

EEA UNEP/MAP Joint Work Plan 2006–2008



European Environment Agency



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Introduction

Jacqueline McGlade
EEA Executive
Director

The Mediterranean environment is recognised both as one of the richest and one of the most vulnerable in the world. A great deal of effort is being devoted to the environmental protection of the Mediterranean Sea by local, regional and national authorities, international organisations and financing institutions.

Many environmental problems continue to arise in the region. In a joint report published in 2006, the EEA and UNEP/MAP highlighted the extent of environmental degradation, and identified 11 major issues ranging from sewage from urban areas to biological invasions.

The current and future challenges are daunting, but we should not be paralysed by their scale. Rather, they should mobilise us into action and encourage working together towards a set of common goals.

The European Environment Agency has a long-standing tradition of cooperation with the Coordinating Unit and the Regional Activity Centres of the UNEP Mediterranean Action Plan. Recent concrete policy developments such as the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Horizon 2020 initiative now provide a focus for cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

To reinforce this cooperation, EEA and UNEP/MAP have established a joint work plan to develop a more structured and systematic way of working together. This builds upon the work programme of cooperation between the MAP Coordinating Unit and the European Commission, which calls for enhanced cooperation and joint activities.

The joint work plan provides a framework for structured and consistent collaboration and charts a productive path forward, which will intensify the partnership between our two organisations and increase the effectiveness of our work.

The EEA and its network, Eionet, involving 32 member countries, in partnership with other European bodies are also developing a shared environmental information system. This has strong parallels with the development of InfoMAP, the proposed shared information system in the context of the Barcelona Convention.

By working together with UNEP/MAP we hope to achieve significant synergies and a sense of mutual capacity building, where experiences about how to protect and improve the environment can be exchanged and practical lessons learnt. This aspect is likely to be especially important given the diversity and richness of the environmental, geographical, cultural and socio-economic heritage of the Mediterranean countries.

Introduction

*Paul Mifsud
Coordinateur du
PNUE/PAM*

Cooperation between the Mediterranean Action Plan and the European Environment Agency on environmental issues is of long standing. Over the years, several joint initiatives were taken between the EEA and MAP as well as with the various MAP components to bring to the attention of policy makers and to create public awareness about the pollution problems in the Mediterranean through the exchange of information, studies, reports and publications.

This Joint Work Programme is intended to put the relations between EEA and MAP on a sounder footing. It provides the basis for a stable and effective cooperation through the implementation of several initiatives up to the year 2008. Areas to be covered range from reporting on state of the environment, data gathering and management, impact assessment studies, networking and partnership building and shared information and communication activities and services.

By joining forces, EEA and MAP will be making more efficient use of their resources and will be taking advantage of each other's strength. In the case of the EEA it is the network of information systems in European countries. MAP on the other hand brings its wealth of experience and data on the state of the Mediterranean marine environment compiled over 30 years working with all the countries in the Mediterranean, within the framework of the Barcelona Convention.

This work plan has been developed at a time when MAP is embarking on a number of important regional projects and initiatives together with the European Commission and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the EIB aimed at improving the state of the Mediterranean marine environment. However, unless the outcomes and results of these initiatives are given the exposure they deserve and brought to the attention of policy makers, they would have little impact.

It is expected that through the implementation of the EEA-MAP Joint Work Plan both organizations will make a stronger contribution towards creating awareness among policy makers, civil society and the public at large about the state of the environment which is currently on top of the world's political agenda as a result of the effects of climate change.

Background and Objectives

This work plan provides the framework for the establishment of a stable and effective cooperation between the EEA and UNEP/MAP for the period 2006 to 2008 and beyond, with the prospect of developing a sustainable working partnership.

The work plan aims to consolidate, further develop and intensify the existing cooperation between EEA and UNEP/MAP, increasing the effectiveness of their work and supporting improved environmental governance in the Mediterranean region. Based on the existing tradition of cooperation, the joint work plan seeks to achieve systematic sharing of information and experiences in all relevant areas as well as coordination of activities in order to promote interoperability and so avoiding incompatibility, duplication of work and redundancy, where possible.

