

Workshop: What can EUSAIR do to enable the blue and green sustainable growth in EUSAIR: MSP in EUSAIR state of the art

State of the Art of MSP situation in Greece

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The marine environment in Greece

Greece is a country well known for its extremely insular and coastal nature.

It is estimated that the coastline of Greece (both in the continental and insular parts), extends to more than 15,000 km, making the country the **second most coastal in Europe** (around **30% of the whole Mediterranean coastline**).

More than 3,000 Greek islands, islets and outcrops are spread in **three (3) different Seas** of the east Mediterranean Basin – the Ionian, the Aegean and the Levantine Sea.

In terms of maritime activities, Greece is placed among the top countries in fishing exports (free fishing and aquaculture), and among the ones with the largest shipping fleet in the world.

The great significance of this marine environment has been well recognized by the Greek State, which makes constant efforts to put many marine areas under special protection status.



MSP experience and practice in Greece

Despite the intensity of use of the Greek marine space, the only **Spatial Framework** that has been adopted/approved so far in Greece regards the **aquaculture** and **sea farming** sector, which constitutes a major maritime and coastal economic activity, with highly competitive and exporting products.

This sectorial Plan (providing strategic planning guidelines at the national level) was adopted in 2011, via Official Gazette No 2505/B/2011.

All other maritime sectors and activities that take place in the Greek marine space, are regulated by National Policies and Strategic Documents, approved by the competent Ministries separately, under minimal sectorial interaction.

Beyond aquaculture and sea farming, other sectorial Spatial Plans that indirectly – and by association – address economic sectors and infrastructure that can also take place in the sea are those related: a) to the Renewable Energy Sources and b) the tourism sector (making special reference to cruise tourism, yachting, beach-based tourism, etc.). Both these sectorial Spatial Plans are under revision.



MSP experience and practice in Greece

Exception to the above clearly sector-based approach, is planning efforts and management in the Greek MPAs' (Marine Protected Areas), which takes place under a clearly place-based approach.

Starting in the **1990's**, with the designation of **two (2) Marine Parks in Zakynthos island and in Alonissos island** and the most recent **MPA of the island of Gyaros** and its surrounding marine area, the **marine areas under protection** in Greece have grown considerably after 2017, and they now cover **22% of the Greek Territorial Waters (mainly as part of the Natura 2000 European network of Protected Areas)** (Common Ministerial Decision 50743/11-12- 2017).

In the MPAs, there is explicit zoning for specific maritime activities, indicating various protection levels according to the biodiversity conservation objectives.

However, as it happens for quite a lot of Natura sites all over Europe, the Greek sites remain **“paper parks”**. It is thus essential, for the designation of marine protected areas in the European seas to establish efficient conservation planning principles rooted also in the MSP process.



MSP experience and practice in Greece

Following the EU MSP Directive 2014/89, in 2018, Greece passed **Law 4546**, introducing in this way the first **legal document fully dedicated to Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)**.

In compliance with the EU MSP Directive, the Greek Law sets a clear transnational framework for MSP, raising the following issues (art.4):

- a) the **necessity for transboundary cooperation** among countries sharing the same marine region (**given the transboundary nature of the sea**),
- b) the **necessity to consider LSI at a national and an international level**, and
- c) the **necessity to adapt to the Ecosystem Approach**, and by association achieve transition from sectorial to a place-based MSP approach.

Further than that, the Greek Law 4546 (art.5), commanded the **preparation of: i) a National Spatial Strategy for the marine space of the country and ii) MSPlans**, the number and size of which would be identified following the guidelines set by the Greek Law harmonizing the EU 2008/56 MSF Directive (Law 3982 of 2011).



MSP experience and practice in Greece

In **2020**, the Greek MSP Law 4546 was **amended** (by Law 4759/2020), introducing two major changes:

- **the coastal zone was excluded from the scope of the MSP law**
- **MSPlans were classified as Regional Plans** (less regulatory force and binding character)

In terms of MSP implementation, Greece has to accelerate its pace towards the elaboration of both the Strategy for the Marine Space and Maritime Spatial Plans (Frameworks) especially under a place-based approach, in compliance with the EU MSP Directive.

