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Agenda Item 4: Specific Issues

MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation – State of Play and Gap Analysis – Draft Report

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UNEP/MAP
Athens, 2020

MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation

Deliverables 4 and 5: State of Play and Gap Analysis

(REVISED DRAFT VERSION – November 2020)

List of Acronyms

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity

CSO Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

IGO Inter-Governmental Organization

HLPF High-level Political Forum

MAP Mediterranean Action Plan

MCSD Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development

MSD Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard

MSSD Mediterranean Strategy on Sustainable Development

MTE Mid Term Evaluation

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

RAC Regional Activity Centre

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SIMPEER Simplified Peer Review Mechanism

SoED State of THE Environment and Development

UNEP UN Environment Programme

VNR Voluntary National Review

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background Information about the MSSD

The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)[1] 2016-2025 was adopted through Decision IG.22/2 by the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 19, February 2016) as a strategic guiding document to translate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the regional, sub-regional and national levels.

The aims of the MSSD (the Strategy) are "*to provide a strategic policy framework to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region; to adapt international commitments to regional conditions, to guide national strategies and to stimulate regional cooperation in the achievement of sustainable development objectives; to link the need to protect the environment to socio-economic development".*

1.2. Objectives of the State of Play and Gap Analysis

As explained in the previous deliverable[2], this document is a desk-based assessment on (i) the state of the sustainability in the Mediterranean (supported by a literature review) and (ii) the progress and gaps regarding the strategy's implementation, providing first answers to the following questions: *Where do we stand with the implementation of the SDGs and the MSSD in the Mediterranean? What are the successes and challenges? What are the opportunities to fill the gaps towards a full MSSD implementation by 2025?*

As part of the MSSD mid-term evaluation, this report identifies successes, gaps, shortcomings and opportunities from the first phase (2016-2020) of the MSSD implementation. A monitoring of the state of progress of MSSD Strategic Directions, Regional Actions and Flagship Initiatives promoted by implementing partners is also undertaken.

After consultation to relevant stakeholders (Deliverable 6: consultation document; Deliverable 7: outputs of the stakeholder consultation), the expected final report and its synthesis (Deliverable 8) will (i) provide evidence on the progress made and achievements in terms of MSSD and SDGs implementation (*what has been done*); (ii) result in the identification of gaps and shortcomings; and, (iii) identify opportunities on which to put the emphasis in the second phase of implementation.

1.3. Methodology of the Assessment

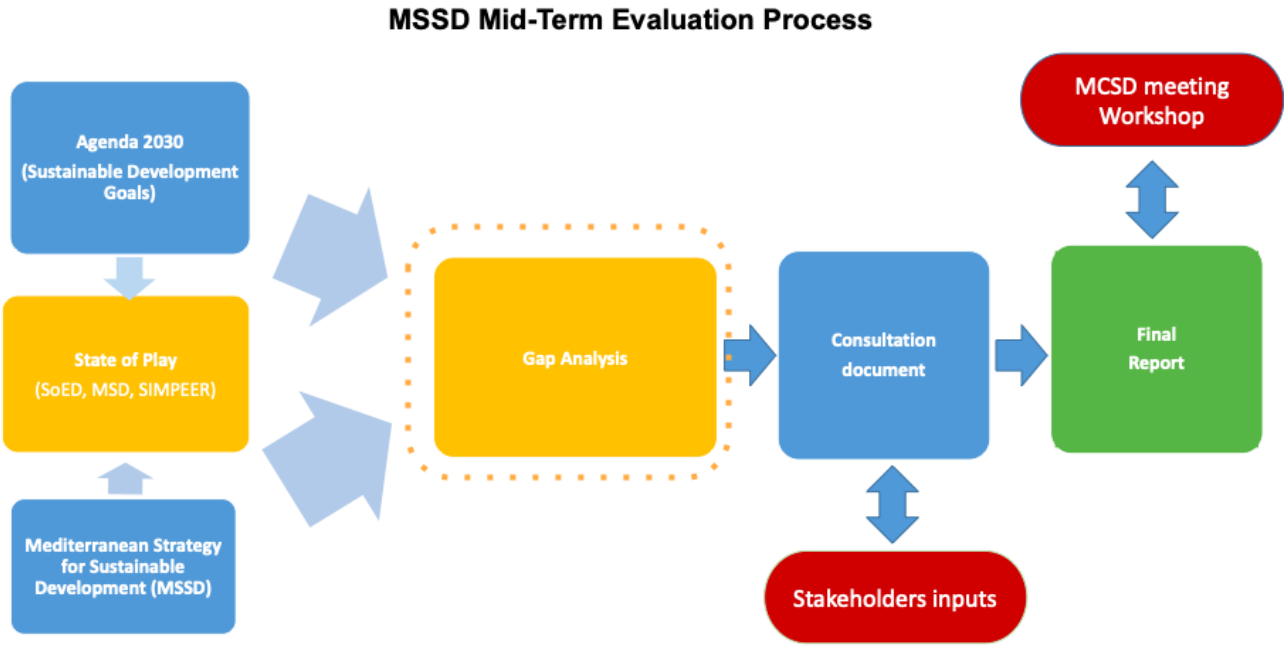
This report is the result of a **desktop analysis** from a broad source of knowledge, literature review and evidence from recognized institutions, countries and researchers. It is based on publicly available data and aims to serve as a basis for engaging consultations with stakeholders to refine and validate its conclusions in the next phases of the mid-term evaluation.

This assessment includes quantitative and qualitative criteria, taking advantage of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and Assessment Studies[3], as well as capitalizing on the level of implementation of MSSD Flagship Initiatives. It will be complemented by the stakeholder consultation, with inputs from Members of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), UNEP/MAP Partners and Components, and other stakeholders and partners.

[1] https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/publications/mssd_2016-2025_final.pdf

[2] Workplan and Timeline, Methodology, Sources of Information and List of Stakeholders to be consulted for the MSSD Mid-Term Evaluation. July 2020.

[3] Report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED); MedECC First Assessment Report on the Current State and Risks of Climate and Environmental Changes in the Mediterranean (MAR1).



1.4. Sources and Data Reliability

For the purpose of this evaluation, a comprehensive process to identify, collect and review reliable information from a broad source of knowledge, evidence and materials from recognized institutions, countries and experts, has been undertaken, as described in Deliverable 3 "Sources of Information and List of Stakeholders".

Relevant reports, data and information publicly available are used from the following sources:

(a) UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat, including Regional Activity Centres (RACs)

(b) UN-related, governmental and other IGOs,

(c) Academic and grey literature, including from scientific (peer-reviewed) journals, think-tanks and research centers.

UN-related sources have been prioritized as such data have been collected from and validated by the countries. The **academic and grey literature** has been also consulted when it provides updated and complementary information.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE MSSD VISION, STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

This chapter reviews the vision, structure, monitoring process and interlinkages of the MSSD in regard of other major multilateral environmental and sustainability-driven agreements and commitments contracted by Mediterranean countries: i.e. UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention policies, the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the Paris Agreement of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

2.1. The MSSD Vision

The MSSD is built around the following vision: "*A prosperous and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity of healthy ecosystems. This is achieved through common objectives, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance*". This vision is encapsulated in the subtitle of the Strategy: "*Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development*".

The MSSD is based on the principle that economic growth needs to be harmonized with the environment and the protection of natural resources, and to distribute the welfare dividend of the development process to all society. According to the MSSD vision, the investment in the environment is the best way to secure long-term, sustainable job creation and socio-economic development, and an essential process for the achievement of long-term development for the present and future generations.

The MSSD vision is much aligned with the objectives and visions of the following global commitments contracted by Mediterranean countries:

- **Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean** (Article 4.2)[4]: "*The Contracting Parties pledge themselves to pursue the protection of the marine environment and the natural resources of the Mediterranean Sea Area as an integral part of the development process, meeting the needs of present and future generations in an equitable manner".*
- **Paris Agreement** (Article 2)[5]: "*This Agreement (...) aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty"*;
- **Convention on Biological Diversity** (extract from Article 1)[6]: *"The objectives (...) are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, (...)"*;
- **2030 Agenda** (UN resolution A/RES/70/1 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", extract from Preamble)[7]: "*We are determined to end poverty and hunger (...) and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in (...) in a healthy environment; (...) to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change (...); (...) to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature; (...) to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies (...); (...) with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people*".

When looking in details, substantial synergies and differences appear between the MSSD vision and the objectives of those global agreements:

- The MSSD's vision is referring to the "carrying capacity" of "healthy ecosystems", terms which are not commonly used in the above-mentioned global frameworks and more generally in legally binding approved texts, and can be challenging to define, monitor or enforce. However, there are

[4] https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/who-we-are/barcelona-convention-and-protocols
[5] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
[6] https://www.cbd.int/convention/articles/?a=cbd-01
[7] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication

used in implementation documents, for example a reference to “healthy planet” appears in the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

- The MSSD’s vision is referring to key principles mentioned in above-mentioned global frameworks, *inter alia*: *Peace, Prosperity, Equity, Partnerships, Solidarity*. As such, the MSSD’s vision echoes the 5 pivotal principles (Ps) from the 2030 Agenda: *People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnership.*
- The MSSD is not directly referring to funding or finance in its vision, although this component is developed in the third chapter of the Strategy (i.e. *Means of implementation*), under the specific Strategic Direction 7.3: *Strengthen capacity for financing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025.*

In conclusion, the **MSSD vision is aligned with global environmental and sustainable development commitments**, with the exception of the reference to “carrying capacity” of “healthy ecosystems” that might be explained, illustrated and monitored in ad-hoc initiatives and tools such as the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) or the Ecosystem Approach implemented by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.

2.2. The Interlinkages with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs

The UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat has identified the main interactions related to sustainable development between the Mediterranean and global levels in the following table:

Global	Regional (Mediterranean)
2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)
High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
Volunteer National Review (VNR)	Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)
SDG Indicators; SDG Index and Dashboards	Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (MSD)

Linking the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 to the Sustainable Development Goals

MSSD Objectives	SDGs
1. Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas	
2. Promoting **resource management, food production and food security** through sustainable forms of **rural development**	
3. Planning and managing **sustainable Mediterranean cities**	
4. Addressing **climate change** as a priority issue for the Mediterranean	
5. Transition towards a **green and blue economy**	
6. Improving **governance** in support of sustainable development	

The MSSD is referring quite extensively in its content to the SDGs (16 times) and the 2030 Agenda (6 times). The Strategy is following a similar political process than the 2030 Agenda, although when looking into operational details substantial differences appear, as described in the following chapters.

Regarding the alignment between the 6 MSSD Objectives and the 17 SDGs, clear synergies are highlighted between environmental, economic and social goals of the SDGs (12 out of 17 goals), although the 5 social goals related to Poverty (SDG1), Health (SDG3), Education (SDG4), Gender (SDG5) and Inequality (SDG10) are not fully stated as such with the MSSD Objectives. Nevertheless, several Strategic Directions (SD) of the MSSD are targeting specifically Women (SD 2.4 and 5.1), Education (SD 2.2, 4.1, and 6.4), Health (SD 3.7 and 4.4) and Poverty (SD 2.4 and 5.1). The term "Inequalities" appears 6 times in the MSSD, but not explicitly in the wording of Strategic Directions.

2.3. MSSD Core Principles and Structure

The MSSD has been built on the following set of **guiding principles**:

- Integrated approach to environmental and development planning,
- Openness to a plurality of future development models,
- Balanced approach to territorial development; the precautionary and polluter pays principles,
- Participatory approach to policy and decision-making,
- Importance of evidence-based policy,
- Reconciliation of long- and short-term for planning and evaluation,
- Transparency,
- Partnership between the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system and other international and regional organizations.

The MSSD focuses on addressing **cross-cutting issues** that lie in the interface between environment and development. The Strategy highlights key areas impacted by human activity, from the marine and coastal areas to urban settlements and the rural and agricultural systems. It also focuses on the global changes brought about by climate change, which is severely impacting the Mediterranean. The Strategy also introduces the Green, Blue and Circular Economy approach combined with Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) to provide the link between environment and economy.

The MSSD is based on a set of **transversal themes** providing scope for an integrated approach to address complex sustainability issues. The first three themes connect diverse types of territories and ecosystems: (1) Seas and coasts, the cornerstone of the Barcelona Convention; (2) Rural areas, including protection of natural resources (biological diversity) and food security; and, (3) Sustainable Cities. The three other themes are focusing on cross-cutting issues: (4) Climate Change, a major sustainability issue from a global and regional perspective; (5) Green and Blue Economy, providing the link between the environment and the economy; and (6) Governance, a key issue for implementing sustainability in the Mediterranean region.

