotspot sightings, and where the coastal habitat is most pristine (which implies analysis of coastal habitat characteristics and their distribution in each nation), followed by *in situ* monitoring to assess the eventual degree of habitat use by monk seals. Coastal areas with confirmed repeated use must be evaluated in terms of pressures and risks. Awareness activities to be carried out in each site will depend on the type of use of the coasts by the species, the degree of the pressures insisting in each site, and the risks involved. Spatial protection measures are established and site-specific management actions are implemented to reduce the pressures on the basis of the monitoring and risk analysis outcomes.

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established.

Objective 3.1.1. A reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence and alert authorities continues to be implemented along the Albanian coastal zone and awareness actions are conducted in areas with seal sightings.

Objective 3.1.2. Long-term cave monitoring is established in the caves identified in previous studies in the Karaburun Peninsula and nearby locations.

Goal Target 3.2. Monk seal presence in Croatia, and in particular in specific localities of the Dalmatian archipelago, is permanently established and monk seal breeding resumes.

Objective 3.2.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the coastal areas characterized by recurrent sightings and coastal habitat historically used by the species

Objective 3.2.2. Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual breeding) is monitored in selected locations of the Dalmatian Archipelago, and awareness action is conducted in the area.

Objective Target 3.2.2.1. Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies as recommended by the MSAC are applied to caves in Istria and selected Dalmatian islands characterised by recent recurrent sightings, starting in 2020.

Objective Target 3.2.2.2. Awareness actions are conducted in Croatia, targeting local residents and visitors.

Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Italy, in areas with recurrent sightings, habitat availability and proximity to nearby breeding colonies, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

Objective 3.3.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is enhanced along the coastal areas characterised by recurrent sightings and coastal habitat historically used by the species

Objective 3.3.2 Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands.

Objective Target 3.3.2.1. Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies, applied to caves in appropriate locations within the Egadi Islands MPA, is continued and enhanced.

Objective Target 3.3.2.2. A programme targeting the local community and visitors, aimed at increasing awareness and fostering species' protection measures is continued and enhanced.

Objective 3.3.3. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings in Sardinia.

Objective 3.3.4. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago.

Objective 3.3.5. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat and recurrent recent sightings in the lesser islands of the Sicily Strait (Pantelleria, Pelagie islands).

Objective 3.3.5. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence is conducted in Salento (Apulia) in coastal areas containing historical monk seal habitat and characterised by recurrent sightings.

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in Lebanon is permanently established.

Objective 3.4.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Lebanese coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.

Objective 3.4.2. A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted in the areas characterised by recent recurrent monk seal sightings and long-term cave monitoring program is initiated in northern Lebanon.

Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Israel is permanently established.

Objective 3.5.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Israeli coastal zone and awareness actions are conducted in areas characterised by recent sightings or coastal habitat suitability .

Objective 3.5.2. A coastal habitat assessment study is conducted and a long-term cave monitoring program is implemented in northern Israel.

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Montenegro is permanently established.

Objective 3.6.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the coastal zone of Montenegro.

Objective 3.6.2. Coastal habitat assessment studies are completed and long-term cave monitoring programmes are implemented in Montenegro.

Goal Target 3.7. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6 is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

Objective 3.7.1. Capacity building. Training sessions are organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.6, with the support of the MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1). Training will concentrate, at least initially, on national / local groups working on the development of monitoring and awareness programs directed at mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglements). Capacity building activities can also target stakeholders identified by national/local groups with the support of the MSAC (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges). Training will be developed together with the local groups, and will be followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.

Objective 3.7.2. Streamlining of sighting and cave monitoring results carried out in Goal Targets 3.1 - 3.4 above is discussed at sub regional level in order to better assess the population status in the “Group B” countries within a geographic context that goes beyond country borders, and in order to identify priority areas in which spatial protection measures are necessary.

Objective 3.7.3. Capacity building of MPA managers acting in monk seal distribution areas identified through the implementation of Goal Targets 3.1 - 3. 6, is carried out so as to discuss improved management and mitigation measures to be introduced in existing MPAs.

Objective 3.7.4. The implementation of Goals 3.1-3.6 is carried out, as much as possible, through the development of international collaboration frameworks, directed at guaranteeing sharing of expertises and monitoring results amongst neighbour countries for the purpose of sub regional status assessments and conservation goal attainment. The latter is particularly important for countries that have limited suitable coastal habitat and recurrent sightings and which border countries with breeding colonies or countries with sightings and extensive and suitable habitat. This may involve cross collaboration

initiatives that involve an array mixture of Group A, B and C countries (i.e. Turkey-Cyprus-Syria-Lebanon-Israel, Libya-Egypt, Greece-Albania-Italy-Montenegro-Croatia, Italy-Tunisia-Algeria-Morocco).

Goal 4. “Group C” countries.

Monk seal presence is again repeatedly reported in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal presence in locations of the Maghreb’s Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.1.1. A reporting scheme to detect monk seal presence through sightings and to alert authorities is implemented along Maghreb’s Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands characterised by monk seal historical presence and recent sightings. This includes areas such as: northern Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain); awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.

Objective 4.1.2. Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the Al Hoceima National Park and Cap Trois Fourches in order to assess monk seal presence in the Moroccan coastal area.

Objective 4.1.3. Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the Chafarinas islands in order to assess monk seal presence in the area

Objective 4.1.4. Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in previous studies carried out in selected Algerian locations in order to assess monk seal presence in the area.

Objective 4.1.5. Long-term cave monitoring activities are initiated in the coastal habitat identified as suitable in the La Galite Archipelago in order to assess monk seal presence in the area.

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.2.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented; awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands, Spain.

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence in Bosnia Herzegovina, and Slovenia repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.3.1. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species’ historical habitat in Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.

Goal Target 4.4. Monk seal presence in Corsica is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.4.1. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica.

Goal Target 4.5. Monk seal presence is reported again from continental France.

Objective 4.5.1. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica and continental France.

Goal Target 4.6. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.6.1. Monk seal ecology and behaviour is monitored in Libya (Cyrenaica) and nearby Egyptian coast (from the border with Libya, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).

Objective Target 4.6.1.1. Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Libyan easternmost coast bordering with Egypt is conducted and long-term cave monitoring is established in this area as well as in the caves identified in previous projects.

Objective Target 4.6.1.2. Awareness actions are conducted in Libya, targeting local residents and most notably fishermen, with the aim of fostering respect and data collection on sightings.

Objective Target 4.6.1.3. Full survey of monk seal presence through data collection on sightings and awareness actions organised in Egypt (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh) by 2025.

Objective Target 4.6.1.4. Full survey of monk seal habitat in the Egyptian areas characterised by recurrent sightings and a geomorphologically suitable coast is conducted, and long term cave monitoring is established.

Goal Target 4.7. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.

Objective 4.7.1. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta.

Goal Target 4.8. Monk seal presence in Syria is repeatedly reported and permanently established.

Objective 4.8.1. A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.

Goal Target 4.9. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1 - 4.8. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities and sub-regional cooperation.

Objective 4.9.1. Capacity building: training courses are organised in locations listed in Goal Targets 4.1-4.8, with the support of the -MSAC (see Objective Target 1.2.2.1).

Objective 4.9.2. The implementation of Goals 4.1-4.8 is carried out, as much as possible, through the development of international collaboration frameworks, directed at guaranteeing sharing of expertises and monitoring results amongst neighbour countries for the purpose of sub regional status assessments and conservation goal attainment (see Objective 3.7.4)

III. Revision of the Strategy

The suggested time horizon of this Strategy is six years, to be concluded in 2025, when a comprehensive review of the Strategy's accomplishments and failures, with a consideration for potential actions to be taken beyond 2025, should be conducted. Such timing also coincides with the process requiring EU Member States to report concerning the Habitats and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, thereby facilitating the implementation of the Strategy's actions by such States.

A mid-term assessment of the implementation results in 2022 is also recommended, to evaluate up-to-date attainment of Goals and Objectives within the Strategy's timeframe and to identify, if needed, moderate adjustments.