Adopting a more place-based approach, is also another – indirect – way to consider LSI in MSP in Greece. Nevertheless, the exclusion of the coastal zone from the scope of the MSP law, has to be revised so as to promote the land-sea interactions (LSI) analysis in the framework of the Regional Maritime Plans.



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Greece has ratified 50% or less of assessed international commitments

Country	CBD			Barcelona Convention			Total policy score	
	CBD ratification	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans	Delivery of the 6th National Report	Entering into force	SPA & Biodiversity Protocol	ICZM Protocol	% of achievement	TOTAL SCORE
Greece	1	1	0	1	0	0	50	1

Scoring: Yes = 1, No = 0

<50% = 0 50% = 1 51-99% = 2 100% = 3



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Greece has 20% of its territorial waters up to 12nm designated as Natura 2000 sites, but this percentage drops to 4.7% when considering offshore waters up to 200nm.

Country	MPA areas within territorial waters (0-12 nautical miles)		MPA areas in offshore waters (0-200 nautical miles)	
	% of MPA area	Score	% of MPA area	Score
Greece	20.07	2	4.69	0

Scoring: 0-5% = 0 5-9% = 1 10-29% = 2 >30% = 3

However only 3% of those have protection measures.



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Greece designated a large percentage of its national waters as MPAs but as it has no management plans in place yet.

Management measures and annual action plans are implemented in some MPAs.



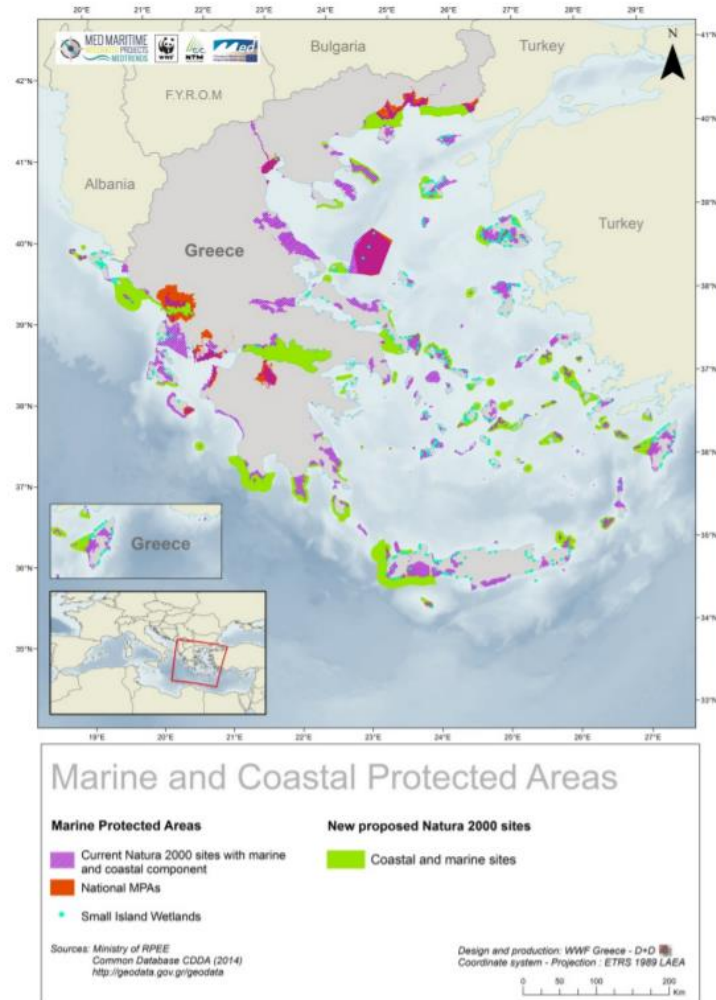
Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Only three MPAs have a zoning plan in place with legally binding regulations for human activities (i.e. fisheries, maritime traffic and tourism).

