

# Plastic Busters MPAs Intermediate Capitalization Conference Report

Learning together: how to curb marine plastic pollution in  
Mediterranean MPAs

23-24 February 2022, Vlorë, Albania

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PREPARED BY

## THE INTERREG MED PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAS PROJECT

<https://plasticbustersmpas.interreg-med.eu>



PLASTIC BUSTERS  
MPAs

## Document Information

**Document** D.6.4.4 Intermediate Capitalization Conference Report  
**Version:** V01  
**Date:** 08/03/2022  
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## Document Information

This document (Deliverable 6.4.4) provides a summary report of the Intermediate Plastic Busters MPAs Capitalization Workshop.

## Approvals

| Date       | Partner |
|------------|---------|
| 08/03/2022 | UNISI   |

## Document History

| Version | Date       | Comments & Status | Contributors |
|---------|------------|-------------------|--------------|
| V01     | 03/03/2022 | First draft       | MIO-ECSDE    |
| V02     | 08/03/2022 | Final document    | MIO-ECSDE    |

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# 1 The Intermediate Plastic Busters MPAs Capitalization Conference in a nutshell

It has been almost 4 years since Plastic Busters MPAs started on its journey to address marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs and the project has achieved a lot: a first-of-its-kind comprehensive diagnostic analysis of the presence and effects of marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs; marine litter monitoring and assessment tools and approaches; showcases and guidelines of best practice measures particularly focused on slashing single-use plastics in Mediterranean MPAs, and so much more.

Seeking to share its the knowledge, know-how, experience and lessons learned obtained by the implementation of the Plastic Busters MPAs demonstration and replication actions addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, the Plastic Busters MPAs team organized in Vlorë Albania, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, a hybrid capitalization conference featuring the Plastic Busters MPAs results and achievements. The two-day conference brought together some 110 participants (38 attended physically, 75 attended virtually) to review and discuss the project advances and achievements addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation. The event brought forward the recent policy and scientific advances with regards to marine litter in the region, provided a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter outputs and results, highlighted local experiences and lessons learned, and created the enabling conditions for building synergies and fostering exchanges among stakeholders active on the science-policy-society interface.

The capitalization event was organized jointly by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment, Culture and Sustainable Development (MIO-ECSDE). The event's participants came from Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

## IN BRIEF

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- ▶ **Event title:** Learning together: how to curb marine plastic pollution in Mediterranean MPAs
- ▶ **Event date:** 23-24 February 2022
- ▶ **Event location:** Vlorë, Albania
- ▶ **Participants number:** 110

## AIM

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- ▶ The Plastic Busters capitalization event aimed at featuring and fully exploiting the knowledge, know-how, experience and lessons learned obtained by the implementation of the Plastic Busters MPAs demonstration and replication actions addressing the entire management cycle of marine litter, from monitoring and assessment to prevention and mitigation. The event brought forward the recent policy and scientific advances with regards to marine litter in the region and provided an opportunity for creating synergies and fostering exchanges among stakeholders active on the science-policy-society interface.

## ORGANIZERS

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- ▶ Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania
- ▶ MIO-ECSDE

## 2 The Plastic Busters MPAs Intermediate Capitalization Conference Programme

### 2.1. Opening remarks

During the opening of the two-day conference, remarks were made by high-level officials from the Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the organizers and the local authorities, while also the Interreg Med project manager addressed the audience remotely. The complete list of speakers is shown below:

- ▶ **H.E. Deputy Minister V. Bello**, Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania
- ▶ **Prefect F. Mamaj**, Prefecture of Vlora
- ▶ **T. Vlachogianni**, MIO-ECSDE
- ▶ **F. Marcato**, Interreg Med Joint Secretariat

All speakers warmly welcomed the participants and firmly acknowledged everyone's outstanding job in drawing attention to the challenging issue of marine litter and more specifically in Marine Protected Areas.




### 2.2. Session #1 - Setting the scene

The session focused on featuring the policy advances regarding marine litter within the scope of the EU and the Mediterranean.

**T. Hema** Coordinator of UNEP/MAP provided an overview of all policy developments on marine litter within the framework of the Barcelona Convention. One of the key issues addressed by her intervention was the updating and upgrading of the Regional Plan for Marine Litter Management in the Mediterranean, its links with the global agenda and main achievements. The upgraded Plan was recently adopted at the COP22 and features new measures that address: the phasing out of single-use plastic items, the reduction of microplastics, the introduction of environmental taxes, the inclusion of

marine litter related measures in the SPAMIs, the strengthening of sanctions in case of non-compliance with the measures identified in the regional plan. The Coordinator highlighted the importance of the Plastic Busters MPAs project in tackling marine litter in the Mediterranean and strengthening the implementation of the upgraded Plan and stressed the momentum for replication that has been built.