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ANNEX-I

**Status of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy
for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean**

Framework

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan, have a longstanding and commitment towards the conservation of the marine environment and to the components of its biological diversity. This commitment was further elaborated with the adoption in 1995, and subsequent national ratification, of the Barcelona Convention's Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol) and its annexes,

The Protocol defines detailed protection measures to be implemented at national and regional level in order to achieve the conservation of the endangered or threatened species listed in Annex II to the Protocol. Over the years, several initiatives conducted under the framework of the activities managed by the Regional Activity Center for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) Secretariat have led to the elaboration of regional action plans centered on the conservation of the species and habitats of conservation concern for the Protocol's implementation (<http://www.rac-spa.org/publications#en4>). The regional action plans are effective tools to guide, coordinate and strengthen Mediterranean countries' efforts to safeguard the marine natural heritage of the region.

Although they do not have a binding legal character, these action plans were adopted by the Contracting Parties as regional strategies setting priorities and activities to be undertaken. In particular, they call for greater solidarity between the States of the region, and for co-ordination of efforts to protect the species in question. This approach has been proved to be necessary to ensure conservation and sustainable management of the concerned species in every Mediterranean area of their distribution.

The Mediterranean Countries adopted, among others, an Action Plan for the management of the Monk Seal (AP) in 1988 and a Regional strategy for the conservation of the monk seal in the Mediterranean (RS), based on specific goals, targets and objectives, was elaborated in 2014 with the intent of factually driving the Action Plan contents and general principles (UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC 2013). , The strategy is designed to be updated each five-year based on an evaluation of the actions implemented at regional and national levels.

For the biennium 2018-2019, the Contracting Parties to Barcelona Convention requested SPA/RAC during the CoP 20 (Tirana, Albania, 17-20 December 2017) to update the following Action Plans and Strategies:

1. The Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean Sea
2. The Action Plan for the conservation of marine vegetation in the Mediterranean Sea
3. The Action Plan for the conservation of marine turtles in the Mediterranean Sea
4. The Action Plan for the conservation of cartilaginous fishes (Chondrichthyans) in the Mediterranean Sea.

As part of the process of updating the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean, this document reports on the status of the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2014-2019) produced for the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) in 2013, which vision was:

“Over the next two decades, the ecological recovery of monk seals in the Mediterranean will deem to have occurred, when multiple colonies have become established within all major habitats of their historic range, interacting in ecologically significant ways with the fullest possible set of other species, and inspiring and connecting human cultures”.

In order to produce this assessment on its implementation, a questionnaire was produced, posted online, and disseminated to SPA/BD National Focal Points, regional institutions and Convention's

Secretariats, Associates and Partners of the Action Plan and to a network of experts available at SPA/RAC.

The present document is divided in two main sections:

- 1- Results of the on-line questionnaire for the Assessment of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean
- 2- Brief synthesis of updated information on monk seal presence, research and conservation initiatives in monk seal low density countries (as defined in UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC 2013)

1. Results of the on-line questionnaire for the Assessment of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean

The information included in this section does not reflect the opinion of the authors of this document but simply provides the results derived from the responses collected from the online questionnaire developed to assess the implementation of the RS which in some cases, despite being filled to the best of the knowledge of the interviewees, may not be necessarily accurate.

The on-line questionnaire asked for basic information on the profile of the participants, a series of questions following the same structure of goals and targets included in the *Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2014-2019)*, and finished with a section dedicated to identify the most relevant actions when to updated the Strategy (see Annex 1). When asked about the specific actions undertaken in Mediterranean locations different from those in which participants factually work, a large portion of the respondents selected the option “I do not know”, indicating that most experts are familiar with the situation in their own countries or study sites but not necessarily with what goes on elsewhere in the region. Detail on the results obtained from the 32 complete questionnaires duly filled can be found in Annex 2.

1.1. Personal profile of interviewees

Participants to the questionnaire were nationals from 15 different countries. More than half of them were from Greece, Italy, Turkey and Algeria. The majority of respondents were SPA/RAC national focal points and researchers working either for public research bodies or non-governmental organizations, had at least 10 years of experience in their current position, and declared being extremely or very familiar with the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2014-2019), hereafter referred simply as the Regional Strategy (RS).

1.2. Goal 1. Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

Achieving this goal, as defined in the RS, was highly dependent on the establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF) and the selection of a Monk Seal Conservation Officer (MSCO). Neither of these were established/appointed. A large majority of respondents agreed to the need of a MSTF by Mediterranean Range States. When looking at the composition of the MSTF, the profiles identified as priority included: researchers, representatives from regional organizations (e.g., SPA/RAC, GFCM, CMs), experts on socioeconomics, as well as MPA managers and fishermen representatives.

There was overall agreement on the activities to be conducted by the MSTF, including: development of a contingency plan for single disastrous events/emergency conditions (e.g., massive oil spill within monk seal critical habitat); planning of capacity building, awareness activities monk seal rescue and rehabilitation programmes; promoting and facilitating support to research and monitoring programmes; consultation body for any program related to monitoring of the species in breeding caves; and, assessment on translocation programs for the species in its range of distribution. The latter activity was the only one scoring several unfavourable responses (n=6), confirming that this is a controversial issue.

1.3. Goal 2. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

1.3.1. *Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in important monk seal locations, including: a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyaros; d) Kimolos and Polyaiagos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus; Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas.*

Reportedly, the following actions have been implemented in most of the above-mentioned sites:

- Current legislation prohibiting carrying firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels is enforced
- Effectively protected through appropriate management actions
- Effectively protected through the keen involvement of the local communities
- A management framework is in place and implemented, defining the spatial, temporal and specific measures needed in the species’ critical habitats, thereby affording effective protection to haul out and pupping sites.

These 8 important monk seal locations all scored positively to the question on the likelihood of the species’ protection benefit through the establishment of an MPA network. However, the higher proportion of negative response obtained for some areas suggests that either some respondents had limited knowledge for such areas (Greek Ionian, Kimolos/Polyaiagos, north coast of Cyprus) or that there is concern that the adequacy and effectiveness of the existing MPAs are not sufficient in such areas.

Although the implementation of Goal target 2.1 should be enabled through *appropriate capacity building activities*, for 75% of the respondents these activities were rare, had never happened, or they were not aware of any training programmes. Reportedly, a few training activities have mainly happened in Greece:

- The only place with more than one training action was Cyclades, where 15 training seminars were conducted in the course of the Cyclades LIFE project.
- Training on the monitoring techniques of the EcAp common indicators related to biodiversity component was organized by SPA/RAC between 22-28 September 2017, Samos Island, Greece

1.4. Goal 3. Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

1.4.1. *Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Italy, and in particular in the Egadi Islands, in locations around Sardinia, and in the Tuscan Archipelago, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.*

Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands; monitoring technologies are applied to caves in appropriate locations within the Egadi Islands MPA and also through a programme involving local fishermen. Nevertheless, monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in Sardinia are conducted only occasionally, while in the Tuscan archipelago only rarely (if ever).

- 1.4.2. Goal Target 3.2. Monk seal presence in Croatia, and in particular in specific localities of the Dalmatian archipelago and southern Istria, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.*

Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is monitored in selected locations of the Dalmatian Archipelago and of the Istria Peninsula, and awareness actions are conducted only occasionally.

- 1.4.3. Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is confirmed and permanently established, and monk seal breeding is reported.*

Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is declared as having occurred occasionally in Libya (Cyrenaica) and the nearby Egyptian coast. A full survey of monk seal presence and awareness actions was organised both in Cyrenaica and in Egypt (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).

- 1.4.4. Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is confirmed and permanently established*

A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented around the Balearic Islands and awareness actions are conducted occasionally.

- 1.4.5. Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established.*

A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone and awareness actions are occasionally conducted in the concerned areas.

- 1.4.6. Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Syria, Lebanon and Israel is confirmed and permanently established.*

A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the coastal zone and awareness actions is declared as occurring occasionally in Lebanon, often in Syria and often in Israel.