These themes have been used as a basis for formulating the six following **MSSD Objectives**:

1. Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas
2. Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development
3. Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities
4. Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean
5. Transition towards a green and blue economy
6. Improving governance in support of sustainable development

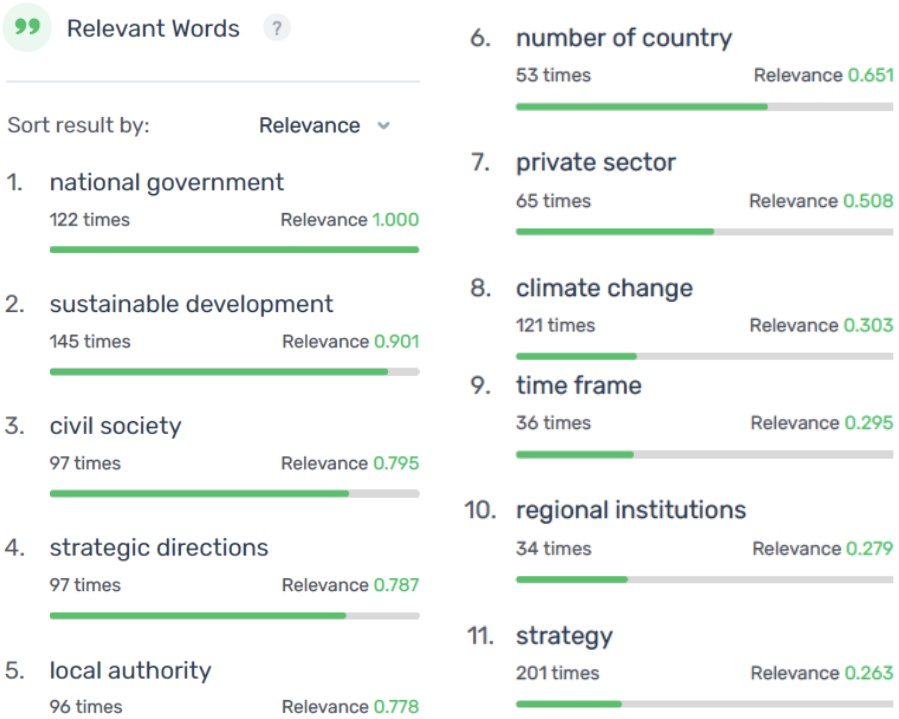
A set of **Strategic Directions** (SD) was formulated for each of the six Objectives. Those Strategic Directions are complemented by national and regional Actions, as well as **Flagship Initiatives** and **Targets**. The **Actions** aim at providing guidance and inspiration for the most effective implementation of the Strategy, taking into account that not all countries may have the necessity or the resources to undertake all the proposed actions; and that the proposed actions need to be adapted to national needs. The MSSD looks also into the means for financing its implementation and measuring its effects, as well as the institutional and governance prerequisites (chapter 3).

2.4. Content Analysis and Keywords Mapping

A text mining software[8] based on artificial intelligence has been used to extract and assess the frequency and relevance of meaningful contents of the MSSD by highlighting main ideas, key words and basic concepts. It brings background information to contextualize and prioritize the MSSD Objectives, Strategic Directions, Regional and National Actions, and Flagships Initiatives.

MSSD Keywords Cloud

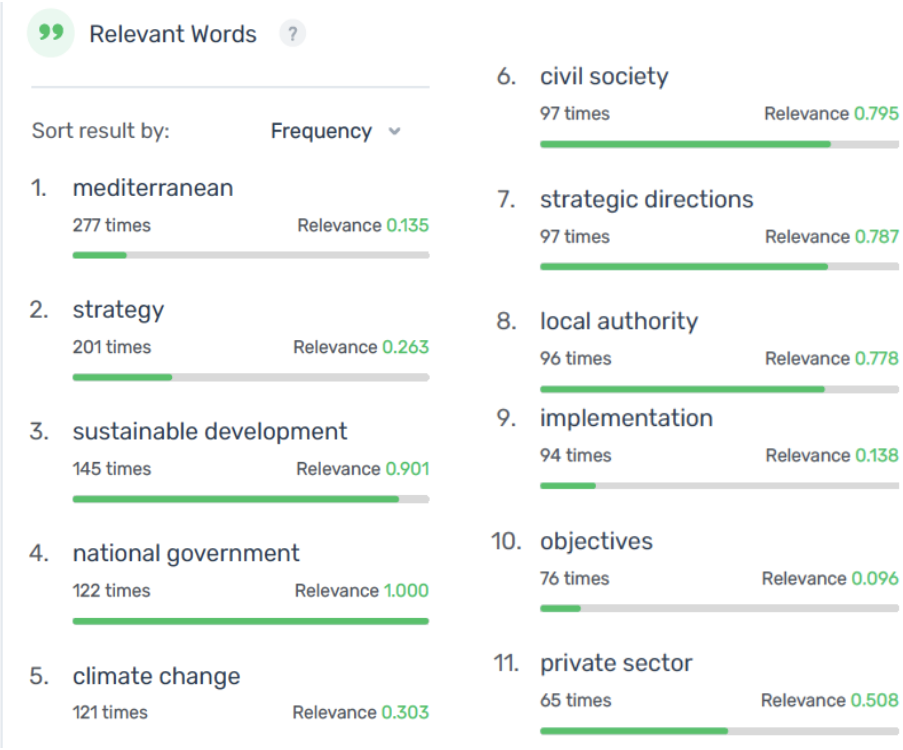
Keywords by Relevance[9]



[8] https://monkeylearn.com/word-cloud/result

[9] Keywords are relevant terms within a text summarizing its contents. Keywords have a corresponding **relevance** measure that indicates how important the keyword is within that particular content. See full methodology here: https://help.monkeylearn.com/en/articles/2174069-what-is-extraction

Keywords by Frequency



An analysis of the **frequency and relevance of keywords** within the MSSD are highlighting two main points. First, the participatory approach of the MSSD is based on the involvement of a large, balanced and diverse number of stakeholders representing the main categories of Mediterranean actors, in particular National governments (122 times), Civil Society (97 times), Local authority (96 times), Private sector (65 times) and Regional institutions (34 times). Secondly, a major cross cutting issue of the MSSD is Climate Change (mentioned 121 times), detailed in a specific chapter (Objective 4) and indeed very much related to the environmental perspective of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.

2.5. Engagement with and from Stakeholders

The **MSSD preparation process** was carried out over two years (2014-2015) of collaborative work within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, with the involvement, support, and contributions from regional and national organizations and stakeholders, which have been supported by Plan Bleu/RAC technical work. First, a consultation document was drawn up by the Secretariat (Coordinating Unit and Plan Bleu) under the guidance of the MCSD Steering Committee, and a wide consultation process was launched, focusing on the issues to be addressed. Then the MCSD Steering Committee proposed a vision and a structure based on six themes (that then became the 6 MSSD Objectives) that emerged from the consultation, as well as from the 2014 proposal of the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs. Six thematic working groups with key stakeholders and experts were created to prepare the draft MSSD, through face-to-face meetings (thematic workshops), a dedicated stakeholders conference[10] (Malta, 17-18 February 2015), electronic communication and on-line surveys. Finally, the final draft Strategy was approved by the 16th Meeting of the MCSD held in Marrakesh, Morocco in June 2015, and formally endorsed, as a non-legally binding instrument, by the Contracting Parties through Decision IG.22/2 at COP 19 (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016).

The **MSSD implementation** is a collective process in which the involvement of regional and national stakeholders is essential. The role of stakeholders to implement the MSSD is highlighted in Chapter 3, where the role of different stakeholder categories (IGOs, NGOs, Private sector, Academia, etc.) is described. The MSSD Foreword states that: "*Facilitated by the MAP system, the participation of all*

[10] Conference on the Review of the MSSD (17-18 February 2015, Malta).

stakeholders will play a decisive role in the delivery of the Strategy, from national and local governments to civil society, academia, private sector, and the support of regional institutions. It is a collective effort, through which the sum will be much greater than the addition of the parts, thanks to the synergies developed and economies of scale achieved".

Additionally, the MSSD states that *"The MAP system, which includes the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and the Regional Activity Centres, as well as the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD), will provide leadership and guidance with respect to implementing the Strategy".* As it will be described later in the present report, the MCSD, supported by UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat, provides the main mechanisms to supervise and monitor the MSSD implementation. The MSSD also mentions that *"The MAP system will provide support and technical guidance to the Contracting Parties to the Convention, as well as the coordination of implementation actions and monitoring processes. In addition, the MAP system provides a platform for the exchange of relevant information, experience and synergies developed at regional or sub-regional level"*.

The involvement of **regional and national stakeholders** is essential for the delivery of the MSSD. However, the ownership of the MSSD has been supported by communication actions[11] mainly oriented within the UNEP/MAP or UN related system. The openness and ease for external stakeholders (i.e. outside the UNEP/MAP institutional context) to engage with the MSSD is not demonstrated. It seems rather difficult for third parties not already connected to the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system to influence or make explicit contributions to the MSSD implementation process.

Although it is in principle open to any **Civil Society Organizations** (CSOs), the mechanisms for becoming accredited MAP/NGO Partner[12] of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system can be rather long and bureaucratic, and requires basic knowledge of that system and formal approval by the COPs organized every two years. In addition, the lack of a user-friendly and centralized platform, for collecting and sharing all relevant data, reports and information related to the MSSD, and potentially accessible to any Mediterranean citizens and CSOs, makes it complicated for third parties to be actively involved.

2.6. Governance and Focus of the Barcelona Convention

Since the main and historical focus of the Barcelona Convention, that provides legal grounds to the MSSD, is to protect the Mediterranean marine and coastal environment, the Contracting Parties representatives (Focal Points) are usually officers of the **Ministries of the Environment**. However, the MSSD is going far beyond environmental issues, covering economic, social, and even cultural aspects of sustainable development; and the Ministries of the Environment can lack technical and financial resources to address such a broad and transversal number of issues. In case of arbitrage and trade-off with potentially environmentally harmful economic or social policies (such as fossil fuel subsidies, for example), Ministries of the Environment can have less bargain power than other ministries (Planning, Economic Affairs, Budget, Development, Energy, etc.) traditionally closer to central power[13]. It is true that governments have usually internal coordination mechanisms to ensure proper consultation, validation and compliance between and within different ministries and agencies covering different topics[14], but in practice knowledge, implementation and reporting gaps appear frequently[15].

The very essence of sustainable development requires **transformative actions** to be undertaken in a coordinated and coherent way by governments through adequate national strategies[16]. But the quality,

[11] Press releases and e-news in UNEP/MAP and Plan Bleu websites; Plan Bleu dedicated internet page; a series of Stakeholder News Briefs; articles in specialized e-media; case study for a UNEP Blue Economy Report; presentations at thematic conferences; hard-copy and electronic printing, etc.
[12] https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/who-we-are/partnerships
[13] The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mediterranean, eco-union (2017).
[14] Getting Governments Organised to Deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals. High Level Political Forum United Nations - New York, 18 July 2017. Summary Report and Next Steps. OECD.
[15] Weinthal, Erika & Parag, Yael. (2003). Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward: Societal Capacity and Israel's Implementation of the Barcelona Convention and the Mediterranean Action Plan. Global Environmental Politics.
[16] OCDE (2019), Governance as an SDG Accelerator : Country Experiences and Tools, Éditions OCDE, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/0666b085-en

coherence and ambition of such plans differ from country to country[17]. Therefore, the capacity of the Barcelona Convention and the MSSD itself to induce an ecological transition can be limited by its original environmental scope. This appears particularly accurate when compared on how the 2030 Agenda and SDGs are driven at national level, usually by the Head of State, Prime Minister, Vice-Presidencies or Inter-Ministerial Commissions or Agencies, providing a strong political leadership with technical and financial means of implementation[18].

2.7. The Role of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)

Supported by Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention[19], the MCSD was established in 1996 as an **advisory body** to assist the Contracting Parties in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in socioeconomic programmes and to promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region and countries. Gathering on an equal footing government representatives (22) and stakeholders (18) from various groups (i.e. Local authorities, Socioeconomic actors, NGOs, IGOs, the Scientific community, and Parliamentarians), the MCSD is the multi-stakeholder advisory body to underpin the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and debate on sustainable development issues that concern interested parties in the Mediterranean region.

Acting as a **forum for experience sharing and peer learning**, the MCSD produces opinions on the overall UNEP/MAP Programme of Work, with the aim of integrating sustainability considerations into the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system as a whole. MCSD recommendations are presented for consideration to the COP, with the aim of advising on making practical and effective use of the MSSD and on the implementation of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols. The MCSD was instrumental in integrating the principles of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs into the MSSD.

In practical terms, as stated in the MSSD and in relevant COP decisions related to the work of the MCSD, the **governance and monitoring of the MSSD** is insured by the MCSD through its Steering Committee composed of 4 elected governmental representatives of Contracting Parties as well as 3 elected partners organizations among the MCSD Members. Meetings of the MCSD Steering Committee are held on a regular basis (two per biennium), with a continuous focus on the MSSD monitoring and implementation activities, assessment studies on the interaction between environment and development, MSSD Flagship Initiatives, etc. Reports of the meetings are published in the UNEP/MAP on-line repository platform[20].

This **MSSD mid-term evaluation** is undertaken under the guidance of the MCSD Steering Committee, through ad-hoc consultation and meeting sessions to integrate inputs and recommendations from the committee members. This consultation process is a relevant mechanism to engage with Contracting Parties and members of the MCSD, although some categories of non-UNEP/MAP related actors can be missing.

2.8. Visibility and Awareness of the MSSD

The level of visibility and awareness of the MSSD is rather difficult to assess, as no public reports have been published so far on those aspects. However, a search within the academic and policy papers database (via *Google Search Scholar*) shows that the term "Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development" is quoted in a very limited number of times during the period 2014-2019: between 36 (2014) and 39 time (2019), with an 8% increase between those two years. This is much lower than the references to the term "Barcelona Convention", between 437 (2014) and 476 time (2019), with a 9% increase over the same period.

[17] Fosse, J., et al. (2016). Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean-Assessment of National Green Economy and Sustainable Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries. eco-union, MIO-ECSDE. *GEC*.
[18] El Bilali, H., et al. (2019). Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mediterranean: institutional and governance arrangements. X AGROSYM 2019 conference.
[19] In the Article 4 of the Barcelona Convention, it is stated that "*the Contracting Parties shall take fully into account the recommendations of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development established within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan*".
[20] https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/meetings/reports

In comparison, the reference to the terms “Mediterranean 2030 Agenda” and “Mediterranean Sustainable Development Goal” have increased by +293% and +14642% respectively for the same period of time (2019-2014).

