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Third Steering Committee Meeting of the EU-funded EcAp MED III Project

Thessaloniki, Greece, 29 November 2022

Agenda Item 2: Status of EU funded EcAp MED III Project Implementation

Progress Report on Project Implementation

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1. Introduction

1. The project “*Support to Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts and to delivery of data-based 2023 Quality Status Report in synergy with the EU MSFD (EcAp-MED III)*” (EcAp MED III) is funded by the EU/DG ENV. It is coordinated and implemented by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat with MAP Regional Activity Centres. It has a budget of USD 2,494,790, for 36 months (end date 31/08/23) covering seven beneficiary countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia). The overall aims of EcAp MED III are, to further assist these Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties to implement the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP); and to contribute to the preparation and delivery of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR).

2. A first Project Steering Committee meeting took place via videoconference on 28 April 2021. Attended by all its Members, the discussions were based on the working documents prepared by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat (UNEP/MED WG.506). The Steering Committee welcomed the good progress in the implementation of Project activities, in spite of some constraints and concerns, and approved the revised work plan and communication plan.

3. The second Project Steering Committee meeting took place via videoconference on 15 June 2022. Attended by all its Members, the discussions were based on the working documents prepared by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat (UNEP/MED WG.525). The Steering Committee welcomed the progress of the Project activities and reiterated the need for harmonisation with the MSFD. Nevertheless, some concerns were expressed and at the request of the EC Representative, a follow-up meeting was held on 8 July 2022 to discuss the state of implementation of the Project at country level.

4. This Progress Report summarises the progress of EcAp MED III since its second Steering Committee meeting. It covers the period from April to September 2022, with earlier relevant information retained. The objective of this Report is to inform the Steering Committee about the status of the Project and to support the oversight of the Project execution and the related strategic guidance of its Third Steering Committee meeting.

2. Progress during the period April to September 2022

The Project falls under the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategies (MTS) 2016-2021 and the Programme of Work (PoW) 2020-2021, as well as the newly adopted MTS 2022-2027 and PoW 2022-2023. Its pace of progress continued in 2022. The activities which took place between April and September 2022 are presented below, with earlier relevant information retained (section I), together with an update on the Project management (section II).

I. Activity Progress

In this section, the two Outcomes of the Project are presented, together with progress towards their respective Outputs.

Outcome 1: Effective ‘on-the-ground’ national IMAP implementation by the beneficiary countries providing quality-assured data that will enable the development of the quality-assured, region-wide and data-based 2023 MED QSR

CI: Common Indicators. EO: Ecological Objectives. DD: Data Dictionaries. DS: Data Standards. Square brackets: subject to signature of pending SSFAs.

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
Output 1.1: N-d out of selected Common Indicator(s) (CIs) in beneficiary countries based on national IMAP		
1.1.1 Number of monitored and assessed IMAP CIs per beneficiary country	12 per each project beneficiary country (BC)	Ongoing. The number of CIs selected for implementation per beneficiary country based on national monitoring plans is as follows: - Algeria: [CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, subject to signing SSFA], [and 13, 14, 17, 22 subject to signing SSFA]
1.1.2 Number of national quality assurance and quality control programmes prepared	Minimum one per CI per country	- Egypt: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, CI 6 related to 7 species of NIS fisheries - Israel: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, CI 6 related to 7 species of NIS fisheries, and 6, 13, 14, 17, 22, 23 - Lebanon: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, CI 6 related to 7 species of NIS fisheries, [and 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23 subject to signing SSFA] - Libya: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals and CI 6 on NIS - Morocco: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, CI 6 related to 7 species of NIS fisheries, and 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 23 - Tunisia: CIs 3, 4, 5 related to marine mammals, CI 6 related to 7 species of NIS fisheries, [and 13, 14, 17, 21, 23 subject to signing SSFA] Quality assurance and quality control are continuously carried out as per regular practice.