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*We are happy to have supported and contributed to the Plastic Busters MPAs project since its launch back in 2018. The project has an important agenda merging the topics of marine litter, marine environment pollution and Mediterranean MPAs, all priority topics also for UNEP/MAP. I am pleased to see that the experiences obtained are shared herewith today and that a momentum for replication is being built so that the project can continue to contribute to the implementation of the upgraded regional plan for marine litter management in the Mediterranean.*

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TATJANA HEMA  
UNEP/MAP Coordinator

**A. Sensi**, Head of the Environment and Blue Economy Sector of the UfM explained how UfM is engaged to tackle marine litter. She presented the main elements of the Blue Economy Roadmap for the implementation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy which is currently under preparation and attention was placed on the 2030GreenerMed Agenda and the decisions taken during the 2021 UfM Ministerial Meeting Environment and Climate Action. Lastly, she highlighted that Plastic Busters is an example of how commitment and unprecedented collaboration on marine litter and circular economy can make a difference and influence the development of the region.



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*The Mediterranean leads by example: Plastic Busters shows how commitment and unprecedented collaboration on marine litter and circular economy, can make the difference and influence the development of the region through scientific evidence and associated decision making"*

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ALESSANDRA SENSI  
UfM Head of Sector – Environment and Blue Economy

**M. Papadoyannakis**, from the Marine Environment and Water Industry Unit of DG Environment gave an update on EU policies related to marine litter. Special emphasis was given to the EU Zero Pollution Action Plan and its targets for marine litter reduction, the Circular Action Plan and the policy provisions of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. What is more, Mr. Papadoyannakis presented the mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030” aiming to address harm to marine life from litter, while he also talked about the lead efforts at international level to reach a global agreement on plastics.



### 2.3. Session #2 - The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring actions

Within this session a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and assessment outputs and results was presented by **C. Fossi** from UNISI while also emphasis was placed in featuring the Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on monitoring; to that end interventions were made by:

- ▶ **C. Alomar**, IEO & Cabrera National Park (Spain)
- ▶ **L. Lazaj**, RAPA Vlore (Karaburun-Sazan MPA) (Albania)
- ▶ **G. Scotti**, ISPRA & Capo Milazzo MPA (Italy)
- ▶ **C. Tsangaris**, HCMR & National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece)

Within 2019 and 2020, harmonized methodologies for monitoring the presence of marine litter in Mediterranean pelagic and coastal MPAs and its impact on marine wildlife have been tested in the Pelagos Sanctuary, the Cabrera Archipelago National Maritime-Terrestrial Park, the Karaburun-Sazan Marine Park, the MPA of Capo Milazzo, the National Marine Park of Zakynthos and. Currently, the project team is fine-tuning the soon-to-be launched diagnostic analysis of the presence and effects of marine litter in Mediterranean MPAs; the preliminary results though confirm that marine litter is building up even in MPAs threatening habitats and species. The tested methodologies are currently being transferred to MPAs across the Mediterranean region, paving the way for a consolidated common framework of action against marine litter in the region, thus contributing to the preservation of natural ecosystems across the Mediterranean basin.

As highlighted by the MPA managers involved in the monitoring activities, the Plastic Busters MPAs project has provided significant knowledge on the magnitude of the problem; increased the carrying capacity of the MPAs Management Bodies to monitor and assess the problem in terms of know-how, man power and equipment; has enabled them to design and operationalize tailored-made mitigation actions; and has concretely illustrated what joint efforts of MPA managers and researchers can achieve on the ground.



#### 2.4. Session #3: marine litter initiatives in Albania

During this session a synthesis of the Albanian initiatives and national policy developments on marine litter was presented. Facilitated by **K. Marika** from the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania, the session included interventions by:

- ▶ **Y. Sela**, GIZ Albania
- ▶ **V. Zuna**, UNDP Albania
- ▶ **L. Bedinaj (on behalf of K. Korro)**, University of Agriculture, Royal Albania Foundation

The Low Plastic Zone Initiative was presented to the participants, as well as the results and achievements of the national efforts to strengthen the management of the Karaburun-Sazan Marine Park. Lastly, the action plan to mitigate marine plastic pollution in 10 Albanian islands was showcased.