- 1.4.7. Goal Target 3.7. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is confirmed and permanently established.*

A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is declared as functioning only occasionally or rarely on the overall Maghreb's coasts and annexed islands. More specifically, it is reported as functioning occasionally or rarely in Tunisia and Algeria, often to occasionally in Morocco. A wide array of answers ranging from often to rarely is reported for the Chafarinas Islands suggesting that respondents may not all have clear knowledge on sighting collections in this area. In all the above areas, public awareness initiatives are declared as occurring on an occasional basis.

1.4.8. Goal Target 3.8. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1.-3.7. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

Most interviewees (72%) did not know if any capacity building initiatives. Of those who answered to this question, most reported capacity building initiatives as rare.

1.5. Goal 4. Monk seal presence is again reported in the species' historical habitat in "Group C" countries, and these "Group C" countries are upgraded to "Group B". Once all "Group C" countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

1.5.1. Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal presence is reported again from Corsica and continental France.

Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica and continental France occasionally.

1.5.2. Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence is reported from Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.

Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia mostly rarely or on an occasional basis.

1.5.3. Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.

Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are reportedly conducted, at most, rarely in the species' historical habitat in Malta.

1.5.4. Goal Target 4.4. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1-4.3. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

A training session was reported for Montenegro but no capacity building initiatives were conducted in the rest of group C countries.

1.6. Towards an updated Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

When asked about their perception on the overall implementation of the RS most of them (31 out of 32) were at best moderately satisfied. Responses were practically equally distributed between, moderate satisfaction, slightly, not at all satisfied and not knowing what to say about it. It is noteworthy that nobody was extremely satisfied with its implementation and only one said to be very satisfied; which can be easily interpreted as not being a very positive feedback from those who participated in the questionnaire. In addition, it is also relevant to say that not even half of those invited to participate in this survey (roughly 70 people) actually did it.

Actions considered more relevant by the respondents when updating the RS, listed in decreasing order of importance, were:

- Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence.
- Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites.
- Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process.

- Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others.
- Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g. UAVs).
- Establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF).
- Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals.
- Capacity building and awareness courses.
- Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000.
- Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000.

Some additional comments / suggestions that were provided at the end of the questionnaire and were considered important by respondents for updating the RS, are included as they were provided at the end of ANNEX 2.

2. Brief synthesis of updated information on monk seal presence, research and conservation initiatives in low density countries

The present summary provides an overview on the knowledge of monk seal presence in countries classified as “low density” countries, namely Group B and Group C countries based on the definitions provided in UNEP-MAP (2013). Information on protected status, conservation measures and programs was collected by taking stock of the contents of the SPA/BD Protocol’s NFP reports to SPA/RAC on the status of implementation of the Mediterranean Monk Seal Action Plan (AP) as reported to SPA/RAC at the time of writing. It is worthy to mention that absence of reports on the status of AP implementation for some countries cannot be interpreted as absence of information on the subject. Rather, the temporal limitation of this assessment does not allow to take stock of imminent/future reporting by the countries for which the reporting sheets are not available at present. The summary below is also based on information collected through scientific publications, technical reports or other information obtained through national contacts. The information is meant to inform on the respective national status since the publication of the RS (UNEP-MAP 2013) and the supporting documents on which the strategy was based (Notarbartolo di Sciara 2013, Gazo and Mo 2012) and the focus is therefore on informing on the status between 2012-2018.

2.1. Group B countries

A) Countries where monk seals are occasionally seen and where monk seal presence should be permanently established and breeding resumes

Italy

Reporting on the AP informs that the species is legally protected and that dynamite fishing is prohibited. Measures to isolate reproductive sites are not applicable because there is no evidence of breeding activities recorded during 2014-2018 although the characteristics of individuals observed through *in situ* monitoring in selected locations and the details of the validated sighting data collected suggest that such a probability cannot be excluded. Validated sighting information is housed in a central database in ISPRA since 1998 and sightings are processed through a sighting validation procedure (Mo et al. 2007, Mo 2011). Validated sightings recorded since 2012 involve locations of southern Sardinian, the southern Thyrrenian sea, the Egadi , Pantelleria and Lampedusa islands, southern Puglia. *In situ* monitoring in the Egadi Islands MPA confirmed cave usage mostly during winter-spring months of 2016 and 2017 (ISPRA and MPA Egadi pers. comm.). Several established MPAs contain historical monk seal habitat and the following marine Natura 2000 sites are identified as important for the species:

IT5160014	Isola di Montecristo e Formica di Montecristo
IT9150002	Costa Otranto - Santa Maria di Leuca
ITB020014	Golfo di Orosei

IT3340006	Carso Triestino e Goriziano
ITA010024	Fondali dell'Arcipelago delle Isole Egadi
ITA010002	Isola di Marettimo
ITA010020	Isola di Pantelleria - Area Costiera, Falesie e Bagno dell'Acqua

Sighting data collection and validation and *insitu* monitoring are carried out within the framework of ISPRA's research activities and are conducted in only one Marine Protected Area. Awareness raising, information and training concerning monk seal conservation are limited. The reported difficulties halting conservation regard policy and regulatory framework, financial resources and administrative management activities. This is reflected in the absence of a formally endorsed national action plan for the conservation of the species.

Libya

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. Cave monitoring activities initiated in 2009 in Cyrenaica have been interrupted. The finding of a juvenile female seal found trapped in fishing nets off of El Elba island in spring 2012 was not followed up with further field investigations. Genetic analysis confirmed the seal as belonging to a haplotype that is more commonly found in seals inhabiting the Aegean on the basis of which the authors speculated that the seal could have been a vagrant from the nearby Greek reproductive colonies (Alfaghi et al. 2013; Karamanlidis et al. 2015). However, considering the large distance from the nearest known breeding colony and the Libyan monk seal finding and that juvenile monk seals are known to travel over straight line distances smaller than the distance to the nearby Greek colonies it cannot be excluded that the seal originated from a reproductive nucleus inhabiting a range area closer to the Libyan-south easternmost Mediterranean coasts.

Egypt (western)

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. Following the spring 2011 seal sighting occurring near Marsa Matrouh, in western Egypt, (Notarbartolo di Sciara & Fouad 2011) there has been no other evidence of reported or documented sightings in the area.

Croatia

Croatia bans the use of dynamite and carrying of arms on board fishing vessels. Several monk seal sighting records were reported during the last decade and documented evidence obtained from photographic material for the period 2010-2013 confirmed the repeated presence of an adult seal observed in different locations of the island of Cres and the Istrian coastline (Bundone et al., 2013 cited in Bundone et al. 2019).. This individual, identified as a very old female (Djuro Huber, pers. comm.), died in 2014⁶ and since that date there have been no confirmed sightings in the Croatian waters. Bundone et al. (2019) report that some sightings were reported until 2015 (Jasna Antolovic, pers. comm.). The Ministry for Nature Protection has formulated rules of conduct in case of monk seal findings at sea, within or outside of caves. Since it is not a resident species no MPAs have been established directly for the monk seal but a census of marine caves suitable for the species has been carried out and such sites have been included in the Croatian marine Natura 2000 network because the habitat qualifies under the EC Habitats Directive habitat 8330 "marine caves". Some NGOs conduct monitoring activities which include interviews with fishermen and monitoring of marine caves as well as awareness raising. Specific awareness and communication campaigns were conducted until 2014 to safeguard the female seal observed using caves and open beaches in Istria. There is no formally endorsed national action plan though some activities have been carried out.

B) Countries where monk seals are occasionally seen and where monk seal presence should be confirmed and permanently established

Spain (Balearic islands)

⁶ <https://monachus-guardian.org/wordpress/2014/10/29/note-on-an-old-female-monk-seal-that-died-in-croatia-in-2014/>

The species was officially declared extinct in Spain on August 1 2018, however the species is legally protected and fishing with dynamite and carrying of guns on board are prohibited. Spain has declared the following marine Natura 2000 sites for which the species is listed as being historically present: ES6300001 Islas Chafarinas, ES0000336 Isla de Alborán, ES6310001 Calamocarro-Benzú. A list of breeding caves and other habitats of importance or the species is under development but no data collection, awareness raising or nationally endorsed action plan is reported for the species. According to expert knowledge two seals were reported on a beach in Congreso island, Chafarinas islands (J. Zapata-Salgado, pers. comm., reported by Bundone et al. 2019).