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
1.1.3 Number of sets of data reported to IMAP Info System per country	Minimum 3 for EO5, EO9, EO10; minimum 1 for EO1	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Beneficiary countries gave a strong impulse to reporting in 2022, in particular on marine litter under the supervision of INFO/RAC and MED POL. Data dictionaries (DDs) and data standards (DSs) for the CIs 3, 4 and 5 related to species were discussed during the related CORMON biodiversity meeting (28-29 March 2022) and for the IMAP Candidate Indicator 24 were approved during the CORMON Marine Litter Meeting in May 2022.</p> <p>New available datasets per Ecological Objective (EO) have been uploaded in IMAP Info System:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -EO1: 1 Israel -EO 5: 3 Israel. From MED POL Info System migration: 1 Algeria, 1 Egypt, 3 Israel, 1 Morocco, 1 Tunisia -EO 8: 1 Algeria, 1 Libya, 1 Morocco -EO 9: 1 Israel, 2 Lebanon, 2 Morocco. From MED POL Info System migration: 3 Algeria, 2 Egypt, 8 Israel, 2 Morocco, 3 Tunisia -EO 10: 8 Israel, 3 Lebanon, 4 Morocco, 2 Tunisia <p>Additional datasets, including (EO 1 and EO2), are being uploaded in the current second semester of 2022.</p>
1.1.4 Number of national institutions involved in the process	Minimum 2 per cluster per country	<p>Achieved for the countries that have signed SSFAs.</p> <p>The Project involved up to two key national institutions and beneficiary countries appointed the national institutions that are in charge of IMAP implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Algeria: the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy (for Biodiversity and NIS) and the National Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development (for Coast and Hydrography) and the National Waste Agency (Pollution and Marine Litter) -Egypt: the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (for all clusters) -Israel: the Nature and Parks Authority (for Biodiversity and NIS) and the Oceanographic and Limnological Institute (for Pollution and Marine Litter as well as Coast and Hydrography) -Lebanon: the National Council for Scientific Research (for Biodiversity and NIS; Pollution and Marine Litter; Coast and Hydrography) -Libya: the Ministry of Environment (for all clusters) -Morocco: the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment (for all clusters) and the National Laboratory for Pollution Research and Monitoring (for Pollution and Marine Litter) -Tunisia: the Agency for Coastal Protection and Management Agency (for Biodiversity) and the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology (for Pollution and Marine Litter)

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
1.1.5 Number of assessment factsheets at national and sub-regional and/or regional level	Minimum 6 national and 6 sub-regional/regional assessment factsheets	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Under the EU-funded EcAp MED III and IMAP-MPA projects, activities and relevant deliverables are envisaged to produce national assessment factsheets and national GES assessments, respectively, for a selection of respective IMAP pollution, marine litter, and biodiversity common indicators.</p> <p>In the framework of both projects, activities are foreseen to support national capacity building regarding assessment at national level. National teams and experts will receive the support from regional experts, including training in the application of (sub)regional assessment tools; i.e., Nested Environmental status Assessment Tool (NEAT), Chemical Status Assessment tool (CHASE+), G/M threshold comparison; EQR and simplified EQR. These tools were developed and applied within the ongoing preparation of the assessment findings for the 2023 MED QSR and are suitable and applicable for specific IMAP CIs in line with the requirements of the respective national IMAPs. They should also agree on pilot areas in which the regional assessment tools will be applied and identify the trainees. The lessons learnt and outputs will be considered as the deliverable to be shared with Coordinating Unit and/or SPA/RAC in the framework of the signed legal agreements.</p> <p>The national assessments in selected areas that this work will produce will be used for future development in the frame of the UNEP/MAP. Beneficiary countries' national data submitted to the IMAP Info System will be used, to the extent possible, in the QSR assessments; provided the validated data are available in the IMAP Info System by the end of October 2022 in time for inclusion in the draft assessments.</p>
Output 1.2: Joint monitoring pilots designed and implemented		
1.2.1 Number of joint (sub-regional) monitoring pilots designed and implemented	1 pilot implemented in East Mediterranean sub-region	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The work is ongoing to implement the joint monitoring and assessment programme on NIS related to fisheries, as explained under 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.2.4.</p> <p>Monitoring activities are progressing for the agreed seven NIS related to fisheries in the East Mediterranean sub-region. It is developed in synergy with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). Data will be uploaded to the related information sharing systems, such as MAMIAS and the Data Collection Reference Framework (DCRF) database.</p>
1.2.2 Number of countries participating in joint sub-regional	3 countries	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>NIS baselines were validated by the 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting and endorsed by the 9th EcAp Coordination Group meeting (5 July 2022) for their use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR. In addition to the beneficiary countries (Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon), Cyprus, Greece and Turkey were involved in this activity.</p>