#### 2.5 Session #4: The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions

Within this session, facilitated by **Sh. Mezini** from the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania, a synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions and their respective results was presented by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSD, while local experiences on prevention and mitigation actions were shared by:

- ▶ **E. Ramaj**, Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania
- ▶ **S. Gvozdenovic**, Institute of Marine Biology of the University of Montenegro
- ▶ **C. Franzosini**, Miramare MPA (Italy)
- ▶ **G. Garcia Hoyo**, Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park (Spain)
- ▶ **A. Palatinus**, Strunjan Landscape Park (Slovenia)
- ▶ **C. Dimitriadis**, National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece)



To-date 10 marine litter prevention and mitigation demos have been implemented, while 5 replication actions are in full-swing. These showcase the following measures: phasing out single-use plastics, establishing derelict fishing gear management schemes, setting up an extended producer responsibility scheme, banning specific activities and kick-starting awareness raising campaigns. The MPAs that have been the testing grounds for the aforementioned measures are:

- 1 FRANCE - Pelagos Sanctuary
- 2 GREECE - National Marine Park of Zakynthos
- 3 GREECE - Thermaikos Gulf Protected Areas
- 4 ITALY - Miramare MPA
- 5 ITALY - Pelagos Sanctuary
- 6 ITALY - Tuscan Archipelago National Park
- 7 SLOVENIA - Strunjan Landscape Park
- 8 SPAIN - Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park-UNESCO Global Geopark
- 9 SPAIN - Cabrera Archipelago Maritime-Terrestrial National Park
- 10 SPAIN - Natural Park of Ebro Delta
- 11 CROATIA – Brijuni National Park
- 12 ALBANIA – Karaburun Sazan MPA
- 13 ITALY- Capo Milazzo MPA
- 14 SLOVENIA - Debeli Rtič Landscape Park
- 15 MONTENEGRO – Platamuni MPA

Some of the points that were stressed by the MPA managers and marine litter practitioners in this session included the following: involving everyone at once in the implementation of the demos is challenging; demo actions won't last for ever and therefore their sustainability needs to be sought well in advance; special attention needs to be placed on communicating the right messages and special attention should be placed on avoiding misconceptions in particular related to alternative materials.



## 2.5. Session #5: Wrap up & concluding remarks

The event was closed by **K. Marika** from the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania and by **Th. Vlachogianni** from MIO-ECSDE. Some take-home messages of the event are listed below:

- ▶ MPAs are at great potential risk from the impacts of marine litter pollution and urgent action is needed.
- ▶ MPAs can serve as a unifying force and catalyst for change towards litter-free coasts and seas through the participatory elaboration and implementation of MPA-specific marine litter action plans (including fit-for-purpose monitoring schemes).
- ▶ The wise use of plastics within a circular economy context that fully respects the waste hierarchy is the key to addressing the issue of marine plastic pollution.
- ▶ MPAs can address the marine litter threat by directly operationalizing targeted prevention and mitigation measures.



## 2.6. Session #6: Field trip

The conference's deliberations came to an end with a field visit to the Karaburun-Sazan MPA, which marked the official completion of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and mitigation pilot actions in the MPA. The MPA managers and officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania in their final remarks committed themselves to continuous exploitation and cascading replication of the project results and outputs towards litter-free coasts and sea in Albania.



The presentations of the conference are available at:

<https://bit.ly/3vNuSdw>

## Annex - The agenda of the capitalization conference

| TIME (CET)         | CONTENT  | NAME  |
|--------------------|--|---|
| <b>23 February</b> | 1st day of the conference  |   |
| <b>09.30-10.00</b> | ▶ <b>Registration</b>  |   |
| <b>10.00-10.30</b> | ▶ <b>Welcome addresses &amp; opening remarks</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>H.E. Deputy Minister Mrs Vilma Bello</b>, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> <li>▶ <b>Prefect, Flamur Mamaj</b>, PREFECTURE OF VLORA, ALBANIA</li> <li>▶ <b>General Secretary, Mrs Ledina Beqiraj Agalliu</b>, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> <li>▶ <b>Francesca Marcato</b>, INTERREG MED JOINT SECRETARIAT</li> <li>▶ <b>Thomas Vlachogianni</b>, MIO-ECSDE</li> </ul>        |
| <b>10.30-11.00</b> | <p><b>Session #1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Barcelona Convention policy advances on marine litter in the Mediterranean</li> <li>▶ UfM policy advances on marine litter in the EuroMediterranean</li> <li>▶ EU policy advances on marine litter</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Tatjana Hema</b>, UNEP/MAP</li> <li>▶ <b>Alessandra Sensi</b>, UfM</li> <li>▶ <b>Michail Papadoyannakis</b>, EC DG Environment</li> </ul>   |
| <b>11.00-11.15</b> | <b>Coffee break</b>  |   |
| <b>11.15-13.00</b> | <p><b>Session #2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs in a nutshell</li> <li>▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring results and achievements at: Pelagos Sanctuary (Italy), Cabrera National Park (Spain), National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece), Karaburun-Sazan MPA (Albania), Capo Milazzo (Italy)</li> <li>▶ Synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter monitoring and assessment results</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Cristina Fossi</b>, UNISI &amp; PELAGOS SANCTUARY (ITALY)</li> <li>▶ <b>Carme Alomar</b>, IEO &amp; CABRERA NATIONAL PARK (SPAIN)</li> <li>▶ <b>Lorela Lazaj</b>, RAPA VLORE &amp; Karaburun-Sazan MPA</li> <li>▶ <b>Gianfranco Scotti</b>, ISPRA &amp; CAPO MILAZZO MPA (ITALY)</li> <li>▶ <b>Catherine Tsangaris</b>, NATIONAL MARINE PARK OF ZAKYNTHOS (GREECE)</li> <li>▶ <b>Cristina Fossi</b>, UNISI</li> </ul> |
| <b>13.00-14.00</b> | <b>Lunch break</b>   |   |
| <b>14.00-15.30</b> | <p><b>Session #3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Low Plastic Zone Initiative</li> <li>▶ Strengthening the management of the Karaburun-Sazani Marine Park: results &amp; achievements</li> <li>▶ Together for zero plastics in 10 Albanian islands</li> <li>▶ Questions &amp; answers</li> <li>▶ Concluding remarks</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Yllka Sela</b>, GIZ</li> <li>▶ <b>Violeta Zuna</b>, UNDP</li> <li>▶ <b>Kastriot Korro</b>, UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE/ROYAL FOUNDATION</li> <li>▶ <b>Thomas Vlachogianni</b>, MIO-ECSDE</li> <li>▶ <b>Klodiana Marika</b>, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> </ul>   |

| TIME (CET)         | CONTENT  |   |
|--------------------|--|---|
| <b>24 February</b> | 2nd day of the conference  |   |
| <b>10.00-10.05</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Welcome addresses &amp; opening remarks</b></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Thomas Vlachogianni</b>, MIO-ECSDE</li> </ul>   |
| <b>10.05-11.45</b> | <p><b>Session #4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Synthesis of the Plastic Busters MPAs marine litter prevention and mitigation actions</li> <li>▶ The Plastic Busters MPAs local experiences on marine litter prevention and mitigation at: Karaburun-Sazan MPA (Albania), Platamuni MPA (Montenegro), Miramare MPA (Italy), Cabo de Gata-Níjar Natural Park (Spain), Landscape Park Strunjan (Slovenia), National Marine Park of Zakynthos (Greece)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Thomas Vlachogianni</b>, MIO-ECSDE</li> <li>▶ <b>Elvana Ramaj</b>, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> <li>▶ <b>Sladjana Gvozdenovic</b>, INSTITUTE OF MARINE BIOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO</li> <li>▶ <b>Carlo Franzosini</b>, MIRAMARE MPA (ITALY)</li> <li>▶ <b>Gloria Garcia Hoyo</b>, CABO DE GATA-NÍJAR NATURAL PARK (SPAIN)</li> <li>▶ <b>Andreja Palatinus</b>, LANDSCAPE PARK STRUNJAN (SLOVENIA)</li> <li>▶ <b>Charalampos Dimitriadis</b>, NATIONAL MARINE PARK OF ZAKYNTHOS (GREECE)</li> </ul> |
| <b>11.45-12.00</b> | <b>Coffee break</b>  |   |
| <b>12.00-12.30</b> | <p><b>Session #5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Questions &amp; answers</li> <li>▶ Concluding remarks &amp; wrap up</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Elvana Ramaj</b>, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> <li>▶ <b>Thomas Vlachogianni</b>, MIO-ECSDE</li> </ul>  |
| <b>12.30-17.15</b> | <p><b>Session #6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Field trip</b></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Organized by the MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT OF ALBANIA</li> </ul>   |



# PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs

## THE PLASTIC BUSTERS MPAs PARTNERSHIP