Morocco

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing this report. It is unknown whether monk seal sightings have occurred in Morocco in the last years. It is also uncertain whether any monitoring and conservation action has been initiated in the three main coastal areas of Al Hoceima National Park, Cap Trois Fourches, Cap de l'Eau (Gazo and Mo 2012 and references therein) which were characterized by sightings until 2010, geomorphological characteristics and cave availability.

Algeria

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. Statements of alleged sightings were recorded in the press during June 2017 but no confirmation based on follow up activities seems to be available⁷.

Tunisia

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. There seems to be no update on recent monk seal sightings in Tunisia but considering that monk seal cave use has been recorded in nearby Italian locations and that sectors of northern Tunisia and its insular MPAs (La Galite, Zembra and Zembretta) have potential monk seal habitat due to the geomorphological coastal characteristics and the pristine nature, it is likely that monk seals may still inhabit this geographic area.

Lebanon

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. However technical reports produced by the Society for Nature Protection of Lebanon (SPNL) indicate that 17 sighting events have occurred since 1997, 14 of which recorded since 2010 which indicates that seal presence in Lebanon has increased in recent years⁸. The finding of a pregnant female trapped in fishing nets in 2015 and the documented proof of cave use of an adult individual, presumably female, in 2017⁹ indicate that monk seal conservation attention in Lebanon is crucial in order to safeguard what appears to be a monk seal expansion phenomenon in this area (Khatib, 2016). SPNL has begun an awareness raising program aimed at fishermen and local communities in the outreach effort to collect more information and advocate respectful behaviour in case of sightings.

Israel

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing. Bundone et al. (2019) report two sighting events occurring during April and June 2014 in the area of Tel Aviv and Rosh-Hanikra.

Syria

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing the present report. Sighting records are described by Jony & Ibrahim (2006) concerning a documented sighting occurring

⁷ <http://www.flashinfo.org/5931c3fedc68f/reapparition-du-phoque-moine-en-algerie.html?fbclid=IwAR1AQOh1t6gZsSTChm-fsuDElCqYrAn9JVKlgZwY3qrdjEMSnlWAKI9f5w>

⁸ <https://www.spnl.org/mediterranean-monk-seal/>

⁹ https://www.spnl.org/news-in-photos-rare-monk-seal-found-in-raouche/?fbclid=IwAR3kl8PPxCYZj34hexx4DWzG_3wZUTYKim-cjX_1Endlp6VMtgliGb2xliw

in 2005 north of Lattakia in April 2005, combined with several reports by local fishermen. A female pregnant seal was found dead on July 22nd, 2013 following involuntary shooting by Coast Guard personnel¹⁰. Although there has been no other documented evidence fishermen accounts of seal observations have been reported in recent years in the northern part of the country (Amir Ibrahim, pers. comm., March 2019). It is not clear if the species' current presence in the area, as inferred from the above information, suggests a re-colonisation of the species' former range from the nearby reproductive colonies in Cyprus (Gucu and Sakinen 2009) and the southernmost coasts of Turkey¹¹, or if the individuals observed belong to small nuclei that have always resided in the area and were previously not reported. However, the evidence of possible reproductive activities in the area flags out the need for urgent conservation actions.

Albania

Albania reports that dynamite fishing and carrying of firearms is prohibited. Documented evidence of a subadult sized individual was reported in August 2012 close to Cape Gjuhezes, located at the tip of the Karaburun peninsula (ISPRA sighting database). A seal sighting was reported by fishermen during summer 2014 in the area northwest of Karaburuni Peninsula (S. Begiraj, pers. comm., reported by Bundone et al. 2019). Recent sighting events some of which supported by photographic documentation have occurred during November 2016 and May 2017 and confirm the presence of at least one individual in the coastal area of the Karaburuni peninsula and south of Dhermi (Bakiu and Cakali, 2018). An inventory of breeding caves and data collection on the species is under development. Habitat monitoring has been carried out under the framework of a study carried out by the PPNEA association and awareness actions under the frame of a MedPAN network project conducted by the Royall Foundation. A specific project has been carried out through UNDP support in the Karaburun-Sazan MPN. Monitoring of potential monk seal caves through camera deployment began in 2016 so it is hoped that ongoing research will shed further knowledge on the number of seals and temporal use of the southern Albanian coastal habitat. Marine Protected Areas identified for the species have yet to be established and a policy framework is the challenge reported as being most needed to accomplish better conservation results. No national action plan has been formally endorsed.

2.2. Group C countries – where presence should be reported

France (Corsica)

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing the present report.

Malta

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing the present report.

Montenegro

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing the present report. Single animal sightings were reported in the years 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2010 in the peninsula of Lustica, bay of Kotor and Budva (Panou et al. 2017, cited by Bundone et al. 2019).

Bosnia Herzegovina

Bosnia Herzegovina reports that protection of the species through legal protection status is under development. Dynamite fishing and the carrying of firearms is legally forbidden. Specially protected areas for the species, data collection, cave censuses, and awareness raising activities have not been conducted and there is no formally endorsed species action plan.

Slovenia

No NFP reporting on the AP implementation was available at the time of writing the present report.

¹⁰ <https://www.ifaw.org/united-kingdom/news/rare-and-pregnant-monk-seal-falls-victim-arab-instability>

¹¹ <https://www.monachus-guardian.org/mguard19/1922infocu.htm>

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ANNEX - II

**Questionnaire on the implementation of the
Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2014-2019)**

PERSONAL INFO

**Optional*

1. First Name*:

2. Surname*:

3. Nationality:

4. Country/es in which you primarily work:

5. Position:

Choose the category that applies best to your position/affiliation.

<i>National Focal Point SPA/RAC</i>	<i>Independent expert / Freelancer</i>	<i>Professor /Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute</i>	<i>Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)</i>	<i>Staff of International intergovernmental organization</i>
<i>MPA/Park manager</i>	<i>MPA/Park staff (other than manager)</i>	<i>Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization</i>	<i>Student / PhD student</i>	<i>Other (Please specify) ...</i>

6. Years of experience in this position

7. In which way are you involved/related to Mediterranean monk seal conservation?

8. Before being invited to participate in this survey, were you familiar with the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seals in the Mediterranean (2014-2019)?

<i>Extremely</i>	<i>Very</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
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Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 1.

Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.

9. The establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF) by Mediterranean Range States is necessary

<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
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10. IF YOU AGREE WITH THE NEED FOR A MSTF, who should be part of it

<i>Monk seal experts</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Representatives from regional organizations (SPA/RAC, GFCM, CMS...)</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Socio-economic experts</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>Please, provide detail</i>				

IN CASE OF ANY DISAGREEMENT you are encouraged to use section 32, at the end of this questionnaire, to tell us why and provide detail.

11. IF YOU AGREE WITH THE NEED FOR A MSTF, what activities should a MSTF endeavour in?

<i>Development of a contingency plan for single disastrous events/emergency conditions (e.g., massive oil spill within monk seal critical habitat, epizootic)</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Plan capacity building and awareness activities</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Plan monk seal rescue and rehabilitation programmes (priority given to Greece, Turkey, Cyprus; "Group A" countries)</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Promoting and facilitating support to research and monitoring programmes</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Assessment on translocation programs for the species in its range of distribution</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Consultation body for any program related to monitoring of the species in breeding caves</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>Please, provide detail</i>				

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 2.

Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in important monk seal locations, including: a) Greek Ionian islands (Lefkada, Kefallinia, Ithaca, Zakynthos, and surrounding islets and seas); b) Northern Sporades; c) Gyaros; d) Kimolos and Polyaiagos; e) Karpathos-Saria; f) Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts; g) Cyprus;. Breeding nuclei in the locations listed above are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and young seals are able to disperse and re-colonise the surrounding areas.

