

Small-scale fisheries governance in MPAs

THE FISHMPABLUE2 APPROACH | KEY POINTS
FOR DECISION MAKERS



When MPA managers actively collaborate with small-scale fishers, there's a far better chance of achieving long-term sustainability in fishery operations. A practical toolkit¹ has recently been released to support efforts to spread best practices in co-management across the Mediterranean.

Background

The FishMPABlue2 project follows on from FishMPABlue1, an earlier analysis of 31 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in 5 Mediterranean countries which proposed strategies to improve the management of small-scale fisheries (SSF) in Mediterranean MPAs².

The study identified five key enabling conditions for successful SSF management in MPAs:

- 1. Fishers should be represented in MPA decision-making bodies**
- 2. MPAs should have affordable monitoring and enforcement capacities**
- 3. Fishers should be engaged in MPA activities like patrolling and data collection**
- 4. MPAs should support sustainable fishery products and services**
- 5. MPAs should have a management plan for SSF developed with input from fishers.**

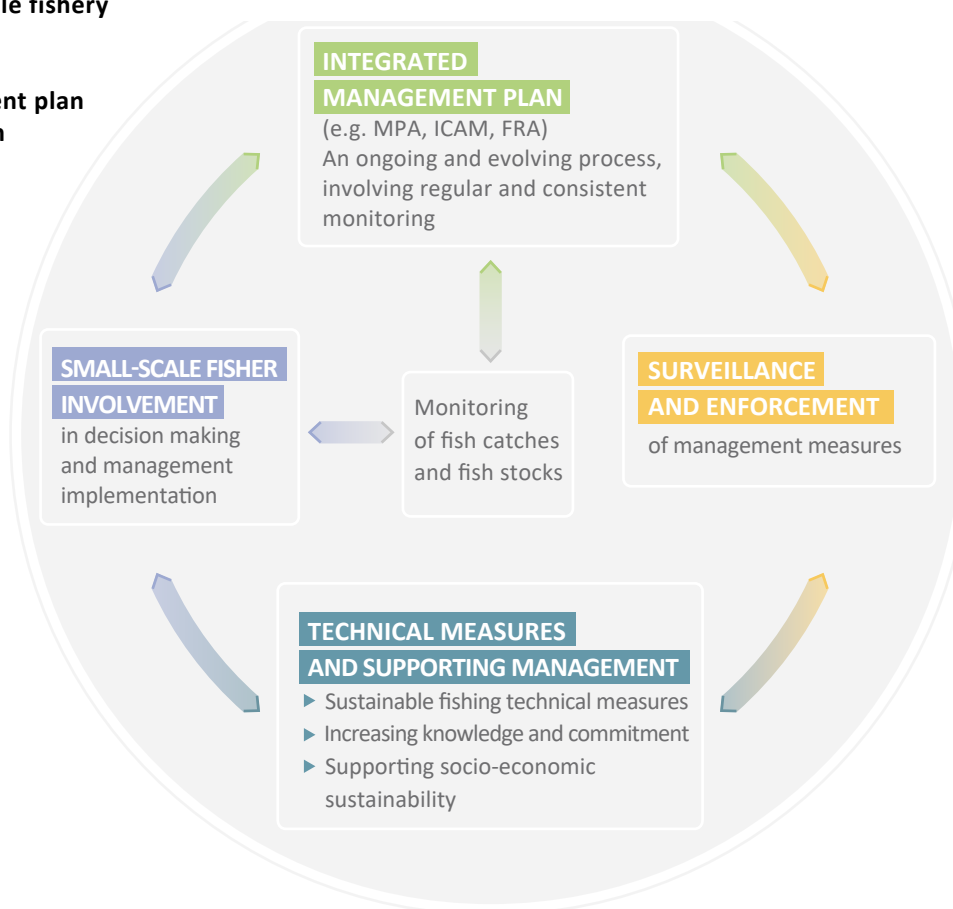
FishMPABlue2

FishMPABlue2 tested the feasibility and effectiveness of such measures in 11 pilot MPAs in 6 Mediterranean countries. It analysed their outcomes in three main areas:

- MPA ecological conditions
- SSF benefits and sustainability
- MPA social acceptance by stakeholders

The analysis identified four themes that are fundamentally important for successful management of SSF in MPAs. When all are present together, they form the basis for an effective governance model (below).

This governance model paves the way for a wide range of supporting measures to improve the ecological, financial and social performance of SSF, including sustainable fishing practices, local marketing, fishing tourism and more.



¹ The FishMPABlue2 Governance Toolkit for managing Small-scale Fisheries in Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas is available on the project website <https://fishmpablue-2.interreg-med.eu/>

² A full list of potential measures and activities identified by FishMPABlue1 is available at www.medmaritimeprojects.eu/section/fishmpablue



Management and governance in MPAs – what's the difference?

Management – is about what is done to pursue conservation objectives, and how the objectives are achieved.

Governance – is about who decides what to do, how they take those decisions, and who is accountable for them.

MARINE NATIONAL PARK OF ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE | © CLAUDIA AMICO / WWF MEDITERRANEAN

Good MPA management – what does it look like?