Google Scholar Search - Number of results per research terms				
Year	*"Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development"*	*"Barcelona Convention"*	*Mediterranean 2030 Agenda*	*Mediterranean Sustainable Development Goal*
2014	36	437	1430	1400
2015	28	405	1960	15400
2016	35	563	2130	16900
2017	36	514	2750	18200
2018	35	502	3400	19200
2019	39	476	4190	20500

Source: own assessment, 30 August 2020 (https://scholar.google.com/)

It appears from this research comparison that the MSSD is much less quoted by scholars than the Barcelona Convention itself, the 2030 Agenda or SDGs. It is indicative that the MSSD is not sufficiently known or recognized by scholars as an instrumental tool related to sustainable development of the Mediterranean region. Additional effort should probably be put in making sure that, beyond the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, the MSSD is well disseminated, knowledgeable and mentioned by policymakers and academia.

2.9. Financing Mechanisms

The financing mechanisms described in section 3.2 of the MSSD are critical for the advancement of the MSSD. In particular, the MSSD states that “*the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development should have its proper funding and its human resources* (...) *with at least two employed officers to focus on the Secretariat role and the formulation and implementation of projects related to the implementation of the Strategy* (...)”.

In 2020-2021, the **UNEP/MAP Programme of Work** (PoW) budget line dedicated to the work of the MCSD is 143,427 EUR, covering the following activities: *“Organize the 19th Meeting of the MCSD and its Steering Committee annual meetings; Undertake and conclude the mid-term evaluations of the MSSD and SCP Regional Action Plan*”. The activities related to the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (*MSSD monitoring*) represent an additional amount of 80,000 EUR secured by the Mediterranean Trust Fund (MTF). As far as functional (vs. activities) costs are concerned, the salary of the Programme Management Officer in charge of Socio-Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development and administrative costs within the Secretariat should also been taken into account, as well as the in-kind contribution from UNEP/MAP Components through resources secured by the MTF (functional costs). No specific dedicated budget is directly covering communication, outreaching or dissemination activities related to the MSSD.

Implementation and delivery of most MSSD Flagship Initiatives are supported by MCSD Members, UNEP/MAP Components and Partners, and external stakeholders, with external secured resources (e.g. project-based grants) without direct funding from the Secretariat. No ad-hoc funding mechanisms (with the notable exception of the MedFund[21]) targeting specific MSSD Strategic Directions or Actions have been identified, beyond specific activities supported by external donors on a case-by-case basis, such as the Horizon 2020 initiative or SwitchMed programme.

[21] https://themedfund.org/en/

It seems, from this first assessment, that the **MSSD financing mechanisms might not be properly developed** to achieve a timely and effective implementation of the MSSD. No monitoring of MSSD funding has been undertaken and no thematic report, nor specific indicators, has been published until now on this topic. This could remain a major obstacle in advancing towards the implementation of the MSSD as adequate finance schemes haven been identified as a major driver to reach SDGs[22].

2.10. Relations with other UNEP/MAP Initiatives

The MSSD identifies synergies between different regional and national initiatives, strategies and roadmaps coordinated or supported by UNEP/MAP and partners[23]. Some others have been recently approved or launched at COP 21, as described in the following box.

Updated list of UNEP/MAP initiatives and supported initiatives

- Strategic Action Programme to Address Pollution from Land-based Activities (SAP MED), and Related National Action Plans (NAP), adopted in 1997 with a timeline of actions and commitments until 2025 (coordinated by MED POL).
- Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of the Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean Region (SAP BIO), coordinated by SPA/RAC, under review through a regional consultation for the preparation of a post-2020 SAP BIO.
- Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021), with Post-2021 Strategy currently under preparation by REMPEC (UNEP/MAP - IMO).
- Road Map for a Proposal for the Possible Designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (Med SOx ECA), adopted by COP 21 and coordinated by REMPEC.
- Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM Protocol), adopted by the Contracting Parties in 2008 and coordinated by PAP/RAC to enhance the governance of coastal zones in an integrated manner.
- Regional Plan on Marine Litter Management, adopted in the framework the LBS Protocol to minimize marine litter and its impacts, preventing it from entering the marine environment and removing existing litter (coordinated by MED POL).
- Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP), adopted in 2016 for the definition of the Good Environmental Status (GES) of marine and coastal environment, based on the Ecosystem Approach (EcAP) (coordinated by the Coordinating Unit and MED POL).
- Compliance mechanism of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.
- Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas to increase the resilience to climate change through the development of a regional approach to climate change adaptation (coordinated by the Coordinating Unit).
- Horizon 2020 initiative to depollute the Mediterranean by 2020, by tackling the land sources of pollution such as municipal waste, urban wastewater, and industrial pollution (coordinated by MED POL in cooperation with the European Environmental Agency).
- Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (SCP Action Plan), coordinated by SCP RAC, to achieve the shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production in priority economic sectors.
- Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD), endorsed at the 2014-Ministerial Conference of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), to incorporate education on sustainable development (ESD) into national education systems.

Supported by its Components, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat is also coordinating a series of assessment studies to enhance knowledge for evidence-based policymaking.

[22] UN Secretary-General's Strategy for Financing the 2030 Agenda launched in 2018
[23] Box 2, page 72 of the MSSD 2016-25

Assessment studies

coordinated by UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat and its Components

- The First Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2017 MED QSR), coordinated by MED POL, assessing the status of the Mediterranean ecosystems and the achievement of Good Environmental Status (GES) in marine and coastal areas. Work is underway for the production of the next edition in 2023.
- The Report on the State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean (SoED), coordinated by Plan Bleu, released on 21 October 2020.
- The MED 2050 Foresight Study, coordinated by Plan Bleu, providing a prospective analysis of the interactions between environment and development at medium and long term elaborated through a participatory and inclusive approach. The final report is expected to be published in 2022 with intermediate publication on the trends in 2021.
- The First Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on the current state of play and risks of climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean, prepared by the network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC – www.medecc.org). The Summary for Decision-Makers has been discussed through a Plenary consultation on 22 September 2020 in view of its finalization and the full report is expected to be released by mid-November 2020

Additionally, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat coordinates the MedProgramme, a 43 million USD endeavor funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This program builds upon the collaboration of regional and global partners[24] focusing on the health and environmental security of the coastal ecosystems in the Mediterranean. It consists of seven child projects to deploy more than 100 coordinated actions at regional and national levels over the next 5 years (2020-2024) in 10 beneficiary countries[25]:

MedProgramme (2020-2025)

funded by GEF and coordinated by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat with contributions of different Regional Activity Centers and MAP Partners to Child Projects

- **MedProgramme Child Project 1.1**: Reducing Pollution from Harmful Chemicals and Wastes in Mediterranean Hotspots and Measuring Progress to Impacts.
- **MedProgramme Child Project 1.2:** Mediterranean Pollution Hot Spots Investment Project.
- **MedProgramme Child Project 2.1:** Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Water Security, Climate Resilience and Habitat Protection.
- **MedProgramme Child Project 2.2:** Mediterranean Coastal Zones: Managing the Water-Energy-Food and Ecosystems Nexus.
- **MedProgramme SCCF Project:** Enhancing regional climate change adaptation in the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Areas.
- **MedProgramme Child Project 3.1**: Management Support and Expansion of Marine Protected Areas in Libya.
- **MedProgramme Child Project 4.1:** Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Environment and Climate Regional Support Project.
- **GEF Adriatic Project:** Implementation of Ecosystem Approach in the Adriatic Sea through Marine Spatial Planning.
- **FishEBM MED Project:** Fisheries and Ecosystem Based Management for the Blue Economy of the Mediterranean.

[24] UNESCO/IHP, EIB, IUCN Med, GWP Med, WWF Med and the UNEP/MAP Regional Activity Centres Plan Bleu (France), PAP/RAC (Croatia), SCP/RAC (Spain) and SPA/RAC (Tunisia).
[25] Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Morocco, Montenegro, Tunisia and Turkey

- **IMAP-MPA Project:** Achieving the Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and Coast through an Ecologically Representative and Efficiently Managed and Monitored Network of Marine Protected Areas.
- **EU Marine Litter MED II Project:** under development with the EC.
- **EU EcAp-MED III:** Support to Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts – under development with the EC.

This long list of sustainability-driven projects, initiatives and institutional frameworks, supported and/or implemented by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat and its Components (without including all other projects developed independently by the Regional Activity Centres through external funding), adds complexity to the tracking, monitoring and follow-up of the MSSD. While all of them contribute, directly or indirectly, to the MSSD implementation, **it is rather challenging to coordinate, synergize and capitalize such a high number of initiatives**, as it would require substantial technical, human and financial resources, beyond the Secretariat's current capacity, as it will be explored in the next chapters.

3. MONITORING OF THE MSSD

The monitoring of the progress achieved under the MSSD implementation has been foreseen from the onset, through a number of indicators proposed in the MSSD for each of the Actions. In this chapter, the monitoring mechanisms of the MSSD are reviewed, such as the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER), Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of the SDGs, and other regional or sub-regional initiatives.

3.1. Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard

The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (MSD)[26] consists of a living list of 28 indicators established and updated by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat (Plan Bleu) to ensure the monitoring of the MSSD implementation. Most of the indicators correspond or are linked to SDG indicators or SEIS / Horizon 2020 indicators. The MSD was last published in July 2019 with **25 out of 28 indicators** (89%) populated for at least one year. However only **18 out of 28 indicators (64%)** are providing two different years, including one between 2016 and 2019, to get a sense of progress over time. Full update of the dashboard is planned every two years, next release being planned in mid 2021.

Level of population of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard

Clusters of Indicators per MSSD Objective	Number of indicators / Objective	Indicators distribution / Objective	Indicator with data from at least one year	Indicator with data from at least two years
General indicators	5	18%	5	4
1 - Sea and coast	3	11%	2	1
2 - Rural & Resources	9	32%	9	9
3 - Cities	3	11%	2	1
4 - Climate change	2	7%	2	0
5 – Green/blue economy	1	4%	1	1
6 - Governance	5	18%	4	2
	28	**100%**	**25**	**18**

Source: own assessment

The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard published in 2019 is providing partially outdated and rather incomplete information towards the MSSD implementation. First, the number of indicators is not well distributed between the different objectives. It varies greatly between one (1) single indicator for Objective 5 (Green and blue economy) up to nine (9) indicators for Objective 2 (Rural areas and Natural resources). In addition, only 18 out of 28 indicators (64%) are effectively populated with at least two different years – including one between 2016 and 2019 –, which is the minimum requirement to give a sense of trend and progress over time. It is rather low when compared with other SDGs data monitoring platforms such as the one run by UN[27], which provides yearly data, although there is missing information for some countries; SDSN[28] represents also a relevant source of information that could be considered when official UN data are not available. However, it is expected that the MSD will integrate the updated SCP indicators being prepared by SCP/RAC to better cover the Objective 5 on Green and Blue Economy.

It is also worth recording the conclusions from the 19th Meeting of the Steering Committee of the MCSD (July 2018): *Regarding the update of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard for enhancing synergies with the SDGs indicators, the MCSD Steering Committee suggested tentatively the following general criteria:*

a. Take into account lessons learned from the process to populate the 26 indicators, especially the challenges encountered during this process including data availability;

b. Select SMART (Specific – Measurable – Achievable/Assignable – Relevant/Realistic – Time related) and reliable indicators;

[26] http://obs.planbleu.org/en/

[27] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/

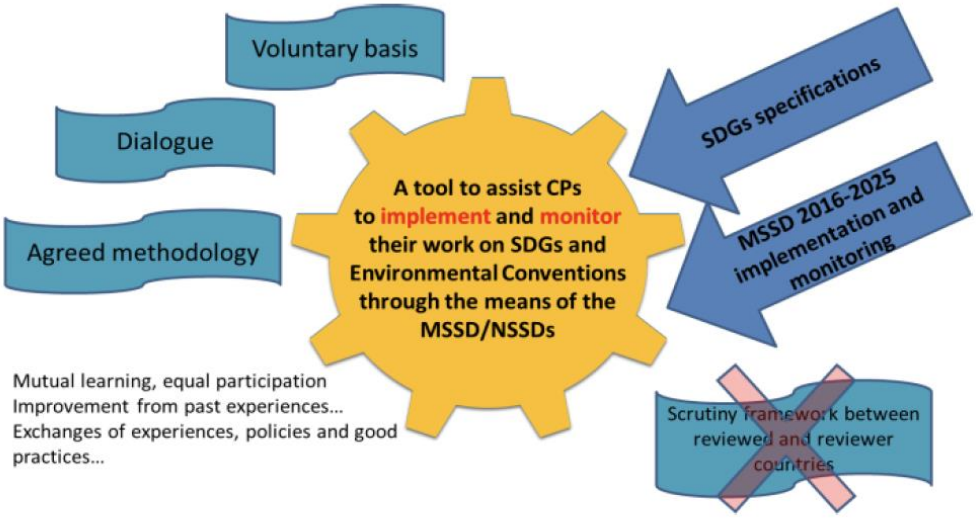
[28] http://sdgstoday.org/

c. Replace MSSD indicators by SDG ones to the maximum possible extent, where relevant and feasible, taking also into account Mediterranean specificities;
d. Keep a balance between the various MSSD Objectives and relevant SDGs;
e. Keep the process as simple as possible by using existing indicators, with a reasonable number (30) of indicators.

3.2. Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)

The Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)[29] has been decided by COP 19 in the context of the Reform of the MCSD (Decision IG.22/17). SIMPEER is an innovative incentive for promoting dialogue between volunteer Mediterranean countries on national structures, processes and policies for sustainable development. This peer review mechanism supports Contracting Parties in streamlining their work for implementing in synergy sustainable development policies and environmental obligations, the MSSD and SDGs. SIMPEER and peer learning experiences facilitate the transposition, implementation and monitoring of the MSSD and SDGs at the regional and national level, improving effective coordination between governmental departments.