Ten more Greek National Parks also include marine areas, but they are limited to narrow zones along the coast.

The rest of the Greek MPAs are operating without formally adopted long-term management plans, missing a clear set of conservation goals, objectives and targeted plans of action in the short and long term, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness.

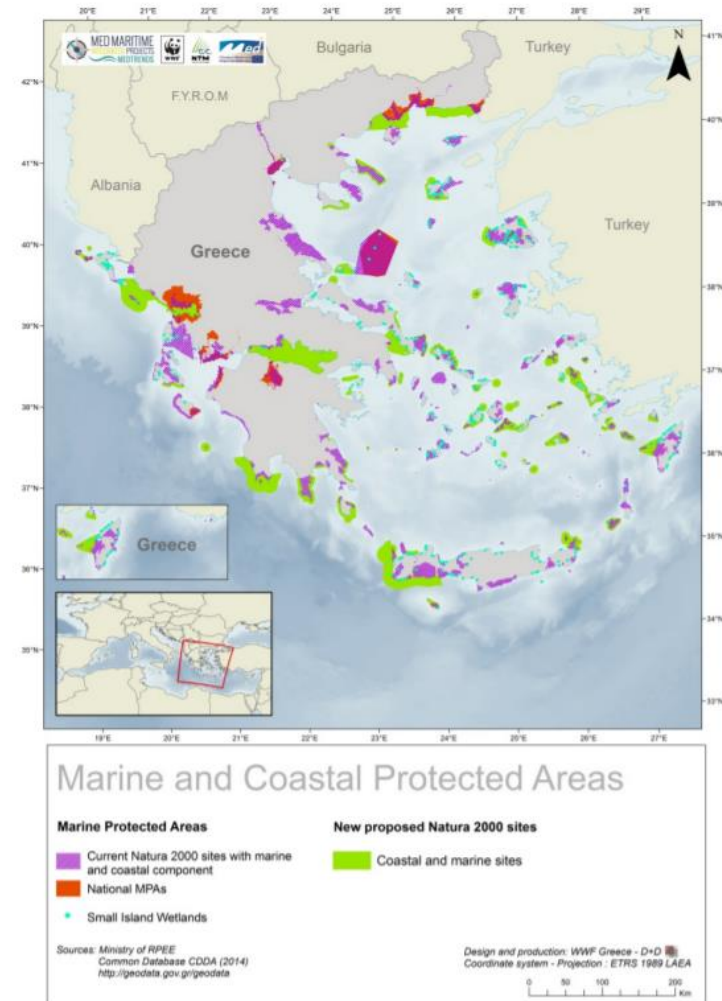
The Ministry of the Environment has only recently initiated a comprehensive project to designate specific zoning schemes and conservation measures for all protected areas in order to formally adopt management plans.