The timing of this work plan takes into consideration concrete policy developments and achievements and aims to underline the role of information delivery and dissemination in supporting the implementation of these policies, in particular the recently adopted Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), the existing joint work programme between the European Commission and UNEP/MAP, the EU Enlargement Policy, the European Neighbourhood Policy and finally the Horizon 2020 initiative.

The activities will be kept under regular review by the EEA and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat and will be revised and updated as required.

Most activities listed in the joint work plan do not represent new areas of work for the organisations involved, rather they address continuing cooperation on existing areas of work with the intention of enhancing their implementation. This includes the respective contributions to the development of an infrastructure for dealing with official statistics through the MEDSTAT programme, launched within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership under the auspices of the European Commission.

It is recognised that for certain activities in this plan to be fully implemented, additional resources may be needed. As appropriate, the EEA and UNEP/MAP will seek such resources.

Priorities for the Joint Work Plan

Eight contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention and members of UNEP/MAP are also member countries of the EEA: Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. In addition, four West Balkan countries, namely Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro, which are contracting parties within UNEP/MAP, also collaborate with the EEA. This provides strong justification for streamlining the information sharing and reporting processes and for cooperating on networking activities of the organisations in order to strengthen synergies in the context of the respective work programmes.

Identified activities aim towards concrete collaborative actions in areas of mutual interest and benefit and will, at the same time, support the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, including the MEDSTAT programme.

The activities proposed as part of this work plan cover the following areas of work:

- State of the environment reporting activities
- Data, indicator and scenario activities
- Impact assessment studies
- Networking, partnership building and support activities
- Shared information and communication activities and services

Work Plan for 2006–2008

1. State of the environment reporting activities

EEA and UNEP/MAP will join efforts to ensure efficient streamlining of data gathering, analysis and assessment methods as well as dissemination of results in an accessible and useful way, building on the experiences gathered in the production of several joint EEA-UNEP/MAP reports over the past years. This represents a 3 to 4 year cycle of report production.

Within the Horizon 2020 initiative under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, EEA and UNEP/MAP (MEDPOL), in cooperation with other relevant organisations, will contribute to regular reviews of the state of the environment in the Mediterranean Sea, based on an agreed set of indicators. This work will be coordinated with similar ongoing initiatives (MSSD, EMMA).

In line with the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), EEA and UNEP/MAP through Blue Plan will cooperate in the promotion and the regular reviews of progress of the sustainable development strategy in the Mediterranean region and the integration of environmental concerns into other policy areas.

EEA and UNEP/MAP, especially through Blue Plan, will pay particular attention to the coastal areas of the Mediterranean region and cooperate in the development of specific studies on these areas.

Specific examples of cooperation:

EEA will continue supporting UNEP/MAP (Blue Plan) in publicising its report “A Sustainable Future for the Mediterranean: The Blue Plan’s Environment and Development Outlook” to promote environmental awareness and sustainable development approaches in the Mediterranean area.

Specific examples of cooperation:

EEA and UNEP/MAP through CP/RAC will cooperate in the follow-up and verification of data and indicators with respect to hazardous waste generation trends in Mediterranean countries in line with CP/RAC’s regional plan for the reduction of hazardous waste from industrial installations.

Specific examples of cooperation:

The Commission has initiated such an approach for the 2010 Free Trade Area and the EEA will participate in the dissemination of results of the forthcoming study.

In support of UNEP/MAP’s initiatives and activities in the field of coastal zone management, EEA and UNEP/MAP through PAP/RAC will cooperate to produce a report on integrated coastal zone management in the Mediterranean.

EEA and UNEP/MAP through CP/RAC will cooperate in the promotion and the regular review of progress of Mediterranean countries concerning the development and implementation of measures for decoupling industrial development from environmental degradation.

2. Data, indicator and scenario activities

EEA will further collaborate with UNEP/MAP through Blue Plan, acting as Mediterranean Environment and Development Observatory, in the development of indicators and outlooks to support the review of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and to contribute to, on a more frequent basis, regular assessments. This work will take place mainly through transfer of experience and exchange of data.

In line with the work programme of cooperation between UNEP/MAP and the European Commission, EEA will, as appropriate, collaborate with UNEP/MAP through MEDPOL and ensure the regular exchange of data resulting from monitoring. There will also be cooperation in the definition, production and verification of marine environment indicators in the framework of the implementation at regional scale of the European Thematic Strategy on the Marine Environment, taking in particular the work done through EMMA into account.