SIMPEER has the potential to support the preparation and follow-up of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented by Contracting Parties at the UN High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF), which aim at facilitating the exchange of national experiences, successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for accelerating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation. SIMPEER helps Contracting Parties to identify common obstacles in the implementation of their national strategies on sustainable development, such as the existing silos between the various ministerial departments, and find possible solutions, such as the establishment of a unique governance framework at national level and an effective coordination mechanism to implement the 2030 Agenda.



The SIMPEER approach

Through a series of technical meetings, field missions and interviews or focus groups at different ministries levels, the Secretariat (Plan Bleu) supported by external consultants implemented the two first editions in 2016-2017 with France, Montenegro and Morocco, and in 2018-2019 with Albania, Egypt and Tunisia, as volunteer Contracting Parties. All technical documents are available[30]. Those reports contain valuable qualitative assessments of the national strategies on sustainable development and sustainability policies of targeted countries. A synthesis report has been prepared by Plan Bleu (*Paper N°20*[31]) with the aim to share key information, learnings, and best practices that can be replicated by other countries.

[29] http://planbleu.org/en/activites/strategie-mediterraneenne-pour-le-developpement-durable-smdd-2016-2025/simplified-peer#:~:text=The%20SIMPEER%20seeks%20to%20establish,reviewers%20and%20countries%20under%20review.
[30] https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/MCSD_SIMPEER_FINAL.PDF.
[31] https://planbleu.org/publications/rapport-simpeer-mecanisme-simplifie-dexamen-par-les-pairs-des-strategies-de-developpement-durable-des-pays-mediterraneens/

SIMPEER appears to be an original and effective process to accelerate the level of implementation of the MSSD and SDGs at national level.

3.3. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are reports presented by countries at the UN High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF), which aim at facilitating the exchange of national experiences, successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for accelerating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation.

Voluntary National Review (VNR) of 2030 Agenda in Mediterranean countries

COUNTRY	YEAR of VNR	COUNTRY	YEAR of VNR
Albania	2018	**Libya**	2020
Algeria	2019	**Malta**	2018
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2019	**Monaco**	2017
Croatia	2019	**Montenegro**	2016
Cyprus	2017	**Morocco**	2016, 2020
Egypt	2016, 2018	**Slovenia**	2017, 2020
France	2016	**Spain**	2018
Greece	2018	**Syria**	2020
Italy	2017	**Tunisia**	2019
Israël	2019	**Turkey**	2016, 2019
Lebanon	2018		

Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, Voluntary National Reviews Database

Full report of VNRs are available at the UN Sustainable Development Platform[32] and gives valuable insights on the priority, strategy and implementation of the SDGs, although the level of details, clarity and consistency is highly variable among countries. All Mediterranean countries have undertaken this exercise. Three countries (Egypt, Morocco and Slovenia) repeated it during two different years.

The VNRs appear to be a necessary exercise, but not sufficient by itself, to advance the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. VNRs usually engage the Heads of States and Governments in the transition towards sustainable development, raising the political commitment of countries in front of the international community. However, VNRs can be rather descriptive and communication-oriented, without bidding or clear commitments. In any case, they can be integrated, as much as possible, within the MSSD monitoring and implementation processes as a tool to engage with Contracting Parties and stakeholders on sustainability issues. In this sense, the draft working document *"Implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) at the National Level"* (UNEP/MED WG.483/5), prepared by the Secretariat in view of the 22nd Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee (December 2020), is an interesting initiative that could be institutionalized and shared with all relevant stakeholders within and outside the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.

3.4. Other Monitoring Mechanisms

The **MSSD Implementation Reporting Tool** updated by the Secretariat (last version released in April 2019, UNEP/MED WG.469/3 – Annex II) tracks the development and implementation of 14 MSSD Flagships Initiatives and Targets (out of 19 in total), with detailed explanation about its situation, leaders

[32] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/

and references. This document is presented on a regular basis to the MCSD Steering Committee and provides a sound basis to discuss and advance the MSSD by involving Contracting Parties and Members of the MCSD. While quite exhaustive and detailed, this document filled-in with information provided by partners remains mainly descriptive, quoting roadmaps and strategic plans and lacking field data. A link with the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard is also missing to better understand the level of advancement and contribution to the MSSD.

The **ENI SEIS II South Support Mechanism**[33] coordinated by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP/MAP aims at developing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) supporting the regular production and sharing of quality assessed environmental data, indicators and information. The data flow, supervised by the INFO/RAC Data Centre, follows the common reporting format developed for the H2020 indicators and monitored via a dedicated dashboard. The current reporting exercise – which feeds in the preparation of the 2nd indicator-based assessment of Horizon 2020 thematic areas – shows that country capacities are heterogeneous. Data availability at the proper geographical scale (national/regional/sub regional) remains often an obstacle which limits comparison among countries[34]. The time series, which are not always being consistent, limits the comparison among different geographical units.[35]

[33] https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/south
[34] EEA and UNEP/MAP report 'Towards a cleaner Mediterranean Sea: a decade of progress'. See: https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/news/press-release/stronger-joint-efforts-needed-achieve-cleaner-mediterranean
[35] https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/south/communication/news/h2020-dashboards

4. STATE OF PROGRESS

In this chapter, the overall progress and state of implementation of the MSSD is reviewed based on the available information and sources previously identified. A particular focus is placed towards Regional Actions, Flagship Initiatives and Targets to be delivered by, before or near the year 2020.

4.1. State of SDGs at global and Mediterranean scale

The **Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020**, published by UN in July 2020[36] presents an overview of progress towards the SDGs before the pandemic started, but it also looks at some of the devastating initial impacts of COVID-19 on specific goals and targets. The report was prepared by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with over 200 experts from more than 40 international agencies using the latest available data and estimates.

According to the UN, one third of the way into the SDG journey**, the world is not on track to achieve the global Goals by 2030.** Before the COVID-19 outbreak, progress had been uneven and more focused attention was needed in most areas. The pandemic abruptly disrupted implementation towards many of the SDGs and, in some cases, turned back decades of progress. Forecasts indicate that the pandemic will push 71 million people back into extreme poverty in 2020, in what would be the first rise in global poverty since 1998. Many of these people are workers in the informal economy, whose incomes dropped by 60 per cent in the first month of the crisis. Half of the global workforce – 1.6 billion people – support themselves and their families through insecure and often unsafe jobs in the informal economy, and have been significantly affected. The impacts of COVID-19 are also increasing the vulnerability of the world's one billion slum dwellers, who already suffer from inadequate housing with limited or no access to basic infrastructure and services. Older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees are more likely to experience severe effects from COVID-19 due to their specific health and socioeconomic circumstances. Similarly, the pandemic is taking a toll on the world's women and children.

As stated in the report[37], the importance of **timely, quality, open and disaggregated data and statistics** has never been as clear as during the COVID-19 crisis. Such data are critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. They are also essential for designing short-term responses and accelerated actions to put countries back on track to achieve the SDGs. Over the years, good progress has been made in increasing the availability of internationally comparable data for SDG monitoring. However, huge data gaps still exist in terms of geographic coverage, timeliness and the level of disaggregation required. Moreover, challenges remain in compiling and disseminating metadata to document the data quality of SDG indicators at local and national levels. Investments in data and statistics are needed to maintain adequate coverage of all population groups, as well as to guarantee the internal consistency, comparability and overall quality of data produced to advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda. For example, many countries would benefit from support to fully digitize their data collection instead of using traditional paper-based methods.

One important area of innovation is the **integration of geospatial and statistical information**. The integrated analysis and visualization of geospatially enabled data on SDG indicators enhances the ability of policymakers and the public at large to understand and respond to local circumstances and needs across geographic space and time. It also offers insights into data connections and relationships that can be further explored by combining traditional and non-traditional sources of data, statistics and information.

The "**Measuring Progress – Towards achieving the environmental dimension of the SDGs"** report[38], published by UNEP in 2019, as a derivative product of the GEO6 report (UNEP 2019)[39], provides an overview of the current state of the environmental dimensions of sustainable development based on the SDG indicators – including the availability of statistical and spatial data, analytical methods and visualizations – and identifies knowledge and information gaps in terms of assessing progress towards the environmental dimension of the SDGs. It contains a detailed analysis of the state of implementation of

[36] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/
[37] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/the-need-for-data-innovations-in-the-time-of-COVID-19/
[38] https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27627/MeaProg2019.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[39] https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/global-environment-outlook-6

environmentally related SDGs at global and regional level (i.e. Europe and Northern America, Northern Africa and Western Asia)[40].

Of the 93 **environment-related SDGs indicators**, 22 (23%) have shown good progress over the last 15 years. If this progress continues, it is likely that these SDGs targets will be met. However, for the other 77% of the environment-related SDGs indicators, there is either not sufficient data to assess progress (68%) or it is unlikely that the target will be met without upscaling action (9%). Many of the indicators for which good progress has been made reflect a mix of policy changes, improved reporting, and increased funding efforts. However there has been mixed progress in improving access to environmental resources and reducing the impacts of environmental degradation on human health and food security. Data and statistics for measuring the environmental dimension of development remains a substantial constraint and information on the gender-environment nexus remains largely limited. In addition, there is insufficient information available for geospatial analysis to understand the challenges facing ecosystems or the relationships between the environment and people.

The **Arab Sustainable Development Report 2020**, published by UN ESCWA in April 2020[41], offers a situation analysis of the 17 SDGs in the Arab region and captures the challenges facing Arab countries. As such, it supports the efforts of governments and stakeholders by assessing gaps, highlighting obstacles, and identifying critical entry points. Analysis of the official SDG indicators, where data is available, offers a regional snapshot of uneven and worrying rates of achievement. In many key indicators, the region will not reach the SDG targets by 2030, and lags behind other regions on the global stage. In line with the global diagnosis on SDG achievement, the authors observe, the region has yet to usher in a transformative shift in development. However, the report finds an increasing recognition among both governments and peoples that more needs to be done to protect the environment, address climate change, and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

The annual report from the **Sustainable Development Solutions Network** (SDSN)[42] shows that all Mediterranean countries are currently far from achieving the SDGs and that no promising trend can be identified in any Mediterranean country that suggests they will be achieved by 2030. Nine of the 21 countries had not achieved any of the SDGs in 2019, and for almost two thirds of the SDGs, significant or major challenges remain for their achievement. In most situations, efforts undertaken since 2015 have brought about positive developments, but changes have occurred at a level and/or pace that is insufficient for achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

The situation is particularly critical for SDG 2 on hunger, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities and SDG 14 on life below water – which is most relevant to the Barcelona Convention - for which none of the Mediterranean countries are considered to be on track to reach the SDG targets by 2030.

[40] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/
[41] https://asdr.unescwa.org/
[42] Sachs et al. (2019), Sustainable Development Report 2019, New York: Bertelsmann Stiftung and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)

SDGs Dashboard in Mediterranean countries (2019)

SDG No./ Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	SDG World Index 2019 rank	SDG score (100= best)
Albania	↑	→	↗	↑	↗	↑	↑	→	↗	…	↗	…	↑	↗	↗	↗	…	60	70.3
Algeria	↑	→	↗	→	↗	↗	↗	→	↑	…	→	…	→	→	→	→	…	53	71.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	↑	↗	↗	…	→	↗	↗	→	→	…	↗	…	→	…	→	→	…	69	69.4
Croatia	↑	↗	↑	→	↗	↑	↗	↑	↗	…	↗	…	↗	↗	↗	↗	…	22	77.8
Cyprus	↑	→	↑	…	↗	↑	↗	↗	↗	…	↗	…	↗	→	…	↗	↓	61	70.1
Egypt	↑	↗	↗	→	↗	↗	↑	↗	↗	…	→	…	↑	↗	→	…	…	92	66.2
France	↑	↗	↑	↑	↗	↗	↗	↗	↑	↑	↗	…	→	↗	↗	↗	→	4	81.5
Greece	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↑	↗	↑	→	↗	…	↗	↗	↗	↗	↓	50	71.4
Israël	↗	↗	↑	↗	→	↑	↗	↑	↑	→	→	…	→	→	↓	↗	↗	49	71.5
Italy	↗	↗	↑	↗	↗	↑	↑	↗		→	↗	…	↗	→	↑	↑	↗	30	75.8
Lebanon	↑	→	↗	↓	↓	↑	…	→	↗	…	…	…	↑	…	→	→	…	94	65.7
Libya	…	↓	↗	…	→	↗	…	…	…	…	…	…	↓	→	…	→	…	n/a	n/a
Malta	↑	↗	↗	→	↗	↑	↗	↑	↗	…	↗	…	→	↗	…	→	→	28	76.1
Monaco	…	…	…	…	…	↑	…	…	…	…	…	…	↑	…	…	…	…	n/a	n/a
Montenegro	↑	→	↗	↗	↗	↑	↗	↗	↗	…	→	…	→	↓	↓	→	…	87	67.3
Morocco	↑	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	…	↗	…	→	…	↑	→	→	↗	…	72	69.1

SDG Dashboard	% of occurrence	SDG Trend Dashboard[1]	% of occurrence
SDG achievement	5%	↑ On track (increases at the rate needed to achieve the SDG by 2030 or performance has already exceeded the SDG achievement threshold)	17%
Challenges remain	26%	↗ Moderately increasing (at a rate above 50% of the required growth rate but below the rate needed to achieve the SDG by 2030)	35%
Significant challenges remain	38%	→ Stagnating (Score remains stagnant or increases at a rate below 50% of the growth rate needed to achieve the SDG by 2030)	20%
Major challenges remain	26%	↓ Decreasing (i.e. country is moving in the wrong direction)	3%
Data unavailable	5%	…Data unavailable	25%

Source: Sachs et al, SDSN, 2019

The universal, integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the high interconnection between SDGs induce the emergence of the so-called **spillover effects**[43]. These are positive or negative effects that one country's actions can have on other countries, affecting their ability to achieve the SDGs, such as environmental spillovers related to the use of natural resources and pollution, unfair tax competition, banking secrecy, international labor standards, fatal accidents at work, trade in arms and organized international crime. In the Mediterranean, those negative feedbacks are unfortunately very present due to the large socio-economic differences between countries and the lack of regional integration and collaboration.