12. Mark with an X the actions that, to the best of your knowledge, have been implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 2.1

LOCATIONS	<i>Current legislation prohibiting carrying firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels is enforced</i>	<i>Effectively protected through appropriate management actions</i>	<i>Effectively protected through the keen involvement of the local communities</i>	<i>A management framework is in place and implemented, defining the spatial, temporal and specific measures needed in the species' critical habitats, thereby affording effective protection to haul out and pupping sites.</i>	<i>No action</i>	<i>Not familiar with this location</i>
Greek Ionian						
Northern Sporades						
Gyaros						
Kimolos and						
Karpathos-Saria						
Turkish Aegean and						
Cyprus						

13. Tell us about the current protection status of locations listed in Objective 2.1 of the Strategy by answering to the statements below:

13.1	<i>Monk seal MPA (or MPA network) established in the Greek Ionian islands</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
13.2	<i>Island of Gyaros Natura 2000 established as a Monk seal MPA</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
13.3	<i>Monk seal MPA established in Kimolos - Polyaiagos</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
13.4	<i>Monk seal MPA established in Karpathos - Saria</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>

13.5	<i>Monk seal MPAs designated along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Turkey as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
13.6	<i>Monk seal MPA designated in Cyprus where monk seal critical habitat was identified</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
13.7	<i>Monk seal MPAs established in north coast of Cyprus; east of Davlos and Karpasia Peninsula, and to the west of Limnidis -</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>

Goal Target 2.2. Implementation of Goal Target 2.1. should be enabled through appropriate CAPACITY BUILDING activities.

14. Were training sessions organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 2.1?

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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PLEASE, IF YOU KNOW OF ANY TRAINING CONDUCTED SINCE 2014, provide detail by answering the aspects below:

14.1	<i>Location (Country of the training)</i>	<i>e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)</i>		
14.2	<i>Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
14.3	<i>Training concentrated, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglement), and targeted stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers)</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
14.4	<i>Training was developed together with the local groups, and followed by a constant "advice service" or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
14.5	<i>Title of the training course</i>			
14.6	<i>Duration of the training course (Days)</i>			
14.7	<i>Name of organization who conducted the training</i>			
14.8	<i>Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))</i>			

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about training/s on points 14.1-14.8:

Keeping in mind Strategy's Goal 3.

Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in "Group B" countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. "Group B" countries are upgraded to "Group A".

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Italy, and in particular in the Egadi Islands, in locations around Sardinia, and in the Tuscan Archipelago, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

15. Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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PLEASE, IF familiar with the situation in the Egadi Islands since 2014, provide detail by answering to the statements below:

<i>15.1</i>	<i>Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies, applied to caves in appropriate locations within the Egadi Islands MPA, is continued and enhanced.</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
<i>15.2</i>	<i>A programme involving local fishermen in the monitoring programme around the Egadi Islands MPA is continued and enhanced.</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>

16. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in Sardinia.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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17. Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 3.2. Monk seal presence in Croatia, and in particular in specific localities of the Dalmatian archipelago and southern Istria, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.

18. Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is monitored in selected locations of the Dalmatian Archipelago and of the Istria Peninsula, and awareness action is conducted in the area.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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PLEASE, IF familiar with the situation in these areas since 2014, provide detail by answering to the statements below:

18.1	<i>Non-invasive and scientifically sound monitoring technologies are applied to caves in Istria and selected Dalmatian islands.</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
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18.2	<i>Awareness actions are conducted in Croatia, targeting local residents, fishermen, visitors and other stakeholders.</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
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Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is confirmed and permanently established, and monk seal breeding is reported.

19. Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is monitored in Libya (Cyrenaica) and nearby Egyptian coast (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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PLEASE, IF familiar with the situation in these areas since 2014, provide detail by answering to the statements below:

19.1	<i>Full survey of monk seal presence and awareness actions was organised in Cyrenaica</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
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19.2	<i>Full survey of monk seal presence and awareness actions were organised in</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
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Egypt (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).

Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is confirmed and permanently established.

19. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented; awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands, Spain.*

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established.

20. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.*

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Syria, Lebanon and Israel is confirmed and permanently established.

21. *A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian, Lebanese and Israeli coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.*

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 3.7. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is confirmed and permanently established.

22. *(From the table below mark with an X the answer you consider most adequate) Is a reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities implemented in the following locations?,*

<i>Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Tunisia</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
<i>Algeria</i>	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>I do not know</i>

Morocco	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know

23. (From the table below mark with an X the answer you consider most adequate) Are awareness actions conducted in these areas?

Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Tunisia	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Algeria	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Morocco	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know

Goal Target 3.8. Implementation of Goal Targets 3.1.-3.7. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

24. Capacity building. Training sessions were organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 3.1-3.7

Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
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PLEASE, IF you know of any training conducted since 2014, provide detail by answering to the statements below:

24.1	Location (Country of the training)	e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)		
24.2	Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
24.3	Training concentrated, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglement), and	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW

targeted stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges)

24.4	<i>Training was developed together with the local groups, and followed by a constant “advice service” or accompanying process to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.</i>	YES	NO	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
24.5	<i>Title of the training course</i>			
24.6	<i>Duration of the training course (Days)</i>			
24.7	<i>Name of organization who conducted the training</i>			
24.8	<i>Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))</i>			

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about training/s on points 24.1-24.8:

Keeping in mind Strategy’s Goal 4.

Monk seal presence is again reported in the species’ historical habitat in “Group C” countries, and these “Group C” countries are upgraded to “Group B”. Once all “Group C” countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal presence is reported again from Corsica and continental France.

25. Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species’ historical habitat in Corsica and continental France.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence is reported from Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.

26. Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.

27. Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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Goal Target 4.4. Implementation of Goal Targets 4.1-4.3. is enabled through appropriate capacity building activities.

28. Capacity building. Training sessions were organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 4.1-4.3.

<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
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PLEASE, IF you know of any training conducted since 2014, provide detail by answering to the statements below:

28.1	<i>Location (Country of the training)</i>	<i>e.g. Gyaros Island (Greece)</i>		
28.2	<i>Training concentrated in monk seal research and monitoring techniques</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
28.3	<i>Training concentrated, at least initially, on mitigating the main threats to monk seals (deliberate killing, habitat degradation, and accidental entanglement), and targeted stakeholders (e.g., fishermen, tourist operators, enforcement officers, judges)</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>
28.4	<i>Training was developed together with the local groups and followed by a constant "advice service" or accompanying process</i>	<i>YES</i>	<i>NO</i>	<i>I DO NOT KNOW</i>

	<i>to ensure that full advantage is taken from the effort.</i>
28.5	<i>Title of the training course</i>
28.6	<i>Duration of the training course (Days)</i>
28.7	<i>Name of organization responsible of the course</i>
28.8	<i>Category of organization/ groups who received training (i.e. MPA permanent staff, volunteers, fishermen, other (please specify:))</i>

If you are aware of more than one training course (in the same Location or in different locations), PLEASE, provide detail about training/s on points 28.1-28.8:

Towards an UPDATED Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

29. Considering all the questions you have gone through until now. Could you tell us how satisfied are you in regards to the overall implementation of the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (2014-2019) to date?

<i>Extremely</i>	<i>Very</i>	<i>Moderately</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
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30. How relevant you consider the following actions when UPDATING the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean for its future implementation and success?

30.1	<i>Establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF)</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.2	<i>Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.3	<i>Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.4	<i>Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.5	<i>Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.6	<i>Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.7	<i>Capacity building and awareness courses</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.8	<i>Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g. UAVs)</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.9	<i>Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>
30.10	<i>Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others</i>	<i>Extremel y</i>	<i>Ver y</i>	<i>Moderatel y</i>	<i>Slightly</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I do not know</i>

IF YOU ANSWERED "NOT AT ALL" OR "SLIGHTLY" TO ANY OF THE ACTIONS LISTED ABOVE; PLEASE TELL US...

what would you modify specifically in the respective structural components (objectives and objective targets) listed under this theme in the actual strategy?