EEA and UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC will also cooperate in the development of marine biodiversity indicators, in particular concerning trends in the extent of seagrass habitats.

3. Impact assessment studies

To reflect the necessity to develop impact assessments of new policies, programmes and activities in the EU context, EEA will collaborate with UNEP/MAP through Blue Plan on testing and validating methods and tools as well as in conducting, upon request, selected impact assessment studies underpinning the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

EEA and UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC will also cooperate in the dissemination among European countries of the Guidelines for Impact Assessment on Seagrass Meadows elaborated by SPA/RAC and in the promotion of the integration of the guidelines into national legislation and policies of European Mediterranean countries.

4. Networking, partnership building and support activities

EEA and UNEP/MAP will cooperate at the institutional level by participating in relevant respective meetings to achieve synergy on strategic matters of common interest.

EEA, together with Eionet, and UNEP/MAP will work together to establish links between the respective National Focal Points and to facilitate regular meetings between these networks. At the same time, EEA will encourage NFPs from its member countries to provide resources to support EEA activities in the Mediterranean region.

EEA and UNEP/MAP will work together to establish the appropriate linkages with the respective networks of official statistical offices. This is being reinforced through the MEDSTAT programme.

Specific examples of cooperation:

An example of EEA-UNEP/MAP cooperation has been initiated and implemented to establish a Mediterranean clearing house mechanism on marine and coastal biological diversity. EEA and UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC will work together on the further development of this service.

Furthermore, EEA and UNEP/MAP, especially INFO/RAC with its capacity to broker and build working partnerships for sustainable development, will work towards strengthening networks through the establishment of sustainable working partnerships in the Mediterranean region.

EEA and UNEP/MAP through PAP/RAC will work together to develop further a Clearing House Mechanism on Mediterranean coastal management.

EEA will cooperate with UNEP/MAP to support the transfer of knowledge on environmental technologies among EU countries and Mediterranean partners through the dissemination of CP/RAC's databases of Mediterranean experts and technologies.

EEA and UNEP/MAP through SPA/RAC will establish procedures to share information on Mediterranean marine and coastal biodiversity and in particular on Mediterranean Natura 2000 sites.

5. Shared information and communication activities and services

With a view to supporting the recent establishment of INFO/RAC, EEA and UNEP/MAP will exchange information, experiences and expertise regarding the setting up of a common information sharing, reporting and communication system for UNEP/MAP. With its long-standing experience in similar settings, the EEA can provide expertise, operational and technical experience and guidelines to this end.

More specifically, EEA and UNEP/MAP, with the full involvement of INFO/RAC, will cooperate in the following areas:

- The design and implementation of InfoMAP
- The design and development of a MAP reporting system that is interoperable and compatible with other relevant reporting systems
- The development of an information and communications strategy for UNEP/MAP and the MSSD

Implementation of the Joint Work Plan

The proposed activities will be in line with the contents and timetable of EEA's Annual Management Plan and UNEP/MAP's Biennium. For each project and related activities, one contact person will be identified by EEA and UNEP/MAP Secretariat respectively. The responsibility of these contact persons will be to facilitate cooperation under this agreement, including coordination of contacts with the European Topic Centres (ETCs) and Regional Activity Centres (RACs).

Related activities under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The EEA also supports the European Commission in the areas of assessments, reporting and networking within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership as follows:

- EEA provides support to DG Environment in its cooperation with UNEP/MAP
- EEA supports the development of DG Environment's Horizon 2020 initiative and will contribute towards measuring progress of the initiative
- EEA supports, upon request, the MEDSTAT Environment Programme by identifying and facilitating specific training needs (monitoring, indicator methodologies, information systems)
- EEA hosts the SMAP RMS Clearing House (Regional Management and Support to the Euro-Mediterranean Programme for the Environment) which provides the SMAP community with information regarding environmental projects funded by SMAP and environmental information and reports at national and regional level
- EEA provides, upon request, support to EEA member countries from the Mediterranean region
- EEA provides, upon request, support to projects carried out in the Mediterranean region
- EEA supports the Euro-Mediterranean Information System on know-how in the Water Sector (EMWIS) through exchange of information and experience