A well managed MPA should have these key features:

Clear, legally gazetted status

Appropriate operational regulations

A clearly defined goal-driven management plan

Strong enforcement capacity

Realistic budget and plans for long-term financial stability

Monitoring systems to support adaptive management

Adequate staff capacity and presence

A governance system with inclusive decision-making processes

Shared management

Co-management

FishMPABlue2 is geared towards promoting co-management. Although not a new idea, over the past decade it has become an important strategic tool to counter the failings of top-down, centralised management practices. The approach involves representatives of user groups, government agencies, research institutions and others coming together to make decisions, so the process of regulation becomes a collaborative one.

There are many reasons for co-management's increasing popularity:

Practical

- Stakeholders who have had a say in decisions are more committed to successful outcomes
- The legitimacy of the management regime is enhanced
- Transparency and accountability are increased
- Users are directly invested in compliance and stewardship
- The knowledge base to inform decision-making is maximised
- Collective awareness of sustainability and marine environmental issues is fostered.

Ethical

- People should have the right to a say in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods
- Inclusion empowers marginalised users (particularly fisher women, in the case of FishMPABlue2).

Achieving successful SSF co-management can take years, and it may not be suitable in all settings. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that it offers the best way forward for more effective natural resource management in the Mediterranean.

Effective decision-making: towards MPA co-management

Engaging stakeholders – including fishers – in MPA management has many benefits. Diverse views and values inform better strategic decisions, while the local knowledge that stakeholders bring to the table can be invaluable in tailoring site-specific solutions. Stakeholder support can help prepare the ground for long-term implementation of management plans, while MPA governance is likely to be better respected by all concerned if stakeholders have had the opportunity to contribute to it.

In FishMPABlue2 each pilot area established a formal joint committee comprised mainly of the MPA managing body and local SSF representatives, which met regularly to jointly select and manage pilot measures. These meetings strengthened relationships and built trust, as managers and fishers together developed a shared vision for their MPAs.

The following points are important for engaging fishers and other stakeholders in MPA management decision-making:

Choose stakeholders carefully

Participants need to understand how to represent their whole sector not just their personal interests, and must report key information back to the people they're representing.

Build capacity

Each group involved must be provided with some training to empower them in participatory processes.

Build a foundation

Transparency and trust are essential starting points to develop any long-term relationship between management bodies and other stakeholders.

Be neutral

Neutral facilitators can be brought in to help with participatory decision-making processes, or MPA managers can be trained in facilitation.

Encourage equal participation

Ensure that all those connected with the SSF sector are represented, including women, and that any marginalised groups are given the chance to take part on an equal footing.

Identify common ground

Stakeholders and managers should together develop a shared vision for the MPA based on realistic goals.



Enforcement

An MPA will only achieve its goals if its rules are effectively enforced. The user support for park rules fostered through co-management helps to spread a culture of compliance, which strongly influences the chances of success.

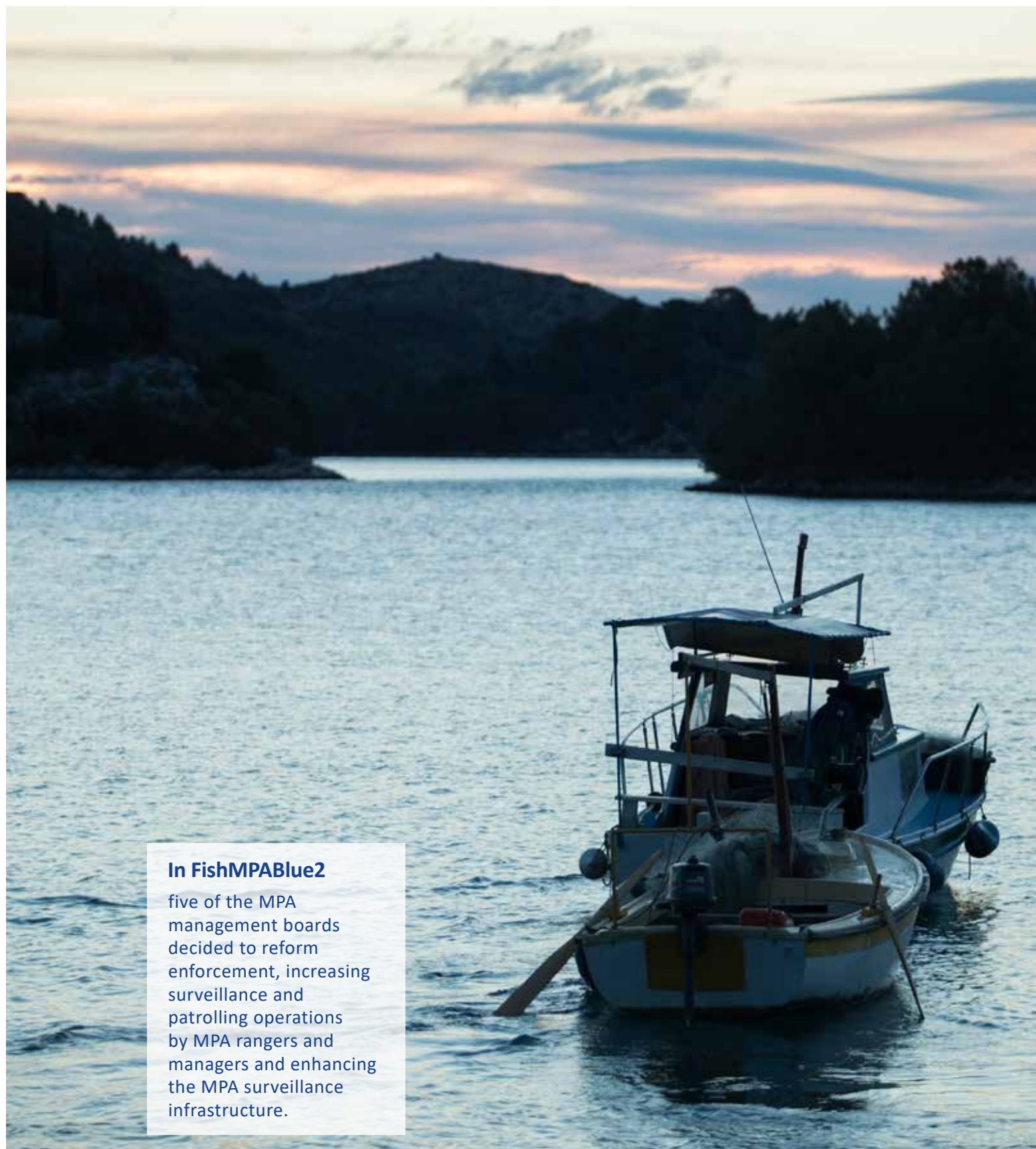
Of course, the real problem is the people who don't respect the rules. In MPAs this can include those entering no-go zones, anchoring in restricted areas, breaking speed restrictions, exceeding dive quotas – but the most serious issue for SSF is illegal fishing, by both professional and recreational fishers.