4.2. State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean

The report on the **State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean** (SoED)[44], prepared by Plan Bleu through the involvement of the UNEP/MAP network's expertise in 2018-2019, presents a comprehensive and updated assessment of the interactions between environment and development in the Mediterranean. This scientific-based report analyses main socio-economic drivers and impacts of environmental degradation of the Mediterranean marine and coastal ecosystems. It contains updated (qualitative and quantitative) data and trends covering MSSD actions, indicators and targets.

By applying an integrated and systemic approach, the SoED aims to increase awareness and understanding of environmental status and trends in the Mediterranean, their driving forces and impacts, facilitating the measurement of progress towards sustainable development. It is also providing an up-to-date foundation for improved decision-making at all levels, and enhancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, SDGs and the MSSD. The SoeD Summary for Decision-Makers and Key Messages have been officially approved by COP21 in December 2019 and are planned to be published on 21st October 2020 at the occasion of a dedicated launch event during the EU Green Week[45] and disseminated as an official UNEP publication and through an extensive and targeted communication campaign.

The SoED recalls that over the last decades, human-induced pressures have increasingly affected the Mediterranean region. Population growth and unsustainable production and consumption patterns have led to environmental degradation. Despite some progress, economic growth continues to increase resource consumption and carbon emissions. Land- and sea-use change, in particular on the coast, are detrimental to the environment. Exploitation of resources and organisms, pollution and climate change are projected to exacerbate pre-existing fragilities in the Mediterranean, leading to multiple stresses and systemic failures, putting health and livelihoods at risk.

[43] SDSN Policy Brief (2019). International spillovers and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
[44] https://planbleu.org/en/activites/report-state-environment-and-development-mediterranean
[45] https://planbleu.org/en/soed-2020-state-of-environment-and-development-in-mediterranean/

According to the SOED, progress has been achieved in policy responses and actions to manage the Mediterranean more sustainably. Results are positive compared to scenarios with no intervention. However, these results have not been sufficient to reduce the most significant pressures on the environment and to safeguard the Mediterranean for present and future generations while meeting human development needs. As stated by the SoED, **current trends do not allow to achieve the Good Environmental Status (GES) of the Mediterranean Sea by 2020**.

In line with worldwide trends, "*global goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors"* (IPBES, 2019).The SoED highlights that **urgent and collective efforts for transformative change** are required to safeguard the Mediterranean environment, while simultaneously fostering human development, taking into account differences between Mediterranean countries. The latter have committed to achieve the GES of the Mediterranean Sea and coast, and more largely the SDGs under the 2030 Agenda. A fundamental reorganization of economic and social systems, including changes in paradigms and values, is required to achieve these commitments.

According to the SoED, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system can play a major role in fostering sustainability transitions. However, this requires an urgent step up from planning, engagement and local innovation, to widespread implementation on the ground and effective enforcement, in collaboration with local authorities and relevant stakeholders, including relevant private sector and funding agencies. **Implementation and enforcement are lagging behind** the ambition of commonly agreed objectives and measures, and risk discrediting their comprehensiveness and the major achievements in environmental diplomacy in the region. The imminent threat of severe and irreversible damage to ecosystems and subsequent human well-being calls for the urgent implementation and enforcement of agreed actions, capitalization, scaling-up and dissemination of a multitude of relevant innovations within a coherent approach, as well as adequate monitoring and evaluation to ensure that measures are leading to the desired effects, and necessary adjustments when achievements fall behind.

4.3. State of Implementation of the MSSD

A color code is being used to show in an easy way the level of achievement of the MSSD Objectives, Strategic Directions, Targets and Flagships Initiatives:

Achieved – Clear evidence of achievement has been found.
In progress – Evidence of certain progress and advancement has been found that potentially keeps the target achievable in due time.
Mixed achievement, low or insufficient progress – Certain evidence of progress has been found but potentially not enough to match the targeted timeline or reach the full objective.
Not reached – Timeline has been passed without reaching the expected target.
No data - lack of reliable or consistent data to have a clear picture of the situation.

Disclaimer: In a number of cases a qualitative and evidence-based assessment cannot be undertaken due to lack of reliable data or no updated indicators. Therefore, this evaluation exercise should be seen as an indicative picture of the situation based on the best knowledge and good faith of the evaluators.

4.3.1. Objective 1: Ensuring sustainable development in marine and coastal areas

The quest for economic development has promoted the exploitation and exploration of coastal and open sea resources and emphasized the need for robust integrated planning to support sustainable development in the Mediterranean region. MSSD **Objective 1 – Sustainable Development in marine and coastal areas –** includes two broad **Strategic Directions** related to the implementation and enforcement of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols.

Strategic Directions	***1.1: Strengthen implementation of and compliance with the Protocols of the Barcelona Convention and other regional policy instruments and initiatives supplemented by national approaches.*** IN PROGRESS: UNEP/MAP compliance and monitoring mechanisms in place.
	1.2: Establish and enforce regulatory mechanisms, including Maritime Spatial Planning, to prevent and control unsustainable open ocean resource exploitation. IN PROGRESS: Adoption at COP 21 of Decision IG.24/5 "Common Regional Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management UNEP/MAP activities", which urges "*the Contracting Parties to support and proceed with the introduction and implementation of Marine Spatial Planning tools in line with the ICZM Common Regional Framework and undertake to exchange best practices in the region*".
Evidence (SoED)	***TO BE COMPLETED***
Targets	***By 2020, conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on best available scientific information (SDG 14.5).*** IN PROGRESS: In 2016, 1,200 MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures cover over 8.9% of the Mediterranean Sea[46]. However, less than 10% of those marine areas covered by conservation measures duly implement management plans, due to the lack of financial resources and technical capacity, as well as gaps in the existing legal and policy frameworks[47].
	By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans (...) (SDG 14.4). INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: In 2015, the Mediterranean and Black Sea region had the lowest percentage of sustainable fish stocks (2019 SDG Report). Although the main commercial fish species in the Mediterranean and Black Sea are still over-fished, pressure has reduced over the past years, raising hopes – for the first time – for the recovery of fish stocks, according the FAO-GFCM report launched in 2018[48]. The percentage of overexploited fish stocks decreased by 10%, from 88% in 2014 to 78% in 2016. More efforts are therefore needed to ensure long-term fish stock sustainability.
Flagship Initiative	***Support the Trust Fund for Mediterranean marine protected areas.*** ACHIEVED: The **MedFund** has been successfully launched in 2015 with 15 members including 6 Mediterranean countries as well as 9 regional civil society organizations. The target of the fund is to reach a capital of 30 million euros in the mid-term, which will make it possible to generate regular and sufficient interest to provide long-term support to around 20 MPAs in the Mediterranean. To date, more than 8 million euros of which 5 million euros of capitalization have already been mobilized for the Mediterranean MPAs[49].
Regional Actions	NO DATA: No clear evidence has been found on the level of achievement of the **two Regional Actions** (*1.2.6: Prepare a regional programme on assessment and control regarding open ocean exploration and exploitation of non-living resources; 1.2.7. Set up process to further the exchange of good practices on control approaches*) although the initiative WestMed[50] could be considered as contributing partially to it.
Indicators	SLOW PROGRESS*:* Regarding the **ratifications to the Barcelona Convention** (Indicator 6), only 2 out of the 7 Protocols (26%) have all Mediterranean countries as Parties (Emergency

[46] MedPAN and SPA/RAC, 2019. The 2016 status of Marine Protected Areas in the Mediterranean. By Meola B. and Webster C. Ed SPA/RAC & MedPAN. Tunis. https://medpan.org/main_activities/mpa-status/
[47] http://medpan.org/towards-2020-wwf-mpa-scorecard/
[48] State of fisheries in the Mediterranean & Black Sea 2018. FAO. http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1174274/icode/
[49] https://themedfund.org/en/
[50] Fostering sustainable blue growth and jobs, improving safety and security and preserving ecosystems and biodiversity in the western Mediterranean. www.westmed-initiative.eu

	Protocol and SPA Protocol) with a very diverse level of ratifications (only 7 ratifications for the Offshore protocol)[51].
	SLOW PROGRESS: Regarding the **coverage of protected areas in relation to marine territorial waters** (Indicator 7), the creation of MPAs with no-go, no-take or no-fishing zone(s) have slowed down since the late 90s.
	INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: Regarding the **proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels** (Indicator 8), no information is provided by the Dashboard, although according to the FAO, the percentage of overexploited fish stocks decreased by 10%, from 88% in 2014 to 78% in 2016[52].
General assessment	SLOW PROGRESS: The high number of Regional and National Actions (17), clustered around 2 main pillars (Strategic Directions) related to the Barcelona Convention core objectives, and supported by a successfully launched Flagship Initiative (the MedFund), contribute to the achievement of the MSSD Objective 1. However, from the state of implementation of SDG 14 (*Life below water*), significant additional efforts remain necessary to reach the 2030 targets, in particular related to extension and location of MPAs and the effective regulation of IUU fishing (MSSD Targets).

4.3.2. Objective 2: Promoting resource management, food production and food security through sustainable forms of rural development

Rural areas in the Mediterranean are relatively diverse in their history, culture, natural conditions, population density, settlements, economic structure, and human resources and thus require different policy interventions, but share a potential for the establishment of new bases for economic and social development.

Strategic Directions	***2.1: Promote the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems*** IN PROGRESS: SAP BIO and its revision, plus specific activities of the UNEP/MAP Program of Work (PoW)
	2.2: Promote conservation and use of indigenous or traditional plant varieties and domestic animal breeds, value traditional knowledge and practices in rural management decisions NO EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
	2.3: Promote networks of ecologically protected areas at national and Mediterranean level and enhance stakeholder awareness on the value of ecosystem services and the implications of biodiversity loss IN PROGRESS: SPA/RAC, IUCN Med, MedPAN activities, such as the 2016 RoadMap for a comprehensive and coherent network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas, currently under evaluation.
	2.4: Promote inclusive and sustainable rural development, with a specific focus on poverty eradication, women's empowerment and youth employment, including equitable and sustainable access to basic local services for rural communities NO EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
	2.5: Ensure access of local producers to distribution channels and markets, including the tourism market MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: Short-term and bilateral projects funded i.a. by EU InterregMed programme[53], but lack of regional initiative.
Evidence (SoED)	NEGATIVE TREND: **Food production** in Mediterranean countries exceeds consumption for fruit and vegetables, wine, and olive oil, but is chronically deficient in cereals. The overexploitation of resources (water, soil) puts increasing pressures on food and water availability. Around 1,238 coastal terrestrial species have been identified by IUCN as threatened

[51] According to the Indicator 6 of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard published in July 2019
[52] State of fisheries in the Mediterranean & Black Sea 2018. FAO.
[53] https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu/

	with extinction. The increasing attractiveness of coastal regions and cities comes with a decline in rural economic and population dynamics. Socioeconomic disparities between the rural and urban areas continue to persist with generally poorer households and more challenging access to basic services and infrastructure in rural areas.
Target	***Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species, and take further action as needed by 2030 (SDG 15.5).*** NOT ACHIEVED: As monitored by Indicator 19 of the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (updated in 2018), the value of the Red List Index in the Mediterranean countries is slightly above the average world value in 11 Mediterranean countries. However, it has decreased in 4 countries (Albania, Egypt, France, and Montenegro), which creates significant concern due to the biodiversity interconnectedness.
Flagship Initiative	***Promote the "Green list" (IUCN World Parks Congress) in riparian states to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of parks managing bodies created***. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: As stated in the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (Indicator 9, updated in 2019), only a few (5) Mediterranean countries are concerned by the IUCN Green List Programme, although activities are currently taking place in the Maghreb region organized by the IUCN-Med centre.
Regional Actions	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: Out of the **four Regional Actions** planned, two are in development (*2.1.9: Cross border water cooperation programmes,* through the Global Water Partnership Mediterranean; *2.3.4: Regional network of managers of ecologically protected areas,* coordinated by MedPAN). No clear evidence of progress was identified for the other two initiatives (*2.2.4: Regional collaboration between seed banks and knowledge repositories; 2.4.4. International partnerships and networks in the promotion of traditional knowledge).*
Indicators[54]	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: **Development assistance and public expenditure for biodiversity and ecosystem protection** (Indicator 10) is increasing in general but amounts vary largely across time and space. A sustainable and regular funding is still lacking.
	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: **Global food security** (Indicator 11) is improving in the Southern and Eastern countries but decreasing in the Northern shore.
	NOT ACHIEVED: **Water stress** (Indicator 12) is increasing in a diverse proportion: it is less than 10% in the Balkans countries up to 1000% in the Southern countries.
	IN PROGRESS: **Access to safe drinking water** (indicator 14) by the population was over 90% in most Mediterranean countries in 2015.
	MIXED PROGRESS: **Access to safe sanitation services** (Indicator 15) by the population is up to 90 % for most Mediterranean countries but less than 50 % in 5 countries in 2015.
	IN PROGRESS: **Organic farming area** (Indicator 16) is unprecedently booming (x 4 since 2000) but still only covers 4% of the agricultural land in 2017.
General assessment	INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: Under Objective 2, Strategic Directions and related Actions are numerous (5 Strategic Directions and 25 Actions) and not always adequately described[55], with vague ownerships or timeline, which makes it very difficult to monitor and implement efficiently. The Target and Flagship Initiative related to biodiversity are not performing well and biodiversity losses remains a major issue at global and regional level.