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
monitoring programmes		
1.2.3 Number of species monitored under sub-regional monitoring programmes on NIS	7 agreed species	Ongoing. The 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting validated the document UNEP/MED WG.520/5 and UNEP/MED baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species and endorsed by the 9 th EcAp CG meeting for their use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR. The document is going through the regional and subregional analysis of NIS listings.
1.2.4 Number of baseline sub-regional assessment for NIS	1 Baseline assessment for the 7 agreed NIS for the East Mediterranean sub-region, and 1 regional baseline for the entire list of NIS	Achieved. The 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting discussed the document UNEP/MED WG.520/5 and UNEP/MED baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species. The 9 th EcAp CG meeting endorsed it for its use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR preparation.
1.2.5 Number of sets of data on NIS reported to IMAP Info System	Minimum 1 set of data on 7 agreed NIS reported to IMAP Info System per participating country	Ongoing (<i>cf</i> 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 above).
Output 1.3: Undertake baseline sub-regional assessments for CI 15 and support implementation of monitoring of CI 16 in at least one area per beneficiary country		
1.3.1 Number of baseline sub-regional assessments for CI 15	At least 1 per sub-region for CI 15	Achieved. All national reports have been completed. The results on CI 15 will be included in the draft of the 2023 MED QSR (EO 7).
1.3.2 Number of sets of data reported for CI 16	At least one for each of the 6 beneficiary countries	Achieved. All national reports for CI 16 have been completed. The data collected for CI 16 will be included in the draft of the 2023 MED QSR (EO 8).
1.3.3 Number of reports presenting lessons learned	1 report	Achieved. The report on lessons learned has been prepared. A report will be used for the preparation of the 2023 Med QSR and presented at the related CORMON meeting in 2023 as planned.
Output 1.4: IMAP Info System expanded to include all mandatory CI of IMAP, fully operational enabling the Contracting Parties to report their monitoring data in 2020, 2021 and 2022		

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
1.4.1 Percentage of mandatory CIs of IMAP included in IMAP Info System	100% (all mandatory CIs included – EO3 not included)	<p>Data Standards (DSs) and Data Dictionaries (DDs) for IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4, 5, 18, 20 and 24 were developed and completed by INFO/RAC in close cooperation with the competent MAP Components to be implemented as correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System.</p> <p>The first three (3, 4 & 5) have been revised with support of ACCOBAMS and the online working groups (OWGs) on marine mammals, marine reptiles and marine birds. The final version integrating inputs by beneficiary countries was adopted by the 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting (UNEP/MED WG.520/6, UNEP/MED WG.500/7, UNEP/MED WG.500/8). OWG meetings will be organised ahead of the next CORMON meeting, starting with OWG on Habitats to discuss the EO6 proposal and the draft assessment elements for habitats, in November 2022.</p> <p>DSs and DDs for CIs 18 and 20 have been adopted by the CORMON pollution (27-30 May 2022). Candidate Indicator 24 has been adopted by the CORMON marine litter (31 May 2022) pending the final revision of INFO/RAC.</p> <p>In 2022, INFO/RAC started the development of CI 19 in close cooperation with REMPEC.</p>
1.4.2 Number of countries supported to facilitate quality assured reporting of monitoring data	5 additional countries	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>During the reporting period, INFO/RAC ensured continuous assistance on a daily basis to all relevant stakeholders, including constant contacts with IMAP User network, support in accessing the Info System, comprehension of data reporting, capacity to fill in DSs and perform the quality check, complete validation process, and replace corrected files. The support was provided to all the Contracting Parties with particular attention to beneficiary countries. In 2022, as additional organised and systematic support INFO/RAC has also organised the workshops on IMAP training/assistance with France, Turkey (in person) and for the following beneficiary countries: 2 with Israel, 2 with Morocco (1 on Biodiversity, 1 on Coast and Hydrography cluster), 1 with Libya (in person), 1 with Lebanon (planned in mid-October) and tentatively with Algeria and Egypt in November/December 2022.</p>
1.4.3 IMAP Data policy availability	IMAP Data policy available and reviewed by CORMONs	<p>Achieved</p> <p>The IMAP Data Policy was developed in close cooperation with the MAP components and the involvement of the Contracting Parties. It was reviewed by CORMONs, adopted by the EcAp CG meeting in September and endorsed by COP 22 in December 2021. In addition, INFO/RAC has started to develop an IMAP Data Policy Annex to facilitate its implementation by Contracting Parties and to be submitted to COP23.</p>
1.4.4 Number of Data flows implemented	Data flows for all the IMAP CIs (EO3 not included) implemented and IMAP Info System	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>The IMAP Info System is fully operational for the initial set of 11 CIs (12 modules) and has been updated in view of the implementation of the new data flows.</p>

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2022 activities
	completed and fully operational	Fine-tuning of the Info System is taking place in view of the implementation of the new data flows for CIs 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 20. The migration of data from MED POL database into the IMAP Info System was fully completed by June 2022, including also further historical data provided by some countries.

