



TOGETHER
FOR THE MED

SUMMARY OF THE WEBINAR

From Local Monitoring to Regional Impact: Engaging MPAs and Local NGOs in the Implementation of EcAp and IMAP

Organised by



Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention



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WEBINAR OVERVIEW

This webinar, organised on 20 July 2026, brought together around 60 participants from across the Mediterranean region, including NGOs, marine protected area (MPA) managers, researchers, and institutional representatives.

Participants joined from a broad range of countries and territories, including Sicily, Somalia, Italy, Tunisia, Cyprus, Turkey, and the Balearic Islands.

The session aimed to clarify how local ecological monitoring carried out by MPAs and NGOs can contribute directly to the implementation of UNEP/MAP **Ecosystem Approach (EcAp)** and the **Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP)** under the Barcelona Convention framework.



AGENDA

10:00 – OPENING



Mahmoud Elyes Hamza,
Director of SPA/RAC



Marie-Aude Sévin,
Director of BlueSeeds

10:10 – THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH AND IMAP: A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR MARINE CONSERVATION



Christos Ioakeimidis,
UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit



Samar Kilani,
UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit

10:30 – BIODIVERSITY MONITORING UNDER IMAP: INDICATORS, METHODOLOGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MPAS



Yassine Ramzi Sghaier,
UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC

11:00 – FROM MONITORING TO REPORTING: PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES FROM MPAS



Lobna Ben Nakhla,
UNEP-MAP-SPA/RAC

11:30 – OPEN DISCUSSION

11:55 – CLOSING AND NEXT STEPS

OPENING REMARKS



The webinar opened with welcoming remarks from **Elyes Hamza (SPA/RAC)**, who situated the discussion within SPA/RAC's long-standing regional mandate.

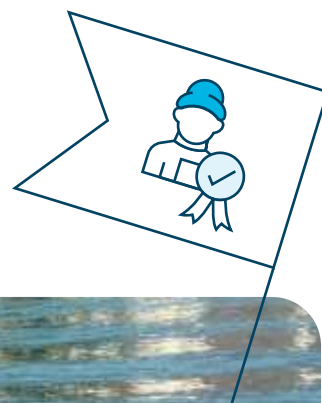
He recalled that, for 40 years, SPA/RAC has worked to preserve Mediterranean biodiversity, support protected areas, and strengthen conservation capacities across the region. He emphasised that marine protected areas are not only conservation tools, but also key monitoring sites that generate essential knowledge on species, habitats, ecosystem pressures, and the effectiveness of conservation measures. He stressed that local information should not remain isolated, but should contribute to national monitoring programmes, regional assessments, and evidence-based decision-making.

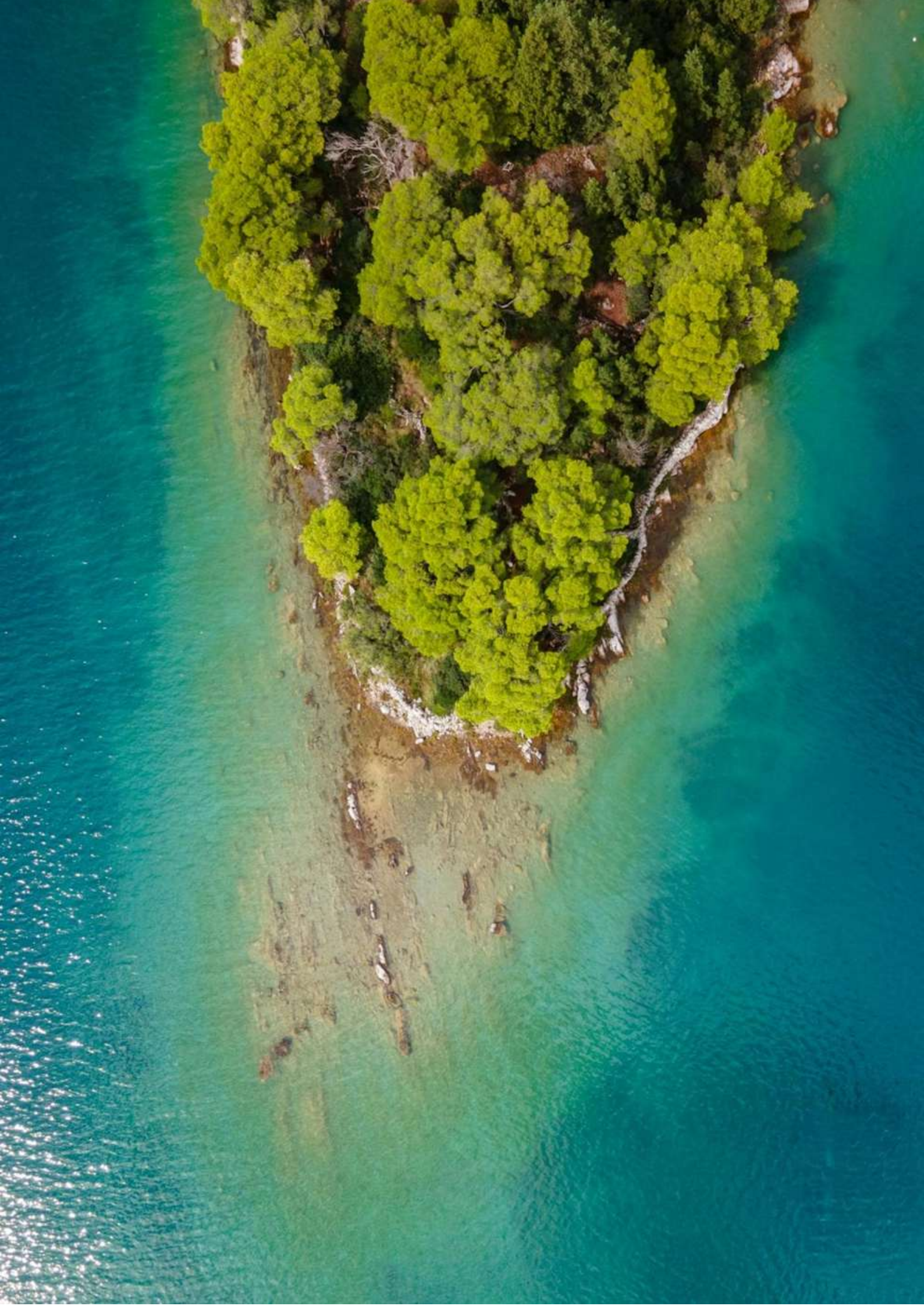
He also noted that the contribution of NGOs and local partners will be essential in preparing the next **Mediterranean Quality Status Report (MedQSR)**.