Higher levels of surveillance and patrolling will reduce illegal fishing and increase compliance in MPAs, and many MPA management boards are making this a priority in their management plans. An increased enforcement presence gives users who follow the rules greater confidence in the management system.

Co-management extends the scope of this activity by involving small-scale fishers in monitoring what's going on in their park, recording and reporting what they see. Their added input can increase the effective enforcement of the regulations that the users themselves have played an active role in creating.

In FishMPABlue2

five of the MPA management boards decided to reform enforcement, increasing surveillance and patrolling operations by MPA rangers and managers and enhancing the MPA surveillance infrastructure.



STRUNJAN LANDSCAPE PARK, SLOVENIA | DARKO MIHALIC / WWF MEDITERRANEAN

The FishMPABlue2 SSF Governance Toolkit: strategic relevance

The FishMPABlue2 toolkit aims to make an important contribution to the GFCM 'Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea' (RPOA-SSF). This is a 10-year plan for managing SSF in the region, which will be implemented by all relevant governments.

Since it has been widely tested with the support and participation of small-scale fishers in 6 Mediterranean countries, the FishMPABlue2 toolkit governance model and its related management measures have high credibility and the potential for widespread uptake.

Use of the toolkit will:

- Improve the performance of Mediterranean MPAs
- Provide a common regional management framework for SSF in MPAs
- Increase international cooperation and the sharing of best practices.

As well as improved governance, the toolkit also supports the implementation of many other aspects of the RPOA-SSF. These include:

- Increasing surveillance and enforcement
- Promoting sustainable fishing practices
- Enabling diversified and higher value fishing products
- Building capacity among small-scale fishers.



MARINE NATIONAL PARK OF ZAKYNTHOS, GREECE | © CLAUDIA AMICO / WWF MEDITERRANEAN

Moving forwards: key points for policy makers

Although the overall volume of SSF catches is relatively low compared to large-scale commercial fisheries, SSF can still have important effects on fishing resources and marine ecosystems alongside factors such as climate change, pollution and recreational fishers. Nevertheless, SSF are generally seen as having a lesser impact than industrial fisheries. For this reason they must be carefully managed and supported, particularly in MPAs.

Collaboration with MPAs can be beneficial to fishers, as both want to see healthy fish stocks and the preservation of habitats used by fish at different life stages. Many MPAs already support such objectives in their management plans: national strategies should take these experiences into account, and build on the successes. In effect, MPAs can serve as laboratories for developing best practice strategies that can later be widely implemented.

Co-management is not a quick fix, and may take many years to succeed. This makes it all the more important to proactively establish a close and permanent dialogue with the SSF sector, as well as developing the enabling conditions (from juridical, economic and technical points of view) to support participatory governance in fisheries management.

project partners



CoNISMa
Consorzio Nazionale
Interuniversitario
per le Scienze del Mare



Project co-financed by the European
Regional Development Fund

FishMPABlue 2

<https://fishmpablue-2.interreg-med.eu/>

Communications contact

Anne Rémy
WWF Mediterranean
aremy@wwfmedpo.org

Lead partner contact

Corrado Teofili
Federparchi – Europarc Italy
corrado.teofili@parks.it