Outcome 2: Regional scale progress and consensus for the monitoring and assessment as well as the reporting processes at national, sub-regional and regional levels

CI: Common Indicators. EO: Ecological Objectives. DD: Data Dictionaries. DS: Data Standards

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
Output 2.1.1: Analysis for each IMAP cluster on knowledge gaps, with a focus on the scales of assessment/reporting prepared/agreed and scales of monitoring for all IMAP CIs agreed/progressed			
2.1.1.1 Number of CI analysed with regards to knowledge gaps with focus on assessment scales	At least 5 CI	Ongoing. SPA/RAC is conducting a desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage. The first draft is under revision and will be shared with GFCM for inputs and comments. This inventory covers gaps of knowledge about EO 6 and hence will form the basis for development of the EO under the EU funded project ABBIOMED. It will be reviewed by the next CORMON meeting (February 2023, tbc).	
2.1.1.2 Number of CI covered by monitoring and assessment scales	At least 5 CI	The Guiding document for CI 16 was finalised early 2022. It was successfully tested in Morocco in synergy with other projects' activities. MED POL will present its progress on CI 17 and 22 at the upcoming CORMON meetings on pollution and marine litter. Similar work is undergoing for CI 13 and CI 14 and will be finalised during Q3 2022. This should ensure its application at national level from the beneficiary countries.	
2.1.1.3 Availability of proposal on integrated scales of assessment	Proposal on integrated scales of assessment submitted to CORMON	Ongoing. The proposals for pollution and marine litter clusters were elaborated under MAP PoW, summarised below. Further work for all Clusters is taking place in the second semester of 2022 and first semester of 2023 as planned. Within the implementation of UNEP/MAP activities at the regional level within the implementation of 2022-2023 PoW, the progress related to the scales of assessment for CIs 13& 14; 17 is as follows:	

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The areas of assessment are properly defined in line with the IMAP nested approach in the Adriatic Sea Sub-region based on NEAT GES assessment methodology. - There is ongoing work to replicate the same approach in the Western Mediterranean further to data availability for NEAT application; - In the remaining part of the Mediterranean where spatial nesting will not be possible by application of NEAT, the assessments will be based on the mathematical aggregation of the concentrations of the contaminants measured at stations in the Mediterranean sub-regions by applying one of the above-listed methods. - Limited data reporting limits the setting of the areas of assessment for CIs 18 and 20. Therefore assessment findings from literature source are aimed to be provided at a regional Mediterranean level, while delivery of the assessments for CI 21 at sub-regional level is conditional of data and/or assessments undertaken at national levels. 	
Output 2.1.2: Assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP CIs included in the current IMAP Pilot Info System as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)			
2.1.2.1 Number of CIs with updated/new assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values	10 IMAP CIs and one candidate indicator (Noise)	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>During the 2022 CORMON on biodiversity, the document on Monitoring and Assessment Elements for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to sea birds (UNEP/MED WG.520/4) was validated, and assessment criteria were endorsed for the 2023 MED QSR.</p> <p>Regarding IMAP EO 10 on marine litter, the CORMON (31 May 2022) presented and reviewed the guidelines for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter and approved the Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP candidate indicator 24. The first draft document for elaborating updated BV and to propose TV for IMAP CI 23 (seafloor macro- and floating micro-litter) is prepared, pending finetuning based on the Contracting Parties' new data submission by the by 31 October 2022 and will be presented during the next CORMON Meeting on Marine Litter monitoring in March 2023 (tbc). The communication between MED POL and the respective Contracting Parties for making the Online Working Group (OWG) ML operational to support the further elaboration of the guidelines on marine litter monitoring has been initiated and the first online meeting will be held 2 November 2022. Moreover, MED POL, INOF/RAC and SPA/RAC are working together to prepare the respective IMAP modules (reporting templates) for IMAP Candidate Common Indicator 24 with the scope for enabling data uploading on a pilot basis to the IMAP Info System.</p> <p>Given the limited data submitted by the Contracting Parties for all IMAP Common Indicators related to pollution and eutrophication, alternative sources were also explored and put to use, as appropriate and feasible. The CORMON Pollution Meeting, held on 27 and 30 May 2022, via videoconference, provided its feedback regarding the progress related to the IMAP Pollution Cluster within the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, along with a review and approval of the proposed assessment criteria for IMAP Common Indicator 17; new</p>	