[54] The Mediterranean Sustainability dashboard includes 9 indicators related to Objective 2. Those are in general well populated and cover different issues: 3 indicators related to Biodiversity, 2 to Food security and farming, and 5 to Water and sanitation). The overall picture is however very unbalanced between countries and the trends are showing a regional degradation of the situation (in particular for water stress, biodiversity losses and food security) that requires more precise data at national level.

[55] Strategic directions can be very general (*2.1.5. Achieve a sustainable balance between production of food, use of water and use of energy*), too ambitious (*2.1.6 Develop socio-economic models for national strategic choices for water allocation*) or difficult to monitor and/or implement (*2.1.8. Develop action plans for the restoration of land from extractive activities).* Additionally, the owners are often a long list of stakeholders and UNEP/MAP Partners, without defining clearly roles and contributions.

4.3.3. Objective 3: Planning and managing sustainable Mediterranean cities

Although affected by the economic crisis, the urbanization of the Mediterranean population continues at a fast pace, in particular along its southern shores. Two in every three people are already living in the urban areas of Mediterranean countries, which is higher than the world average.

Strategic Directions	***3.1: Apply holistic and integrated spatial planning processes and other related instruments, as well as improved compliance with respective rules and regulations, to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion and reduce pressures on the environment*** LACK OF DATA: Assessment of this SD is difficult due to its very open, broad and generic description. Spatial planning in the region has advanced through the implementation of the Barcelona Convention instruments (such as the ICZM Protocol and related policies). No comprehensive review or monitoring of spatial planning instruments has been found at regional or national level.
	3.2: Encourage inclusive urbanization and strengthen capacities for participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management LACK OF DATA: Assessment of this SD is difficult due to its very open, broad and generic description.
	3.3: Promote the protection and rehabilitation of historic urban areas LACK OF DATA: No specific review or monitoring of historic urban areas' protection/rehabilitation has been found at regional or national level.
	3.4: Promote sustainable waste management within the context of a more circular economy LACK OF DATA: Assessment of this SD is difficult due to its very open, broad and generic description.
	3.5: Promote urban spatial patterns and technological options that reduce the demand for transportation, stimulate sustainable mobility and accessibility in urban areas LACK OF DATA: Assessment of this SD is difficult due to its very open, broad and generic description.
	3.6: Promote green buildings to contribute towards reducing the ecological footprint of the built environment LACK OF DATA: No specific review or monitoring of green building has been found at regional or national level.
	3.7: Enhance urban resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to risks from natural and human-induced hazards including climate change LACK OF DATA: Although relevant reports and initiatives on urban resilience exists at Mediterranean level (such as the ones promoted by the UfM), it is difficult to track progress due to lack of monitoring.
Targets	***By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (SDG 11.3)***. IN PROGRESS: A specific Flagship Initiative has been promoted to disseminate educational and technical knowledge towards sustainable management of Mediterranean cities. Some results are already available through the release of the **Med Urban Tools** Platform coordinated by the association of Mediterranean municipalities MedCities. However, there is not clear evidence of achievement at country or sub-national level.
	By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse (SDG 12.5).

	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The **Horizon 2020 initiative** to depollute the Mediterranean is a major regional program to develop, support and finance activities towards a better management of waste at national or local level. Major achievements have been reached in some specific countries, in particular in the Southern shore, to develop adequate strategies, policies and facilities. However, it is not clear yet if progress is sufficient to address the increasing impact of waste due to the rise of population, economic development, and lack of regulation or incentives.
Flagship Initiatives	***Promote the "Environment Friendly City" Award.*** ACHIEVED: This initiative, approved at COP 19 (2016), has been successfully launched; the first and second editions of the Award have been respectively delivered at COP20 and COP21[56]. As part of the UNEP/MAP Programme of Work, the initiative is directly managed by the Secretariat, with support (voluntary contribution[57]) from the Government of Turkey.
	Create a sustainable urban toolbox for the Mediterranean, with a view to planning cities that will work for everyone, in order to make them inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. ACHIEVED: This initiative is underway with the release of the **Med Urban Tools** Platform[58] coordinated by the association of Mediterranean municipalities MedCities.
	Undertake regional assessments, as well as knowledge exchanges, of high- and low-tech solutions, that have been successfully implemented to achieve waste reduction (3.4.5). IN PROGRESS: This initiative, promoted by MIO-ESCDE and COMPSUD, is taking place in synergy with several regional projects, such as the EU-funded regional project **Water and Environment Support Mechanism** (WES)[59], the Regional Solid Waste Exchange of Information and Expertise Network in Mashreq Maghreb countries (SWEEP-Net)[60] and the Euro-Mediterranean Strategic Platform for a suitable waste management (MED-3R)[61].
Regional Actions	INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: Out of the **10 Regional Actions** promoted within Objective 3, only 1 is showing clear proof of implementation (*3.2.4: Regional networking and partnership programmes between cities,* as coordinated by MedCities and other networks of local authorities, which are represented in the MCSD). For the other 9 Actions, no clear evidence of development has been found during the research. Some sub-regional projects financed by the European Commission (through Interreg or ENI CBC Med grants) are targeting specific Mediterranean countries for a limited period of time (usually 3-4 years) on the topics promoted in Objective 3.
Indicators[62]	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: In most countries, the **urban population living in slums** (Indicator 18) is increasing in absolute numbers even if its percentage is decreasing in relative terms.
	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: On the **Status of UNESCO World heritage sites in the Mediterranean** (Indicator 19), out of 54 sites in danger globally, 28% are in Mediterranean countries.
	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The **waste production and recycling** rate (MSD Indicator 20) is showing in 2016 a mixed situation, with high waste generation in the North, high food waste in the South, and a still low recycling rate.
General assessment	INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: Under Objective 3, Strategic Directions and related Actions are very numerous (7 Strategic directions and 35 Actions), often vague and

[56] http://www.cop21med-italy.net/index.php/2019/12/02/istanbul-environment-friendly-city-award-2018-2019/
[57] 44,000 EUR in 2017; 20,000 EUR in 2019
[58] http://medurbantools.com/about/
[59] https://www.wes-med.eu
[60] http://www.sweep-net.org
[61] http://www.med-3r.org
[62] The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard includes 3 indicators related to MSSD Objective 3 (Sustainable cities), with two of them being well populated with specific information related to Mediterranean countries.

	not always adequately described, which makes them very difficult to track and implement efficiently. Additionally, several actions are planned to be delivered by 2020, which is evidently not achievable at the current path of the MSSD implementation. In particular, the effective management of waste, including marine litter and used waters, remains a major problem in the Mediterranean region, as it has been highlighted by several recent reports[63]. The migrations due to internal and cross-borders conflicts creates also a lot of pressure on cities, in particular in the Southern countries[64].

4.3.4. Objective 4: Addressing climate change as a priority issue for the Mediterranean

As highlighted in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[65] and the recent MedECC report[66], the Mediterranean region, considered one of the world's major climate change hotspots, is highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of global warming.

Strategic Directions	***4.1: Increase scientific knowledge, raise awareness, and develop technical capacities to deal with climate change and ensure informed decision-making at all levels, recognising and protecting the climate adaptation and mitigation services of natural ecosystems.*** IN PROGRESS: The launch of the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC)[67] and the preparation of the first Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) on the risks of climate and environmental change in the Mediterranean are major steps to improve Science-Policy interface, while a lot of work remains to implement its conclusions through sound decision making processes at regional and national level.
	4.2: Accelerate the uptake of climate smart and climate resilient responses. LACK OF DATA: A growing number of initiatives have been launched related to greener technologies and resilience improvement of coastal areas. However, effective and systemic solutions to overcome climate change risks are still lacking.
	4.3: Leverage existing and emerging climate finance mechanisms, including international and domestic instruments, and enhance the engagement of the private and finance sectors. IN PROGRESS: Recent assessment reports, policy recommendations and thematic working groups coordinated by the UfM are showing a growing interest on the issue while a lot of work remains to match the national and regional needs.
	4.4: Encourage institutional, policy and legal reforms for the effective mainstreaming of climate change responses into national and local development frameworks, particularly in the energy sector. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The various UfM Working Groups related to climate mitigation and adaptation are contributing to the improvement of climate knowledge and environmental policies in Mediterranean countries. However, the high dependency of most Mediterranean countries to fossil fuel and the on-going investments in gas exploration remain a major barrier to address climate change.
Evidence (SoED)	The Mediterranean basin is already experiencing climate change, at rates that exceed global averages. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) considers the Mediterranean Region to be "highly vulnerable to climate change" due to the influence of multiple stressors and the projected associated "systemic failures" (IPCC, 2014) through the exacerbation of pre-existing fragilities, including high coastal urbanization and the limited adaptive capacity of coastal countries, especially in

[63] https://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/a4_plastics_reg_low.pdf
[64] https://www.uclg.org/en/issues/migration
[65] https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar5/
[66] https://www.medecc.org/medecc-booklet-isk-associated-to-climate-and-environmental-changes-in-the-mediterranean-region/
[67] https://www.medecc.org/

	SEMCs. The air temperature in the Mediterranean basin is moving towards +1.54°C above pre-industrial values, well above the global average. Mediterranean countries are designing national frameworks to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These efforts need to be urgently implemented, effectively enforced and their ambition strengthened in a multi-stakeholder context.
Flagship Initiative	***Establish a regional science-policy interface mechanism on Climate Change (...).*** ACHIEVED: The network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC)[68] has been launched in 2015 and the first conclusions of the Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) have been published in 2019, with significant political and media impact[69].
Regional Actions	INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: Out of the 7 Regional Actions, only one is showing clear proof of implementation (*4.1.5. Promote a Mediterranean research agenda,* through the PRIMA initiative[70]). For the others Actions, no clear evidence of development has been found during the research, although some sub-regional projects financed by the European Commission (through Interreg or ENI CBC Med grants) are targeting specific Mediterranean countries for a limited period of time (usually 3-4 years) as for example Clima Med project or UfM climate related studies and Working Groups[71].
Indicators[72]	GOOD PROGRESS: The **energy intensity and the share of renewable energy** (Indicator 22) are improving in most Mediterranean countries. NEGATIVE TREND: **CO2 emissions** from fossil fuel (Indicator 21) continue to rise in most Mediterranean countries.
General assessment	IN PROGRESS: The particularly high density of the coastal population and infrastructure on the shoreline, linked to a limited tidal range, make the Mediterranean coast particularly vulnerable to changes in climate and sea level. These risks are even higher along the southern and eastern shores, where monitoring systems are limited, and the adaptive capacity is generally lower. Although Mediterranean countries are designing national frameworks to mitigate and adapt to climate change, much effort is needed to implement, enforce and increase ambition in a multi-stakeholder context. The creation of MedECC and the preparation of the first Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1) have been major milestones to provide a scientific basis around the impact of climate change in the region. However the diverse climate and environmental frameworks such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the work of the IPCC and the IPBES results could be better interconnected through the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system to overcome jointly climate, biodiversity and development challenges in the region.

4.3.5. Objective 5: Transition towards a green and blue economy

Addressing socio-economic inequalities between and within countries, owing partly to the high unemployment rate, is a key concern for the Mediterranean region.

Strategic Directions	***5.1: Create green and decent jobs for all, particularly youth and women, to eradicate poverty and enhance social inclusion.***

[68] https://www.medecc.org/
[69] https://www.medecc.org/our-work/
[70] PRIMA is an EU-funded initiative to finance R&D projects in Mediterranean countries related to sustainable agriculture, food and water. www.prima-med.org
[71] https://ufmsecretariat.org/fr/climate/
[72] The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard is integrating only two indicators on Energy and Climate, well populated, although slightly outdated (last data from years 2014-2015). It does not include specific indicators on climate change impact. Those indicators show that in most Mediterranean countries, the energy intensity and the share of renewable energy are improving while C02 emissions are increasing.

	INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: Sub-regional initiatives such as SwitchMed[73] are promoting greener and more inclusive businesses in Southern Mediterranean countries. However, the unemployment rate remains very high in particular for women and youth (SoED).
	5.2: Review the definitions and measurement of development, progress and well-being. INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: Limited initiatives, mainly at global[74], OECD[75] or academic[76] level, are promoting new ways of defining and measuring progress and prosperity. No regional initiatives have been identified so far.
	5.3: Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. SLOW PROGRESS: The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (SCP Action Plan)[77] is promoting a greener industry and more responsible lifestyles. The Domestic Material Consumption (Indicator 23) is decreasing in relative terms by increasing in absolute volume.
	5.4: Encourage environmentally-friendly and social innovation. IN PROGRESS: Sub-regional initiatives such as SwitchMed MedTest[78] are promoting greener business practices and more inclusive SMEs in Southern Mediterranean countries. EU-funded Horizon 2020 and PRIMA initiatives are also essential to develop technological and societal solutions.
	5.5: Promote the integration of sustainability principles and criteria into decision-making on public and private investment. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The EU has approved a new Taxonomy for investors, companies, issuers and promoters to identify low-carbon, resilient and resource-efficient projects. However, the taxonomy is not yet implemented at EU or national level and is not targeting (yet) the Southern Mediterranean countries.
	5.6: Ensure a greener and more inclusive market that integrates the true environmental and social cost of products and services to reduce social and environmental externalities *LACK OF DATA*
Evidence of progress	The **Switch Med** program[79] has been launched in 2013, and renewed in 2019 for 4 additional years, to speed up the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Southern Mediterranean. Funded by the European Union (22 million € for SwitchMed I; 16.4 million € for SwichMed II for 2019-22), the regional SwitchMed Program supports eight countries in the Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia) in achieving sustainable, productive and circular economies. Since 2013, SwitchMed has under the lead of UNIDO, in cooperation with the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production of UNEP/MAP (SCP/RAC), and the UNEP Economy Division, demonstrated the potential of SMEs, green entrepreneurs, organizations from the civil society and policymakers to drive a green and sustainable economic development[80].
Target	***By 2025, the majority of Mediterranean countries are committed to green or sustainable public procurement programmes.*** SLOW PROGRESS: This target is being advanced through the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean (SCP Action Plan)[81], targeting Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) in the Food, Fisheries and Agriculture (FFA) sector, in the Manufacturing Goods sector, in Tourism as well as in the Housing and

[73] https://switchmed.eu/
[74] http://happyplanetindex.org/
[75] http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/
[76] https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/ecological-footprint/
[77] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/20731
[78] https://switchmed.eu/
[79] https://switchmed.eu/
[80] See UNIDO post: https://www.unido.org/our-focus-safeguarding-environment-resource-efficient-and-low-carbon-industrial-production/switchmed-enabling-switch-resource-efficient-and-circular-economies-southern-mediterranean
[81] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/20731

	Construction sector. However, the number of SPP in Mediterranean countries is not yet known, although it should be tracked through the current mid-term evaluation of the SCP Action Plan.
Flagship Initiatives	***Create and promote a Mediterranean business award for environmental innovation.*** IN PROGRESS: As part of the UNEP/MAP mandate (Decision IG.24/3) and Programme of Work for 2020-2021, SCP/RAC is currently implementing this initiative, which is supported by the SwitchMed Program, in view of the presentation of the first edition of the award in 2021[82]. ***Integrate sustainability principles into public procurement at national and local levels.*** IN PROGRESS: This initiative is being advanced through the implementation of the SCP Action Plan[83], targeting Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) in the Food, Fisheries and Agriculture (FFA) sector, in the Manufacturing Goods sector, in the Tourism industry as well as in the Housing and Construction sector.
Regional Actions	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: Out of the 8 regional Actions planned, 4 Actions (50%) are currently in development (*5.1.4. Green jobs & green and social entrepreneurship; 5.3.3. Sustainable Consumption and Production Regional Action Plan; 5.5.4. Environmental and social criteria for investments*; *5.6.4. Grade cooperation)* supported by the SwitchMed initiative (covering Southern Mediterranean countries), Business Associations (Ascame, Business Med, etc.) or the UfM Working Groups[84] and regional platforms. No relevant information has been found related to the other regional actions.
Indicators[85]	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: Last data (2017) are showing that most of the Mediterranean countries have started decoupling (relatively) their economic growth from **Domestic Material Consumption** (DMC), with a large variety of performance. In the EU Mediterranean countries, the DMC per constant 2010 US dollars is less than 6, while it is between 7 and 17 in most Southern countries, and reaches 33 and 43 respectively in Libya and Syria.
General assessment	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: Production and consumption patterns in the Mediterranean region have undergone profound changes in recent decades, which, in combination with demographic growth, urbanization, and rising living standards, have led to an increase in resource consumption and environmental degradation. The increase in demand for processed, refined food, manufactured goods and coastal tourism go hand-in-hand with food loss and waste packaging overuse, and the associated loss of scarce resources such as water, land and energy. This adds to inefficient industrial processes and unsustainable waste management, putting further pressure on the natural resources on which Mediterranean economies depend (SoED). The transition of the Mediterranean region towards a Green and Blue Economy is showing an unbalanced and complex picture. While most EU Mediterranean countries have a strong political and economic commitment towards green and inclusive socio-economic transformation (e.g. European Green Deal, the EU Blue Economy Strategy, Recovery funds, etc.), the Southern Mediterranean countries are in general not performing well[86]. The lack of (political and social) leadership, the high level of harmful subsidies (such as for fossil fuels) and the low involvement of stakeholders hinder the development of more sustainable and responsible economies[87].

4.3.6. Objective 6: Improving governance in support of sustainable development

Governance is a cross-cutting objective, relevant to each of the other objectives of the Strategy. Objective 6 focuses on improving environmental governance at the national level, while aspects of governance related to the implementation of the Strategy are addressed in Chapter 3 "Means of implementation". Governance

[82] See SwitchMed press release: https://switchmed.eu/news/switchmed-is-looking-for-communication-professionals-to-support-the-creation-of-the-new-mediterranean-green-business-award/
[83] https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/20731
[84] The UfM is coordinating different Working Groups and Regional platforms composed with stakeholders, experts and government representatives on a broad number of issues such as Blue Economy, Climate Change, Water, etc. https://ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/platforms/
[85] The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard has only one indicator covering Objective 5: Domestic Material Consumption.
[86] https://greeneconomytracker.org
[87] "Towards a Green Economy in the Mediterranean" (eco-union, MIO-ESCDE & GEC, 2016) http://www.medgreeneconomy.org/assets/downloads/greeneconomy-med-web.pdf

is characterized by the inclusion of non-state actors in the decision-making process, such as civil society, private sector, and international organizations.

Strategic Directions	***6.1: Enhance regional, sub-regional and cross-border dialogue and cooperation, including on emergency-preparedness.*** IN PROGRESS: The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) (UNEP/MAP – IMO) is in charge of supporting the Mediterranean coastal States in implementing international maritime conventions related to the prevention, preparedness and response to pollution from ships. Within its current Regional Strategy (2016-2021), REMPEC organizes capacity-building, knowledge sharing and networking activities between and within Mediterranean countries.
	6.2: Promote the engagement of civil society, scientists, local communities and other stakeholders in the governance process at all levels, in order to secure inclusive processes and integrity in decision-making. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus convention)[88] has not yet been ratified by all Mediterranean countries. The capacity for stakeholders to effectively participate in policy and decision-making varies widely between countries. Within the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system, different initiatives and activities have been carried out: MAP/NGO official partners accredited as Observer in MAP Focal Points Meetings and COPs; inclusive process and stakeholder consultation for the preparation of the COP Ministerial Declarations, etc. However, for non-UNEP/MAP related stakeholders, access to information and active participation to consultation processes is not easy.
	6.3: Promote implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements including through policy coherence based on inter-ministerial coordination. IN PROGRESS: Mediterranean countries are using Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and about 75% of the countries have regulated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)[89]. However, the effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement of environmental obligations varies widely between countries and areas.
	6.4: Promote education and research for sustainable development. IN PROGRESS: Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (MSESD) was endorsed in 2014 by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change.[90] It remains now to be implemented at regional and national level.
	6.5: Enhance regional capabilities for information management. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The ENI SEIS II South Support Mechanism[91] aims at developing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) at Mediterranean level. The current reporting exercise shows that country capacities are very heterogeneous. Data availability remains often an obstacle which limits comparison among countries.
Evidence of progress	The **Mediterranean Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development** (MSESD) was drafted through a participatory process carried out under the scientific and technical coordination of the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development Management and Education in the Mediterranean, with the support of the Mediterranean Educational Initiative on Environment and Sustainability (MEdIES) of the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE). The MSESD was endorsed in 2014 by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate Change.[92] It should now be implemented at regional and national level.

[88] https://www.unece.org/env/pp/introduction.html
[89] According to the SoED report
[90] https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Objective6_MSESD_FINAL.PDF
[91] https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/south
[92] https://planbleu.org/sites/default/files/upload/files/Objective6_MSESD_FINAL.PDF

	The **Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area** (PRIMA)[93] was approved in 2012 by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Research and Innovation and launched in 2018 through the PRIMA foundation. It devises new R&I approaches to improve water availability and sustainable agriculture production in a region heavily distressed by climate change, urbanisation and population growth. It currently includes 19 countries[94], including EU Member States, Horizon 2020 Associated Countries and Mediterranean Partner Countries on an equal footing basis (co-ownership, co-management and co-funding) with the participation of the European Commission. The partnership is financed through a combination of funding from PRIMA Participating States (currently €274 million), and a €220 million contribution from the EU through Horizon 2020, its research and innovation funding programme (2014 – 2020). This initiative is the first of its kind to support regional R&D projects with the aim to advance sustainable development in the region. It provides an innovative experience that could be extended into other areas of research (e.g. transport, energy, IT, health, etc.)
Target	***By 2025, two-thirds of Mediterranean countries have acceded to the Aarhus Convention.*** SLOW PROGRESS: The Aarhus Convention[95] provides legal instruments for civil society and citizens to access environmental information at national level. However, **only 12 countries out of 21 (57%) have acceded to the Aarhus Convention**. Therefore, two additional countries are necessary to reach the two-thirds target, which remains rather unambitious.
Flagship Initiatives	***Develop capacity building programmes related to implementation and compliance with environmental obligations and agreements.*** IN PROGRESS: The **Horizon 2020 initiative**[96] to depollute the Mediterranean is a major regional program to develop, support and finance activities towards a better management and implementation of environmental obligations and commitments. Major achievements have been reached in some specific countries, in particular in the Southern shore, to develop adequate strategies, policies and facilities. However, it remains insufficient to tackle the increasing impact of human activities due to the rise of population, economic development, and lack of regulation or incentives.
	Establish a publicly-accessible Mediterranean integrated information system (...) to collate and transparently display information on the state of the environment. MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: This initiative is being advanced through the **ENI SEIS II South Support Mechanism**[97] coordinated by the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP/MAP. It aims at developing a Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) supporting the regular production and sharing of quality assessed environmental data, indicators and information. The current reporting exercise shows that country capacities are very heterogeneous. Data availability at the proper geographical scale (national/regional/sub regional) remains often an obstacle which limits comparison among countries. The time series not always being consistent limits the comparison among different geographical units.
Regional Actions	IN PROGRESS: Out of the **6 Regional Actions**, five have been advanced **(***6.1.2. Cooperation on emergency-preparedness; 6.4.5. Research and innovation; 6.4.6. Education for sustainable development; 6.5.3. Data and information production and sharing; 6.5.4. Monitoring programmes).* One Regional Action does not seem to be launched *(6.1.3. on Population flows).*
Indicators	***Number of National Strategies for Sustainable Development (Indicator 24).*** INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: The large majority of the countries have outdated or incomplete national green economy / sustainable development strategies. Often, they are vague, not giving clear definitions, objectives, budgets or indicators.

[93] http://prima-med.org/
[94] Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey have formally become PRIMA Participating States.
[95] https://www.unece.org/env/pp/introduction.html
[96] https://www.h2020.net/
[97] https://eni-seis.eionet.europa.eu/south

	Bank credit allocated to the private sector (Indicator 25). LACK OF DATA (TREND): The domestic credit allocated to the private sector in percentage of GDP is varying across time and countries without any obvious trend. It varies from 23 % in Libya to 106% in Spain and reaches about 200% in Cyprus.
	R&D expenditure (Indicator 26). MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The amount of national public expenditures on R&D is increasing. On average, Mediterranean countries spend 1.25% of their GDP on R&D in 2016. The expenditure in EU-27 countries is stabilized around 2% of the GDP. In Israel, it reached 4,25% of GDP. It is between 1 and 2,3% in Greece, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, and France and less than 1% in the other Mediterranean countries.
	Number of countries ensuring public participation and access to environmental information (Indicator 27). LACK OF DATA: No conclusions can be extracted from this indicator as it is not properly populated and updated.
General assessment	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT: The advancement of the MSSD Objective 6 is rather difficult to determine due to lack of information from the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard and other monitoring mechanisms. The launch of regional initiatives described earlier (PRIMA, MSESD) are showing progress towards more inclusive and sustainable governance patterns. However, the lack of effective and robust regional mechanisms to discuss, regulate and enforce sustainable policies, related to non-environmental issues such as trade, energy, migrations or health, is a barrier to advance towards the MSSD.

4.3.7. Ensure the Implementation and Monitoring of the MSSD

The implementation of the MSSD is based on stakeholder ownership and collective process facilitated by the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system. The chapter 3 of the MSSD addresses the implementation of the Strategy, focusing on (i) Institutional structures and processes; (ii) Financing the implementation of the Strategy and (iii) Monitoring system and regional dashboard.

Institutional structures and processes for the implementation of the MSSD

Strategic direction 7.1: Put in place or strengthen structures for sustainable development implementation at national and regional scale, and ensure their adequate resourcing. IN PROGRESS
***7.1.2 Improve the impact of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development in the regional context through strengthening of the administrative and financial support for its operation, in particular by strengthening the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit* (…).** IN PROGRESS: The MCSD has been supported by the UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit, through the recruitment of a Programme Management Officer dedicated to socio-economics affairs. The Steering Committee meets now two times per biennium, instead of once.
7.1.3 Enlarge the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to ensure the participation of a larger number of relevant international organizations and stakeholder groups from the Mediterranean region involved in sustainable development processes. ACHIEVED: The Reform of the MCSD has been approved at COP 19 through Decision IG.22/17.
7.1.4. Improve visibility of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly within the United Nations system (…). IN PROGRESS: The MCSD and the Secretariat has organized events on sustainable development at international and regional conferences. Collaboration has been initiated with Un Regional Economic Commissions covering the Mediterranean basin (Europe, Africa, Western Asia).
***7.1.5. Ensure that the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development fulfils its role in promoting the exchange of good practices and networking* (…).** IN PROGRESS: Successful meetings of the MCSD. Recommendations provided to the COPs.