31. PLEASE provide us with any **comments / suggestions** that you may consider important for updating the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (Maximum 100 words)

ANNEX III

Detail on the answers obtained from the 32 questionnaires duly filled on-line on the Assessment of the Implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Conservation of Monk Seal in the Mediterranean

1. Personal profile of interviewees

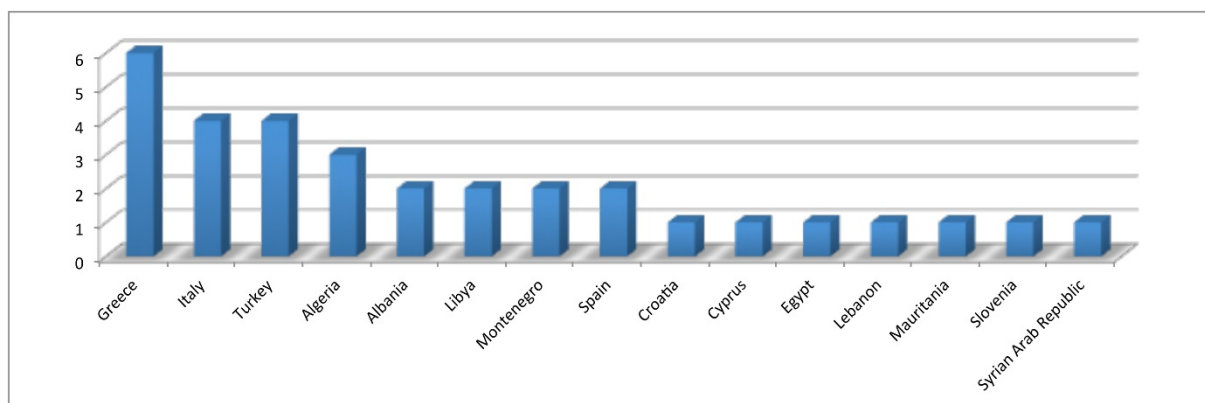


Figure 1. Countries where interviews primary work

Position (category that applies best to position/affiliation)	
National Focal Point SPA/RAC	9
Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	7
Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	6
Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	5
Independent expert / Freelancer	1
MPA/Park manager	1
MPA/Park staff (other than manager)	1
Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of no-governmental organization	1
Staff of International intergovernmental organization	1
Total responses	32

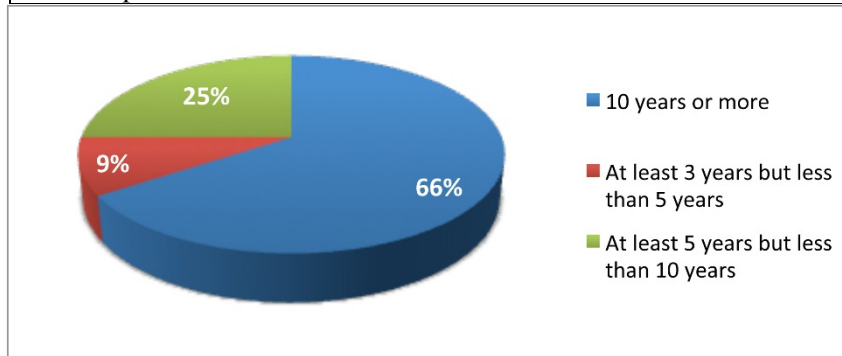


Figure 2. Years of experience in this position

	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	Independent expert / Freelancer	MPA/Park manager	MPA/Park staff (other than manager)	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	Researcher at University (Academic)/ Research Institute	Conservation officer or any other staff of non-governmental organization	Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	Staff of International intergovernmental organization	TOTAL
Extremely	1	1			1	2		4		9
Very	1				3	2		2		8
Moderately	2				3	1		1	1	8
Slightly	1				2	1	1			5
Not at all			1	1						2
TOTAL	5	1	1	1	9	6	1	7	1	32

Table 1. Familiarity with RS and position

Country of work	Position	Relation with Mediterranean monk seal conservation
Croatia	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	Monitoring the presence of the species, implementation of the National Stranding Network for strictly protected marine species, including marine mammals; creation of conservation measures; preparation of rules of conduct in case of finding monk seal in the sea, in front and in caves, on the coast or during a boat ride; cooperation with NGOs involved in monk seal research and monitoring.
Cyprus	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	I am involved in the implementation of the monitoring of the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Cyprus as well as its Habitat 8330. Moreover I am responsible for submitting all relevant and requested data within the framework of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/ECC.
Libya	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	Researcher and National coordinator of field work on Monkseal in Libya.
Spain	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	Monk seal conservation in the Atlantic
Syrian Arab Republic	Civil servant (Central, regional or local administration bureau)	save the specie and the habitats
Greece	Independent expert / Freelancer	I have been constantly working with the Mediterranean monk seal for more than 16 years on biological research, conservation and policy issue for the preservation of the species in Greek seas and the Mediterranean Sea.
Spain	MPA/Park manager	Monk seal is a very scarce species in my area. Last sighting was al 2008 in El Toro Marine Reserve
Italy	MPA/Park staff (other than manager)	I am involved in mediterranean monk seal monitoring in Egadi Island MPA
Albania	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	As institution manager I have participated in few activities related to monk seals in Albania
Algeria	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	Not directly involved in the conservation of the monk seal but in the cetaceans
Egypt	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	I was involved/ related to Mediterranean monk seal as a representative to the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), and my graduated about Marine Ecology, any way no recent data about
Italy	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	participation to research activities
Lebanon	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	The Department of Ecosystems that I am heading at the Ministry of Environment, is responsible of the establishment and supervision of the management of the protected areas, thus by establishing new MPAs, and supervising their management, we will contribute in the conservation of monk seals if they are present in these areas.
Libya	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	Coordination and administration
Montenegro	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	Since monk seal is last time recorder in Montenegro in '70 I didnt have experience in monk seal conservation except knowledge about data on potential suitable caves in Montenegro.
Slovenia	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	not involved - no monk seals in Slovenian waters
Turkey	National Focal Point SPA/RAC	via Research project, monitoring and protection activities
Algeria	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	I am globally interested in marine biodiversity with a particular interest for species affected, more precisely, by anthropic action
Italy	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	Monitoring monk seal presence through fieldwork, monk seal sighting validation
Mauritania	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	started with research and a PhD, and currently conducting reports on status and surveys along the mediterranean
Montenegro	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	I was mapping semi submersed marine caves in Montenegro
Turkey	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	Leading research and conservation projects
Turkey	Professor or Researcher at University (Academic)/Research Institute	Field work, Environmental education, lobbying, conservation activities
Algeria	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of non-governmental organization	Dealing with strandings.
Greece	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	I conduct research dedicated to the study and conservation of marine mammals, including Mediterranean monk seal
Greece	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	Distribution monitoring. Habitat suitability. Anthropogenic impact assessment. Individual behaviour study. Citizen science sighting recording. Awareness campaign.
Greece	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	- More than 30 years monk seal conservation projects in the field (pioneer work since 1985): habitat use, population numbers, interaction with fisheries, photo-identification, sightings of others, public awareness. -Elaboration of a national strategy for Greece (1996) - Several scientific publications
Greece	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	Design and implementation of research and conservation projects. Involvement in policy issues at the national and EU level. Involvement in development of national conservation strategy.
Greece	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	policy and research
Italy	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	Field work on habitat availability, photoidentification, fishery interaction and several related scientific publications
Turkey	Researcher, Conservation officer or any other staff of Non-governmental organization	We have many ongoing research and conservation projects funded by international donors.
Albania	Staff of International intergovernmental organization	I have been involved in the survey with the fishers in Albania for the identification of monk seals in Albania

Table 2. Relationship of survey participants with monk seal conservation (as reported)

1.1. *Goal 1. Mediterranean Range States implement this Strategy in pursuance of the Vision, through the expeditious development and adoption of appropriate national policies and administrative frameworks, and with the effective, coordinated support from relevant international organisations and civil society.*

