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## Interreg Med project FishMPABlue 2

# Artisanal fishers and MPAs: a partnership for sustainability in the Mediterranean

The Interreg Med project FishMPABlue2 has involved key actors in the planning of conservation measures and fishery regulation processes within blue-economy-driven sustainable governance in Mediterranean MPAs.

The project has built on good working relationships between MPA managers and fishers in MPAs, and developed new ways of improving governance through small-scale fisheries co-management within and around MPAs. It has addressed existing and potential conflicts and proposed solutions.

## Project facts and figures

- 11 pilot MPAs with more than 200 fishers involved
- A Governance Toolkit for managing SSF in Mediterranean MPAs produced with 13 sustainable management-related solutions
- 9 additional MPAs supported to adopt the Toolkit
- 11 Local Governance Clusters created
- 8 partner institutions from 6 countries working together on the project
- 3 years of work with a budget of €3.5 million.

## Approach

- Fishers and conservationists work together and share decisions
- Best management practices are tested
- Impact on the environment and fishers is monitored in an innovative way.

## Results

- A Governance Toolkit ready to be used in any Mediterranean MPA
- Effective monitoring methods for assessing the environmental, social and economic dimensions of the effectiveness of MPAs for small-scale fisheries management
- Recommendations for national and international policy makers.



## The Toolkit

In the 11 pilot MPAs, fishers and MPA managers worked together to test the FishMPABlue2 approach. It received strong support and commitment from fishers, leading to improved trust and communication between fishers and MPA managers and improved fishery management measures. The resulting Toolkit, and the governance model that has emerged from the combined results of activities in each of the pilot MPAs, are credible and have the potential to be used in MPAs throughout the Mediterranean. This will:

- improve the effectiveness and performance of individual MPAs
- provide a common national framework for the management of SSF in MPAs
- increase cooperation and the exchange of best practices between MPAs in different countries.



**“Co-management is about building a vision together... little by little we can change the bigger picture.”**

Charalampos Dimitriadis  
National Marine Park  
of Zakynthos, Greece

The Toolkit supports the improved governance called for in the GFCM Regional Plan of Action, including capacity building, adoption of sustainable fishing practices, enabling diversification and valorisation of fish products, enforcement and surveillance.

Almost all of the Pilot MPAs in FishMPABlue2 opted for an increase in surveillance to reduce illegal fishing and poaching. Strategies included the use of surveillance cameras, patrolling at night by MPA rangers, and engagement of fishers in voluntary surveillance activities. These actions could have a significant deterrence power and therefore lower the impact of IUU.

## Monitoring

The FishMPABlue2 monitoring methodology is a science-based means of assessing MPA effectiveness for small-scale fisheries management, which addresses environmental, social and economic dimensions. The monitoring involves small-scale fishers both in the provision and in the collection of data. During the project the methodology was tested twice (before and after implementation of the SSF management-related measures) in each of the 11 pilot MPAs.

## Recommendations

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. For this reason SSF 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.



**“We must give fish enough time to reproduce. Without respect there is no future for the sea”.**

Francesco Bevilacqua  
Fisher, Egadi Islands, Italy

### project partners



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<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