Strategic direction 7.2: Establish regional processes for the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 – INSUFICIENT PROGRESS
7.2.1 Ensure that the regular programmes of work of UNEP/MAP allocate the necessary resources for leading the implementation and monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025. INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: The effective and timely monitoring of the MSSD requires significant political, technical and financial resources not yet in place. The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard is not adequately updated and the Actions of the MSSD are not fully tracked.
7.2.2 Prepare an implementation plan for the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, which identifies the optimal mechanisms for the participation of national institutional frameworks responsible for sustainable development in the implementation of the Strategy actions at the national level. INSUFICIENT PROGRESS: The MSSD implementation plan has been discussed at the 19th Meeting of the MCSD Steering Committee in June 2018 but it is not adequately detailed and monitored.
7.2.3 Strengthen the support of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development to national systems implementing sustainable development policies with the aim to establish connections between national policies and the objectives of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, by preparing guidelines to help countries adapt the Strategy to their national contexts as well as through capacity-building measures. IN PROGRESS: The SIMPEER mechanism is an effective tool supported by the MCSD to promote the exchange of good practices and learnings between countries. It should be extended to all countries.
7.2.4 Undertake a participatory mid-term evaluation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 based on the first 5 years of data regarding its implementation, using indicators associated with the actions, as well as the proposed dashboard of Sustainability Indicators. IN PROGRESS: The MSSD mid-term evaluation is currently being developed.
7.2.5 Review the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025, issuing a new Strategy for the period 2026-2035. ***Not yet applicable.***

Financing the implementation of the MSSD

Strategic direction 7.3: Strengthen capacity for financing the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 **– NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS**
7.3.1. Build a project portfolio aimed at supporting the implementation of Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 actions, and associate possible funding sources with the portfolio. NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS: The portfolio has not been developed.
7.3.2. Provide capacity-building workshops to national governments and stakeholders, as well as sub-regional bodies in fundraising to improve their access to funding. NO PROGRESS: No regional workshops have been undertaken so far with this goal.
7.3.3. Create an investment facility for sustainable development implementation in the Mediterranean, involving international financial institutions, development banks, the European Union and bilateral donor agencies. NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS: Although private or public sustainability-driven investment facilities do exist, those instruments are not specifically targeting the Mediterranean region nor related to the MSSD.
7.3.4. Encourage private sector to engage with civil society and foster greater corporate social responsibility. NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS: Although private or public Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs do exist, those initiatives are not specifically targeting the Mediterranean region nor related to the MSSD.

Towards a monitoring system and a regional dashboard on the implementation of the Strategy

Strategic direction 7.4: Ensure the regular monitoring of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025 – INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS

7.4.2. Ensure the utilisation of the potential of the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development meetings for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy using breakout groups.

IN PROGRESS: The Steering Committee of the MCSD is having an active role in reviewing the state of Progress of the MSSD through regular reporting from the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit.

7.4.3. Ensure that the Strategy monitoring systems are built taking into account the existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of the MAP.

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard is partially using data from the Barcelona Convention System. However, the MSSD indicators are not connected to the MAP information and monitoring system.

7.4.4. Develop and populate a dashboard of sustainability indicators for the Mediterranean, with the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development playing an advisory role in the selection process though a sub-committee of the Commission.

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: As detailed in chapter 3.1, the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard (May 2019 version) is not yet fully developed, lacks updated data and is not covering well all the MSSD Objectives.

General Assessment of the 'means of implementation", including financing and monitoring the MSSD

INSUFFICIENT PROGRESS: From the above review of the Strategic Directions and Regional Actions, despite substantial efforts, the implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the MSSD need to be strengthened. On a positive note, the MCSD Steering Committee has been successfully mobilized to actively follow-up the MSSD Flagships Initiatives, the work on the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard, and assessment studies. However, the Processes for the implementation and monitoring of the MSSD (SD 7.2), the Capacity reinforcement for financing the MSSD (SD 7.3) and the Monitoring mechanisms of the MSSD (SD 7.4), have not been fully designed nor effectively implemented. This lack of appropriate supporting instruments for the MSSD implementation is a major barrier to advance its Objectives. It requires the mobilization of significant human, technical and financial resources, beyond the actual capacity or budget of the UNEP/MAP Coordinating Unit or RACs.

4.4. The Impact of COVID-19 on the MSSD and SDGs

The COVID-19 pandemic is having major health, economic and social impacts in all countries, through severe increase of mortality, lock-down of millions of citizens, and disruption of international freight and transport. In the Mediterranean region, the consequences of the crisis are dramatic, being Spain, France and Italy some of the countries more badly affected globally, both in number of cases per inhabitants[98] and in GDP fall, due to their dependence from international tourism revenue[99]. In addition, the current crisis can affect negatively the capacity of countries to collect, assess and interpret data related to the implementation of the MSSD and SDGs[100].

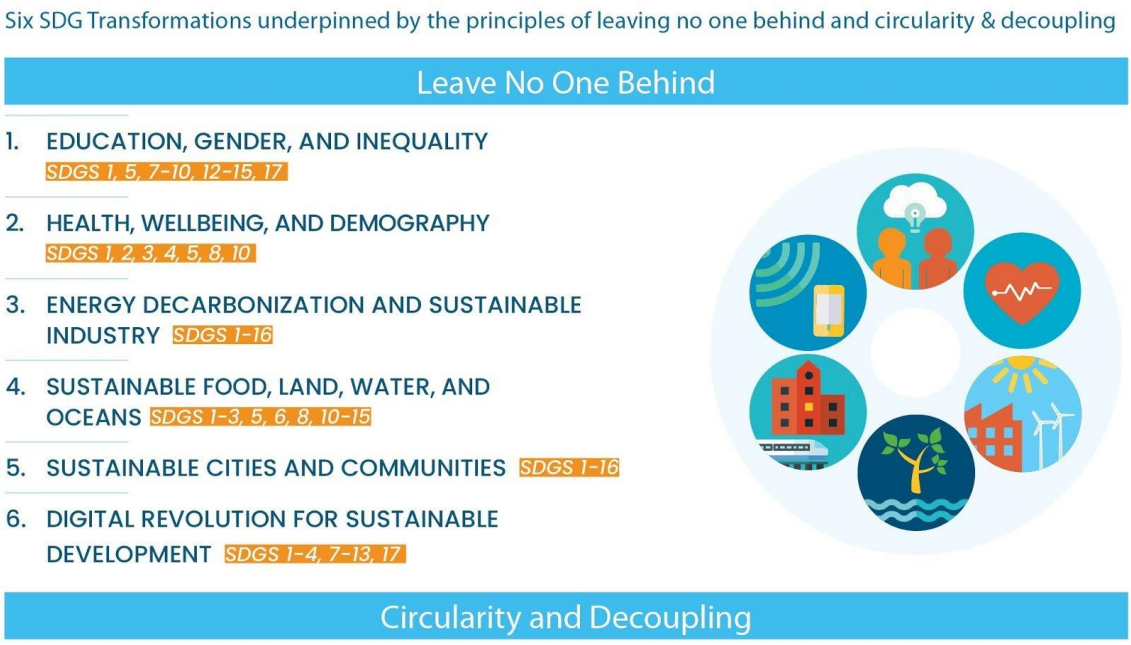
The response from international organizations to the challenges created by the pandemic have been rather quick and targeted. The UN launched a specific platform to disseminate high level political messages to "turn the recovery into a real opportunity to do things right for the future."[101] UNEP also published a number of reports and recommendations to integrate COVID-impact in the development and implementation of environmental policies during and after the crisis[102]. In the Mediterranean, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention Secretariat is promoting a regional response to better understanding zoonotic threats, assessing deeper the links between environment and human health, and updating regulatory and policy instruments to take into account the socio-economic impact of the pandemic[103].

As highlighted in a recent editorial published in *Nature* magazine[104], the COVID-19 crisis probably requires a **reshaping of the SDGs**, recognizing the impact of the crisis on the delivery of the 2030 Agenda, as well as a need to have a more pragmatic strategy to cluster the 17 SDGs into a set of few

[98] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969720323342
[99] http://www.oecd.org/economic-outlook/june-2020/
[100] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/the-need-for-data-innovations-in-the-time-of-COVID-19/
[101] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sdgs-framework-for-covid-19-recovery/
[102] https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/covid-19-updates-unep
[103] https://www.unenvironment.org/unepmap/covid-19/transformational-change-nature-and-people
[104] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02002-3

pivotal axes. As such, the way the MSSD is structured around 6 objectives could be of inspiration for such work at Mediterranean scale. In addition, the proposal from SDSN to focus on "Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" through an integrated framework seems very synergic to the MSSD[105]. The **six transformations** proposed are the following:

1. Education, gender and inequality;
2. Health, well-being and demography;
3. Energy decarbonization and sustainable industry;
4. Sustainable food, land, water and oceans;
5. Sustainable cities and communities; and
6. Digital revolution for sustainable development.



Source: UN-SDSN, 2019[106]

Out of the 6 transformations proposed, 3 are already integrating into the MSSD:

- Transformation 3 (Energy decarbonization and sustainable industry): Integrated into MSSD Objective 4 (Climate) and Objective 5 (Green and Blue Economy);
- Transformation 4 (Food, land, water and ocean): integrated into MSSD Objective 1 (marine and coastal areas) and Objective 2 (Resource management, food production and food security)
- Transformation 5 (sustainable cities and communities): directly equivalent to MSSD Objective 3 (sustainable cities)

The other 3 transformations (1, 2 and 6) are covered partially by the other MSSD Objectives, in particular MSSD Objective 6 “Governance”. Only Transformation 6 (digital revolution) is currently lacking in the MSSD.

As stated in the UN SDGs 2020 report[107], the importance of **timely, quality, open and disaggregated data and statistics** has never been as clear as during the COVID-19 crisis. Such data are critical in understanding, managing and mitigating the human, social and economic effects of the pandemic. They are also essential for designing short-term responses and accelerated actions to put countries back on track to achieve the SDGs.

[105] Sachs J D, Schmidt-Traub G, Mazzucato M, Messner D, Nakicenovic N, Rockström J (2019). Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Nature Sustainability. https://rdcu.be/bPzO6
[106] https://www.unsdsn.org/news/2019/08/26/six-transformations-to-achieve-the-sustainable-development-goals-provide-cross-cutting-framework-for-action
[107] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/the-need-for-data-innovations-in-the-time-of-COVID-19/

5. SYNTHESIS OF THE STATE OF PLAY AND GAP ANALYSIS

Based on the previous assessment of MSSD state of progress, a first set of gaps and opportunities have been identified, as a basis for discussion and further development with stakeholders during the consultation process.

5.1. Main identified Gaps

a. The **path of implementation** of the MSSD and SDGs seems too slow to match 2020, 2025 and 2030 deadlines. Without transformative acceleration and leverage on synergies between those strategic frameworks, the targeted Objectives will not be reached in time.

b. The **MSSD suffers from a lack of visibility, awareness and engagement** from non-UNEP/MAP related stakeholders. Non-environmental decision-makers in the Mediterranean region and countries are not sufficiently knowledgeable of the MSSD, as highlighted by the relatively low references to the MSSD in the academic and policy literature.

c. **The MSSD does not identify clearly the owners and implementing partners of Strategic Directions and Actions**, which leads to a lack of empowerment and commitment. Often the Strategic Directions and Actions are too vague and generic to be correctly implemented, and they are lacking SMART indicators to monitor efficiently its state of progress.

d. The **monitoring mechanisms of the MSSD are not providing a timely and exhaustive picture of the state of sustainability in the Mediterranean region.** They do not cover adequately the level of implementation of the Strategic Directions, Actions, Flagship Activities and Targets. Significant **data gaps** exist in terms of geographic coverage, accuracy, timeliness and the level of disaggregation required. The Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard is, as per today, incomplete, partially outdated and is not treating equally all MSSD Objectives.

e. The **level of financial investment** into the MSSD activities seems insufficient to ensure its effective implementation and reach its Objectives in due time. The amount of funds is not adequately tracked, which impedes the possibility to evaluate the quantity and quality of stakeholders' initiatives contributing to the MSSD. The MSSD is also lacking a strategy to attract relevant financial actors and increase available funds

f. **The complexity and diversity of international sustainability frameworks and multilateral agreements** (MSSD, 2030 Agenda and SDGs, CBD, Paris Agreement, etc.) requires a strong, high-level institutional, technical and political coordination that goes beyond the current capability and competences of the existing MSSD monitoring mechanisms and UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention governance mechanisms.

5.2. Main identified Opportunities

a. **The MSSD can be a strategic instrument accelerating the SDGs implementation**, by providing a mid-term milestone by 2025, 5 years ahead of the 2030 Agenda target. The MSSD also guarantees a better focus on sustainability issues most relevant to the Mediterranean region, as endorsed by the countries and supported by the stakeholders involved in the MSSD inception, monitoring and implementation.

b. **The MSSD can leverage the active involvement of Contracting Parties and relevant stakeholders through the MCSD and UNEP/MAP Partners consultation mechanisms**. The MCSD can be empowered, and enhanced technically and financially, to become the multi-stakeholder central platform supporting the MSSD/SDGs implementation in a timely and effective manner.

c. The clustering of **Flagship Initiatives with key Regional Actions and other identified sustainability-driven initiatives** contributing to the MSSD can simplify the monitoring and support the upscaling, dissemination and replication at regional, national or local level, through adequate financing as well as political and technical support.

d. **The massive investment in post-COVID recovery plans can be directed** towards MSSD and SDGs implementation, providing a unique opportunity to accelerate the sustainability transformation and avoid harmful or divergent initiatives.

e. **The diversity, complementary and inter-relations between the existing Mediterranean platforms, institutions, initiatives and actors** can create major synergies and potential gains that can be harvested through innovative collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnerships in the framework of the MSSD and the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system.