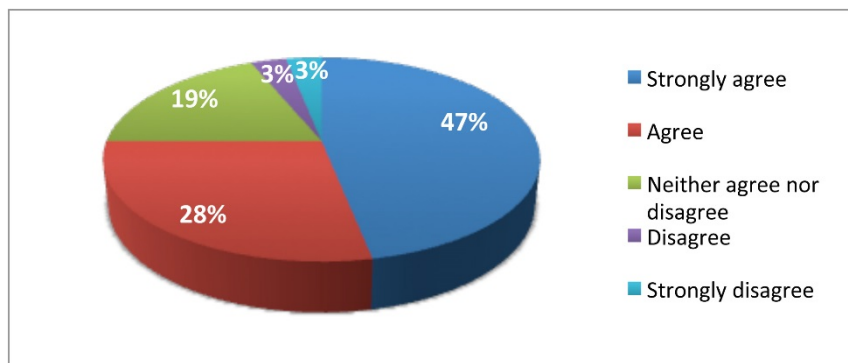


Figure 3. Agreement with the need for the establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF)

MSTF members	Monk seal experts	Representatives from regional organizations (SPA/RAC, GFCM, CMS...)	Socio-economic experts
Strongly agree	23	13	6
Agree	7	14	15
Neither agree nor disagree	-	3	7
Disagree	-	-	1
Strongly disagree	-	-	-

Table 3. Composition for MSTF

MSTF Activities	Development of a contingency plan for single disastrous events/emergency conditions (e.g., massive oil spill within monk seal critical habitat, epizootic)	Plan capacity building and awareness activities	Plan monk seal rescue and rehabilitation programmes (priority given to Greece, Turkey, Cyprus; “Group A” countries)	Promoting and facilitating support to research and monitoring programmes	Assessment on translocation programs for the species in its range of distribution	Consultation body for any program related to monitoring of the species in breeding caves
Strongly agree	8	15	11	15	6	11
Agree	17	12	14	12	9	15
Neither agree nor disagree	5	3	5	3	9	4
Disagree	-	-	-	-	4	-
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	2	-

Table 4. Activities MSTF should endeavour

- 1.2. *Goal 2. Monk seal breeding nuclei in sites located in “Group A” countries are effectively protected from deliberate killings and habitat degradation, so that seal numbers in such sites increase and seals are able to disperse to and re-colonise the surrounding areas.*

Goal Target 2.1. Maintain and secure monk seal presence in important monk seal locations	Current legislation prohibiting carrying firearms and explosives aboard fishing vessels is enforced	Effectively protected through appropriate management actions	Effectively protected through the keen involvement of the local communities	A management framework is in place and implemented, defining the spatial, temporal and specific measures needed in the species' critical habitats, thereby affording effective protection to haul out and pupping sites.	No action implemented	Not familiar with this location
Greek Ionian islands	2	3	-	2	-	29
Northern Sporades	2	4	3	4	1	25
Gyaros	3	4	3	4	1	27
Kimolos and Polyaigos	1	-	-	-	3	29
Karpathos-Saria	1	1	1	2	1	29
Turkish Aegean and Mediterranean coasts	3	2	3	3	4	24
Cyprus	2	2	4	2	1	28

Table 5. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 2.1

Current protection status	YES	NO	I DO NOT KNOW
Monk seal MPA (or MPA network) established in the Greek Ionian islands	2	6	24
Island of Gyaros Natura 2000 established as a Monk seal MPA	4	2	26
Monk seal MPA established in Kimolos - Polyaigos	1	4	27
Monk seal MPA established in Karpathos - Saria	4	1	27
Monk seal MPAs designated along the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline of Turkey as determined and mapped by the Turkish National Monk Seal Committee	5	-	27
Monk seal MPA designated in Cyprus where monk seal critical habitat was identified	3	-	29
Monk seal MPAs established in north coast of Cyprus ; east of Davlos and Karpasia Peninsula, and to the west of - Limnidis.	1	2	29

Table 6. Current protection status of locations listed in Objective 2.1

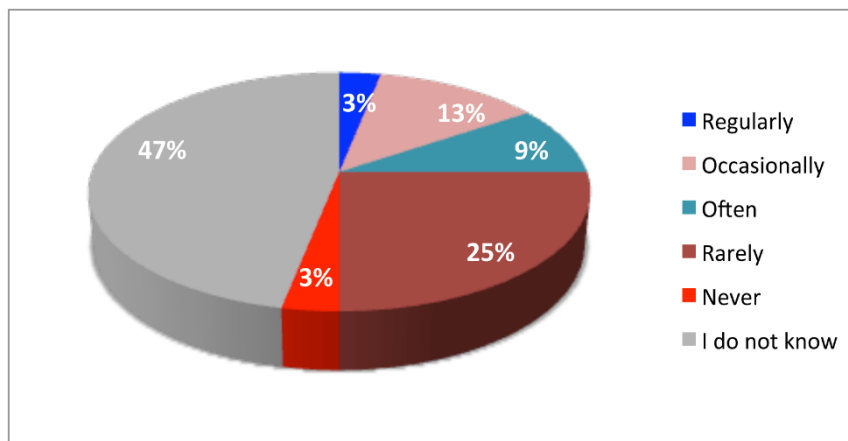


Figure 4. Frequency of capacity building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 2.1

1.3. Goal 3. Monk seal presence in sites where they are occasionally seen today in “Group B” countries is permanently established, and breeding resumes. “Group B” countries are upgraded to “Group A”.

Goal Target 3.1. Monk seal presence in Italy, and in particular in the Egadi Islands, in locations around Sardinia, and in the Tuscan Archipelago, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Monitoring of monk seal distribution, abundance and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is continued in the Egadi islands	6	2	1	-	-	23
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in Sardinia .	-	1	2	5	1	23
Regular monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in areas historically containing monk seal habitat in the Tuscan Archipelago .	-	-	-	4	3	25

Table 7. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.1

<p>Goal Target 3.2. Monk seal presence in Croatia, and in particular in specific localities of the Dalmatian archipelago and southern Istria, is permanently established, and monk seal breeding resumes.</p> <p>Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is monitored in selected locations of the Dalmatian Archipelago and of the Istria Peninsula, and awareness action is conducted in the area</p>	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
	-	-	6	1	-	25

Table 8. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.2

<p>Goal Target 3.3. Monk seal presence in Libya and nearby western Egypt is confirmed and permanently established, and monk seal breeding is reported.</p> <p>Monk seal ecology and behaviour (including eventual pup production) is monitored in Libya (Cyrenaica) and nearby Egyptian coast (from the border, including Sallum MPA, to Marsa Matrouh).</p>	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
	-	2	2	2	1	25

Table 9. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.3

<p>Goal Target 3.4. Monk seal presence in the Balearic Islands, Spain, is confirmed and permanently established.</p> <p>A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented; awareness actions are conducted around the Balearic Islands, Spain.</p>	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
	1	1	3	1	1	25

Table 10. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.4

<p>Goal Target 3.5. Monk seal presence in Albania is confirmed and permanently established.</p> <p>A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Albanian coastal zone; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.</p>	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
	-	1	4	2	-	25

Table 11. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.5

Goal Target 3.6. Monk seal presence in Syria, Lebanon and Israel is confirmed and permanently established.	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Syrian coastal zone ; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.	-	2	2	1	1	26
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Lebanese coastal zone ; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.	-	-	2	4	1	25
A reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities is implemented along the Israeli coastal zone ; awareness actions are conducted in the concerned areas.	2	-	3	-	-	27

Table 12. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.6

Goal Target 3.7. Monk seal continued presence in locations of the Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands, in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and the Chafarinas Islands (Spain) is confirmed and permanently established.	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
<i>Is a reporting scheme to detect occasional monk seal presence and alert authorities implemented in the following locations?</i>						
Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands	-	-	4	2	-	26
Tunisia	-	1	2	4	-	25
Algeria	-	-	3	2	-	27
Morocco	-	2	3	-	-	27
Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	1	1	3	1	-	26
<i>Are awareness actions conducted in these areas?</i>						
Along Maghreb's Mediterranean coasts and annexed islands	-	-	4	-	-	28
Tunisia	-	-	3	-	-	29
Algeria	-	-	2	-	1	29
Morocco	-	-	3	-	-	29
Chafarinas Islands (Spain)	1	-	1	-	1	29