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

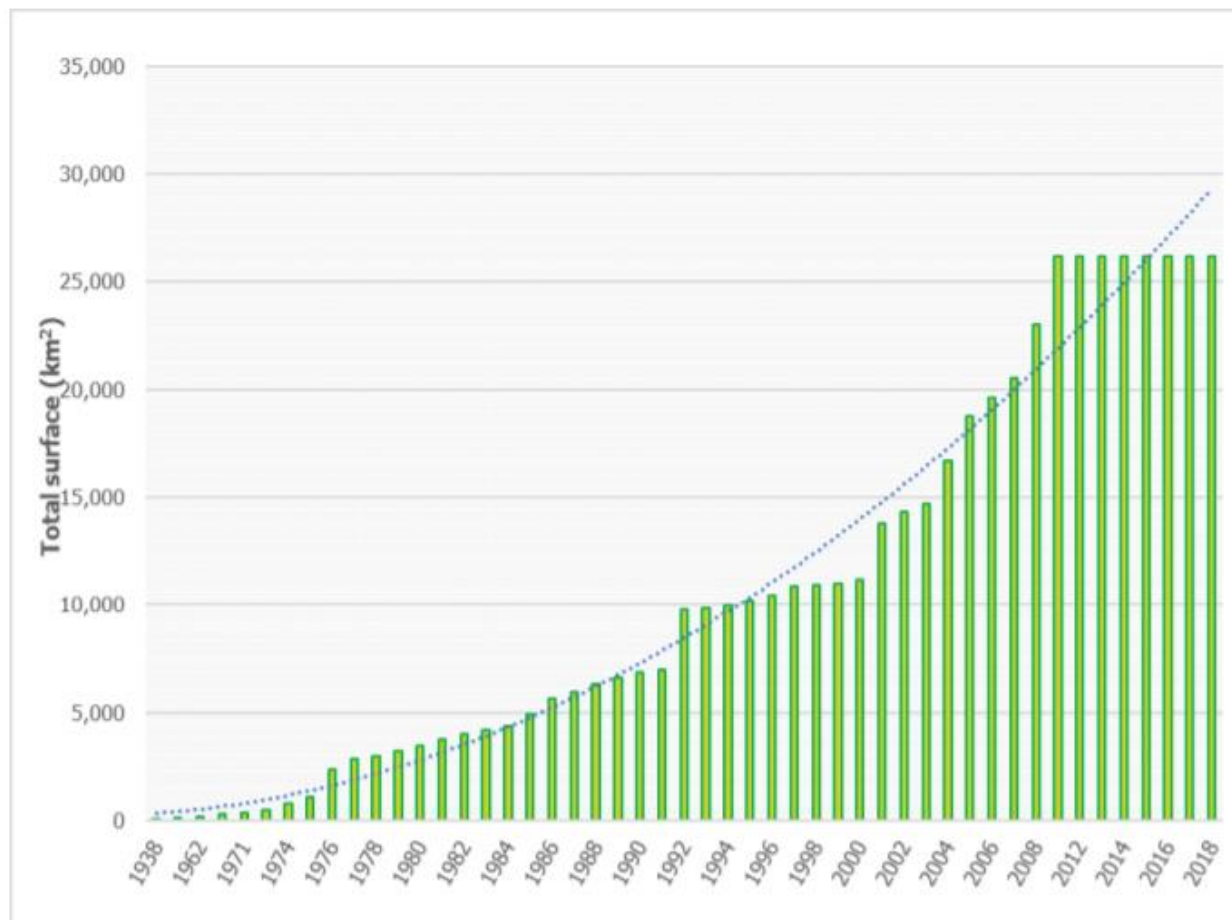
The **Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA)**, formed in 2020, is a Legal Entity of Private Law supervised by the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MEEN).

The aim of NECCA is to implement the policy set by the Ministry of Environment and Energy for (i) the management of protected areas in Greece, the conservation of biodiversity and (ii) the promotion and implementation of actions for sustainable development actions and climate change.



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Trend over time in total (terrestrial and marine) coverage of nationally protected areas (km²) in Greece for the period 1938-2018



* After deduction of overlaps

** Natura 2000 sites (SACs & SPAs) are not included

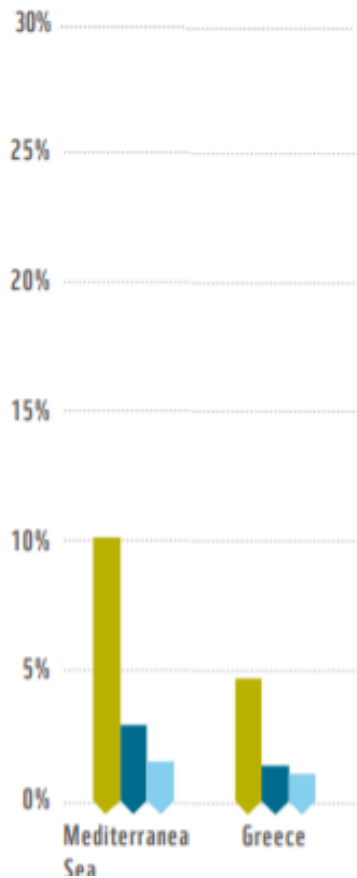
There is an exponential growth in total coverage in the considered period.