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
		<p>reference and boundary values for IMAP Common Indicator 13; as well as the maximum regulatory levels for CI 20 that are aligned with EU regulations.</p> <p>Further to new and/or updated assessment criteria for Common Indicators 13, 17 and 20, the assessment methodologies set for IMAP Common Indicators 13 & 14; 17 and 21, as well as the proposed use of the literature sources for IMAP Common Indicators 18 and 20, the work is ongoing to deliver the assessment findings per sub-divisions integrated and aggregated into the assessment findings for Mediterranean sub-regions.</p> <p>In collaboration with ACCOBAMS, the preparation of the initial assessment findings is foreseen, further to the availability of the assessment products from the ongoing and/or realised projects related to noise monitoring and assessment across the Mediterranean</p>	
Output 2.1.3: Regular regional/sub-regional expert group meetings, i.e., expert group per sub-region per topic established and operational to address monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols and assessment criteria			
2.1.3.1 Number of regional and sub-regional expert group meetings	At least one regional expert group meeting per cluster, and one per sub-region per cluster, per year back-to-back with CORMON	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>The CORMONs in spring 2022 were held online, limiting the opportunity for back-to-back expert group meetings of national IMAP country teams. However, regional and sub regional meetings will be held in spring 2023 in synergy with EU-funded IMAP-MPA project. They will connect experts at national level in the seven beneficiary countries, to enable an exchange of experience, and support the process of development of monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols and assessment criteria, upon which the 2023 MED QSR will be prepared.</p>	
Output 2.1.4: Support to CORMON meetings per cluster ensuring strong participation and inputs to its work from expert networks established at sub regional level for the beneficiary countries			
2.1.4.1 Number of CORMON meetings organised and supported	At least one per cluster per year and two integrated	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Three CORMON meetings were held in the first semester of 2022.</p> <p>- The CORMONs Biodiversity and Fisheries took place on 28-29 March via videoconference. Among EcAp MED III beneficiary countries, it was attended by Algeria, Israel, Lebanon, Libya (chair), Morocco. Participants supported the MED QSR structure and outline content template, and status of Common Indicators and Ecological Objectives (UNEP/MED WG.520/3). In addition, the CORMON approved:</p> <p>UNEP/MED WG.520/4, Monitoring and Assessment Elements for the IMAP Common Indicators related to sea bird.</p> <p>UNEP/MED WG.520/5, Baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species; and</p> <p>UNEP/MED WG.520/Inf.3, Monitoring and Assessment Scales, Assessment Criteria, Thresholds and Baseline Values for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species.</p>	