Table 13. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 3.7

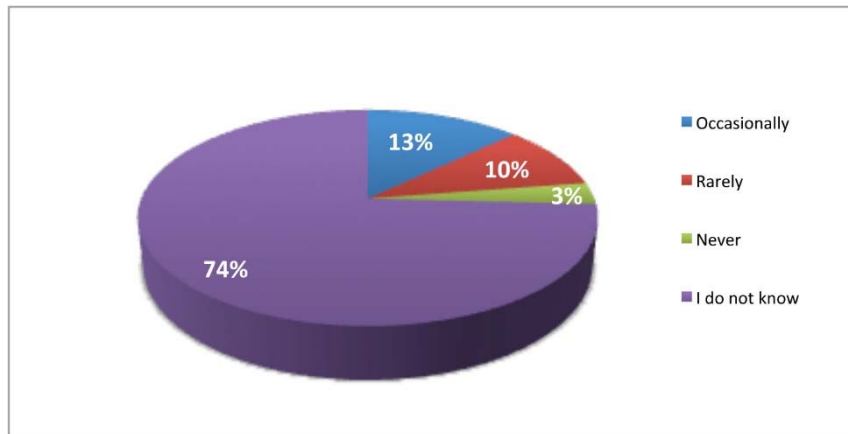


Figure 5. Frequency of capacity building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 3.1-3.7

1.4. Goal 4. Monk seal presence is again reported in the species' historical habitat in "Group C" countries, and these "Group C" countries are upgraded to "Group B". Once all "Group C" countries are upgraded, Group C is deleted.

Goal Target 4.1. Monk seal presence is reported again from Corsica and continental France.	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Corsica and continental France.	-	-	3	-	1	27

Table 14. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 4.1

Goal Target 4.2. Monk seal presence is reported from Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Slovenia.	1	-	2	3	-	25

Table 15. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 4.2

Goal Target 4.3. Monk seal presence is reported from Malta.	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Monitoring of monk seal presence and awareness actions are conducted in the species' historical habitat in Malta.	-	-	-	1	1	29

Table 16. Actions implemented in the locations listed under Goal Target 4.3

CAPACITY BUILDING.						
Training sessions were organised in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Target 4.1-4.3.						
	Regularly	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	I do not know
Corsica	-	-	-	-	2	28
Continental France	-	-	-	-	2	28
Montenegro	-	-	2	1	2	25
Bosnia Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	2	28
Slovenia	-	-	-	-	2	28
Malta	-	-	-	-	1	29

Table 17. Frequency of capacity building activities in areas relevant to locations listed in Goal Targets 4.1-4.3

1.5. *Towards an updated Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean*

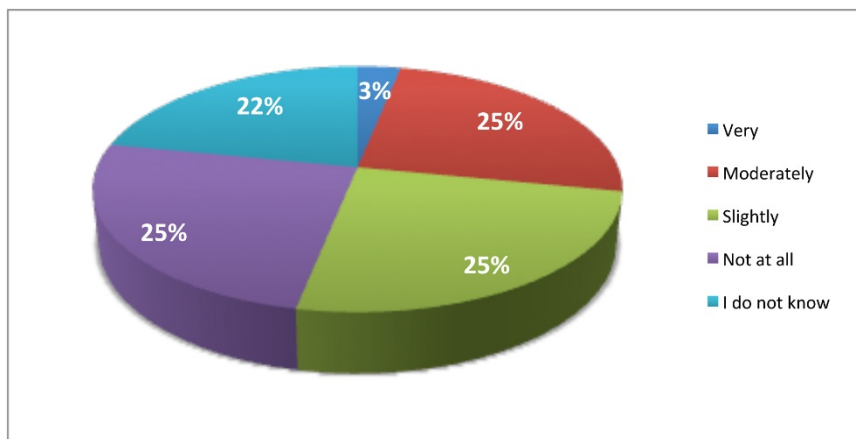


Figure 6. Degree of satisfaction of respondents on the implementation of the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (2014-2019) to date.

How relevant you consider the following actions when UPDATING the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean for its future implementation and success?	Extremely	Very	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	I do not know
Regular monitoring of areas where there is presently evidence of monk seal presence	16	13	-	2	-	-
Regular monitoring of areas already known as monk seal breeding sites	19	9	1	-	2	-
Engagement of stakeholders in the conservation process	18	10	-	3	-	-
Fundraising to support the actions above and/or others	15	12	2	1	1	-
Testing/development of new techniques for monk seal monitoring (e.g. UAVs)	8	16	3	2	2	-
Establishment of a Monk Seal Task Force (MSTF)	10	13	4	4	-	-
Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas neighbouring sites known to host presently seals	10	13	6	2	-	-
Capacity building and awareness courses	11	12	6	1	1	-
Regular monitoring of areas where there was evidence of monk seal presence but none has been observed/reported since 2000	7	11	11	2	-	-
Monk seal habitat assessment studies in areas where monk seals had been present in the past but no seal has been observed/reported since 2000	4	10	13	4	-	-

Table 18. Degree of importance for actions to be considered when updating the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean

Comments / suggestions considered important by respondents for updating the Regional strategy for the conservation of monk seal in the Mediterranean (as provided)

It is necessary to sensitize the users of the sea and especially the fishermen;

- preserve its habitats and protect the beaches;
- create MPAs dedicated to the conservation of the monk seal;
- creation of a surveillance network of the species;
- responsible and sustainable fishing
- Find sources of funding for the establishment of protected areas for monk seals.

Call and support the relevant countries to prepare national action plan for this species (or updated) and establish national team to monitor this species.

There are still some key areas with no data or data deficiency where the presence of *Monachus monachus* is recorded weekly without any consideration. It is extremely needed to involve new scientists and experts in the decision making process for the conservation of this species.

Since the first Strategy for Greece in 1996 written by us in collaboration with MOm/HSSPMS, not much has been done. Strategies get more and more complicated for the reader and with too many points and sub-points but eventually without any actual effect. International bodies should put more effort in the implementation of existing strategies rather than develop new ones every few years. But they should take into account the real situation of the species, mainly in the Mediterranean!

The questionnaire of SPA RAC-is often misleading; thus results may be biased: for instance, pups in Croatia were never registered so the question (and the answer, of course) is wrong. Distribution, abundance and pup production in low density areas are 3 different questions. Putting together Corsica and continental France administratively does not make sense in terms of ecology and distribution of monk seals; the same applies to Montenegro put together with Slovenia. Also, trainings depend extremely on who makes the training (here, practical experience is absolutely necessary!), to whom and with what prospects for the future. And so on...

The establishment of the Task Force should be at the global scale and not only for the Mediterranean. One of the key tasks of the TF should be a feasibility assessment of the new and updated Regional Strategy and Action Plan. In addition the TF should explore how the Mediterranean strategy for the species can be integrated with the relevant strategy for the Atlantic population of the species so as to develop a species AP at the global scale.

The MSTF should provide the Countries clear indications on conservation measures / protocols that can be factually applicable in the specific locations / Countries. In order to achieve this the MSTF needs to confront itself with the national bodies / institutions working on the topic (wildlife rehabilitations / fishery administration organisations / MPA managers) The MSTF should contribute to the definition of scientific internationally shared specific guidelines for the management of the human activities in the areas where the monk seal breeds or is present (A, B)

Updating the Regional strategy for the Conservation of Monk seal is an important task to share knowledge and experience between Countries in the Mediterranean.

I am really not from this field so maybe with experts dedicated to this topic, better research, monitoring and protection (also, of course, better funding) we could have better situation.

Carry on activities of National Monk Seal Conservation Commission to monitor and coordinate monk seal conservation efforts. -Providing Expertise at the International Level -Implementation of Nationwide Public Awareness Activities

I believe the present RS, by slightly updating, is still valid, requires attention of the coastal states to undertake their duties and responsibilities.