There is no change in total coverage of protected areas in Greece since 2012.



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Since 2010, most of the new MPAs in Greece are Natura 2000 sites, established under the binding legislation of the European Birds and Habitats Directives.



■ MPA coverage ■ Marine area with management plan ■ Implemented management plan



Marine Protected Areas in Greece

Most of the designated MPAs are found in the western basin of the Mediterranean. The majority of the eastern basin areas are not officially managed by a designated body, thus resulting in a considerable lack of spatial information regarding ecological features. A significant part of the Mediterranean biodiversity is underrepresented in existing environmental management schemes and remains effectively unprotected.

Management bodies are struggling to fulfil their mandate. They are **small entities** with **limited financial resources** within a sluggish governance system, where most responsibilities related to the management of MPAs and of maritime and coastal activities are dispersed between agencies at different government levels with quite conflicting directives.

Each one is responsible for a number of diverse areas; for example, in the Cyclades the management body oversees 37 sites – marine, terrestrial and freshwater – on 23 islands from only one office.



Network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas Managers (MEDPAN network)

Management Body of the Cyclades Protected Areas – MB-CPA

Management Agency of Dodecanese Protected Areas – MADPA

Management Agency of Aenos National Park

Management Agency of Alonnisos and Northern Sporades **National Marine Park**

Management Agency of Evros and Samothraki Delta Protected Areas

Management Agency of Samaria National Park and Western Crete

Management Authority of Schinias – Marathon National Park, Mount. Hemetus and Southeast Attica region

Management Agency of the Thermaic Gulf

Management Agency of Zakynthos **National Marine Park**



The Gyaros MPA

In 2013, WWF-Greece and partners decided to launch a new approach for the Natura 2000 site of Gyaros, an uninhabited island in the Cyclades that hosts the largest colony of the endangered Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*) in Greece. A key element of the Gyaros initiative has been the active and **full involvement of key national and local stakeholders in the process of the MPA design**. The Gyaros Consortium of Stakeholders was established together with policy makers, local government, scientists, conservationists and local users, including fishers.



The Gyaros MPA

The Consortium also managed to formulate a **comprehensive ecosystem-based management plan**. In addition, an **innovative surveillance and patrolling system** that uses a wide-range marine radar, a high definition infrared camera, and a drone, has been set up and endorsed by the relevant ministers to protect the MPA from illegal activities. In June 2019 the Greek Ministry of the Environment adopted the proposal for the area's zoning and conservation measures and formally designated the Gyaros MPA. The challenge is now to persuade the government to apply similar participatory approaches and comanagement in all Greek MPAs.



The protected area of Northern Karpathos and Saria: the case of the RECONNECT project



RECONNECT aimed to develop strategies for sustainable management.

Three study sites were targeted, threatened by common pressures: the protected area of Northern Karpathos and Saria (Greece), the marine protected area of Kavo Gkreko (Cyprus), and the Natura 2000 site of Gradina-Zlatna Ribka (Bulgaria).

Creating a **transnational cooperative network to confront the environmental threats of ecosystems with a high natural and cultural interest, under a common approach**, was the overall goal.

The **establishment of common practices and a joint regional strategy** were the main challenges. The overall objective was to promote **efficient management of natural systems** and **enhance the competence of management authorities through the development of a Decision Support System**.



The protected area of Northern Karpathos and Saria: the case of the RECONNECT project



The transnational holistic approach promoted more efficient and accurate management practices in the Balkan-Mediterranean area and used both ecological as well as genetic methodologies for biodiversity assessment, as well as socio-economic aspects

RECONNECT project resulted in a new interdisciplinary decision support tool (DSS) that was designed for the conservation of habitat types of special interest. It is the first time that this methodology was applied in the chosen Natura 2000 sites.

It required close collaboration with researchers from various backgrounds and disciplines: from ecology to bioinformatics, from genetics to habitat mapping, from functional biodiversity to socio-economics.



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