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
		<p>-Back-to-back CORMON meetings on Pollution and Marine Litter focused on monitoring were held via video conference 27-30 May 2022 and 31 May 2022 respectively.</p> <p>The CORMON Pollution Meeting participants provided their feedback regarding the progress related to the IMAP Pollution Cluster within the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, along with their review and approval of the proposed assessment criteria for IMAP Common Indicator 17; new reference and boundary values for IMAP Common Indicator 13; application of NEAT tool to support GES assessment in the Adriatic Sea; methodologies proposed for assessing the status of the marine environment in the areas with insufficient data; and Data Standards and Data Dictionaries for IMAP Common Indicators 18 and 20.</p> <p>The CORMON Marine Litter Meeting took place on 31 May 2022 during which the Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP EO10 CI 24 (Ingestion and Entanglement on Marine Turtles) were approved (UNEP/MED WG.534/3) and the first review of the Draft Guidelines for Monitoring Riverine inputs of Marine Litter took place (UNEP/MED WG.534/4).</p> <p>-The next CORMONs meetings in spring 2023 will, <i>inter alia</i>, review the draft chapters of the 2023 MED QSR, and are tentatively scheduled as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution and Marine Litter in March 2023, • Coast and Hydrography in March/April 2023, • Biodiversity and Fisheries in February 2023. 	
Output 2.2.1: Establish and implement a communication and visibility strategy for the MED 2023 QSR; Outreach to key partners			
2.2.1.1 Availability of communication and visibility strategy for 2023 MED QSR	Communication and visibility strategy available	<p>Achieved.</p> <p>The 2023 MED QSR Communication and Visibility Strategy was drafted and approved by the 8th EcAp CG (meeting on 09/09/21). Its objective is to ensure that the 2023 MED QSR publication has a wide dissemination and receives a high level of visibility; to promote its findings and related recommendations.</p>	
2.2.1.2 Availability of a collaboration mechanism and Partnership Plan for the 2023 MED QSR	Collaboration mechanism and Partnership Plan available	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Mechanism established and operational. There is bilateral cooperation between MAP Components and partner organisations to discuss whether and how their data and information could be used, and these bilateral partnerships continued in 2022.</p> <p>Within the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, the use of EMODnet data and COPERNICUS products was ensured as feasible and appropriate. In collaboration with ACCOBAMS, the preparation of the initial assessment findings is foreseen, further to the availability of the assessment products from the ongoing and/or realised projects related to noise monitoring and assessment across the Mediterranean.</p> <p>An official letter was communicated to GFCM regarding their involvement in the elaboration of the chapter on EO3 related to fisheries in the 2023 QSR as well as on the EO2 (NIS) about the sub-regional activity, monitoring and assessment of the seven invasive species related to fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean</p>	

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
		beneficiary countries under the EcAp MED III project. The proposed reports will be reviewed during the CorMon meeting on Biodiversity and Fisheries (February 2023 tbc)	
Output 2.2.2: Strengthen SPI networks of scientists and policy makers for the IMAP and its implementation; Design and implement 1-2 pilots at country level			
2.2.2.1 Number of national SPI pilot networks established	2 pilot national SPI networks established	Ongoing. A consortium was selected by Plan Bleu in April 2022 to work on the SPI component from spring 2022 to spring 2023. It takes place in Morocco in close collaboration with the IMAP-MPA project. Work started to identify existing relevant national mechanisms and processes as well as SPI frameworks in place involving scientific centres/laboratories and institutions that follow the implementation of environmental policies (coastal and marine particularly).	
2.2.2.2 Number of SPI workshops organised	2 national SPI workshops and 1 regional SPI workshop	The work focus on two common indicators (1 and 15). An advisory committee has been set up at the launch of the activity, composed of Moroccan scientific experts and some from the ministry of environment. The deliverable n°1 (entitled: “ <i>SPI frameworks and processes regarding monitoring of IMAP Common Indicators 1 & 15 in Morocco</i> ” is under internal consultation and review (autumn 2022). The second deliverable will start as planned in early November 2022. The national workshop in Morocco is subsequently planned to be organised back-to-back with a CORMON on coast and hydrography. Since the next CORMON meeting is planned later than initially envisaged, the SPI session is de facto rescheduled in spring 2023.	
Output 2.2.3: Develop and implement a timeline for regional data sharing between partners			
2.2.3.1 Availability of agreement and timeline with regional partners for data sharing	Agreement and timeline for data sharing available	Cf 2.2.1.2 above.	
Output 2.2.4: Develop and Publish 2023 MED QSR in 2 languages; make it available online and present at COP 23			
2.2.4 Availability of 2023 MED QSR	2023 MED QSR published	Ongoing. The 9 th EcAp Coordination Group (5 July 2022) approved a more elaborated 2023 MED QSR annotated contents that builds on the previously endorsed methodology, structure, and content of the QSR. A detailed report per CI and EO on the current state of progress and the anticipated content of the QSR 2023 – assessment criteria, baselines, threshold values, assessment methods & scales, data availability, and integration possibilities – was also presented to the 9 th EcAp Coordination Group. Draft QSR Chapters are being prepared for 20 October to be discussed at an in-person meeting 3-4 November, Athens.	

Indicator(s)	Target	Description of 2021 activities	Description of 2022 activities
		Under a SIDA-funded project there is an activity in the Adriatic testing and validating a quantitative good environmental status (GES) assessment related to the IMAP Common Indicators that correspond to UNEP Regional Seas Indicator, as a test/contribution for the QSR preparation.	

II. Project management

Human resources and budget

At the Secretariat, the contracts of the two UNV specialists involved in the project - EcAp MED III Officer and Finance Assistant - were extended. The UNV project officer left in July 2022 and will be replaced by the P3 Officer in quarter 3 2022. The G5 finance officer is under recruitment, with interviews to be held in autumn 2022.

SSFAs

The Secretariat finalised a new legal agreement with Israel and the National Park Authority (INPA) on the biodiversity cluster, signed early May and finalised the preparation for two additional legal agreement with the INSTM (Tunisia) and the AND (Algeria) that are expected to be signed in autumn 2022. Liaison is ongoing with Lebanon to resolve technical hurdles.

SPA/RAC reached a preliminary agreement with Algeria, Lebanon, Libya and Egypt, thanks in particular to the resumption of missions and face-to-face meetings (Libya 12-14/02/22, Algeria 7-10/03/22, Egypt 30/03-02/04/22, Lebanon upcoming).

SPA/RAC reached legal agreement with Libya, Egypt and Lebanon:

- Memorandum of Agreement (MoAs) were signed with The Arab Federation for Wildlife Protection (AFWP) an NGO designated by the EEAA for the implementation of the project activities.
- Due to the national financial situation in Lebanon, a tripartite agreement was signed between SPA/RAC, CNRS-L (the national institute designated by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment) and the Association of Francophone Universities (AUF).
- In coordination with the Libyan Ministry of Environment (MoE), funds allocated for Libya were transferred to a SPA/RAC sub-account and is co-managed by SPA/RAC and MoE via establishment of contracts with the national Libyan experts and national project coordinators.

Despite the continuous attempts to sign a legal agreement with Algeria, no responses were received from the Algerian colleagues.

Challenges

Covid-19 and its consequences continued in 2022. Considering the late conclusion of legal agreements with the national authorities and the seasonal dimension of the monitoring activities on the ground, the Secretariat suggests the Steering Committee explores the possibility of a six-month no-cost extension, which would not modify the nature of the Project.

Communication

The video presenting the three EU-funded projects was finalised

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTdQIID-8B0>).

A joint article was published on the UNEP/MAP website

(<https://www.unep.org/unepmap/news/news/how-unepmap-eu-funded-projects-achieving-good-environmental-status-Mediterranean>).

UNEP/MAP always ensures appropriate EU visibility and the acknowledgement of its financial contribution in the abovementioned actions. All the RACs will pay particular attention to the promotion of EcAp MED III in the framework of the numerous international and regional meetings planned in the second semester of 2022.

Synergies with other EU-funded projects

Coherence with IMAP-MPA and ML MED II continued to be ensured in 2022 in order to leverage their effects and avoid overlaps. Analysis for each IMAP cluster on knowledge gaps (with a focus on the scales of assessment, reporting and scales of monitoring for all CIs) is ongoing within the IMAP-MPA project. The results will be applied to EcAp MED III.

INFO/RAC ensures the harmonisation of data between the EU-funded projects through the IMAP Data Standards and its intermediary role among official IMAP Users, MAP Components and other Mediterranean experts. INFO/RAC has promoted the use of IMAP Data Standards also in the other projects collecting monitoring data in order to maximise the data availability and harmonisation. The enlargement of the network of IMAP Users has been extended to the other Countries representatives from other projects that have been included in the training programme.

Plan Bleu and PAP/RAC contribute to bridging IMAP-MPA and EcAp MED III on SPI and CI 15 related to coast and hydrography through a common questionnaire, the dissemination of reports and organisation of several coordination meetings, including a dedicated session related to SPI during the CORMONs Coast & Hydrography in 2023 to present the result of the activity. Plan Bleu delivered the first Deliverable of an overview of SPI mechanisms and frameworks in Morocco with regards to CI 15 implementation. The report is under finalisation and has been reviewed by relevant RACs. The report will be then reviewed by a national advisory committee in October 2022. During the Coast & Hydrography CORMON in 2023 there will be a dedicated section related to SPI organised to present the result of the activity.

The development of EO 6 on seafloor integrity is ongoing under the EU-funded ABIOMMED project. The desk review conducted under EcAp MED III will serve as a basis for the development of EO 6 and the work conducted by ABIOMMED under the supervision of SPA/RAC.