The second opening intervention was delivered by **Marie-Aude Sévin, Director of BlueSeeds**. She welcomed participants on behalf of BlueSeeds and **Together for the Med**, under whose umbrella the webinar was organised in collaboration with UNEP/MAP and SPA/RAC.

She underlined the importance of strengthening collaboration across all Mediterranean shores, building bridges between regional institutions and local actors, and fostering peer-to-peer learning. She framed the central question of the webinar as follows: how can EcAp and IMAP become truly useful, practical, and accessible for field practitioners?

She stressed that these frameworks should not be seen as distant institutional mechanisms, but rather as practical tools, guidance frameworks, and methodologies that can support day-to-day management and monitoring work. She also encouraged participants to share field-based feedback, noting that these frameworks are iterative and should continue evolving in response to realities on the ground.





OPENING PRESENTATION: POLICY AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The first presentation was delivered by **Christos Ioakeimidis**, who introduced the broader policy framework underpinning EcAp and IMAP. He explained that:

“

ECAP AND IMAP WERE ADOPTED TOGETHER AND DESIGNED TO WORK IN SYNERGY, AND CONNECTED TO OTHER MAJOR REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS...

...including the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2026–2035** and the new **Regional Climate Change Adaptation Framework**. He highlighted that several MSSD targets are directly relevant to IMAP implementation, especially those related to biodiversity, ecosystem health, and environmental status.

Christos also presented key findings from the **2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (QSR)**. He noted that marine protected areas currently cover **9% of the Mediterranean**, still well below the **30% target for 2030**. He

underlined that the number of established non-indigenous species has doubled since 2012, that pollution remains problematic in some areas despite moderate to good conditions in others, and that the Mediterranean continues to be a hotspot for marine litter, especially floating microplastics. He also stressed the growing impact of climate change and explained that work is already underway towards the **2031 MED QSR**, including a roadmap to be presented at the **13th EcAp Coordination Group meeting in November 2026**.

He further described the main categories of pressures affecting the Mediterranean: climate and environmental pressures such as warming, acidification, sea-level rise, and hydrographic change; human-driven pressures such as pollution, marine litter, overfishing, habitat degradation, coastal development, tourism, and non-indigenous species; and governance-related pressures including limited monitoring capacity, uneven cooperation, and enforcement challenges.



PRESENTATION ON THE ECAP MED PLUS PROJECT

The second presentation was delivered by **Samar Kilani**, who introduced the **EcAp Med Plus** project as a major EU-funded initiative supporting EcAp and IMAP implementation in the Mediterranean. She explained that the

Samar outlined the project's four main expected outcomes:

project runs from **March 2024 to 2026** and represents the **fourth phase** of earlier ECAP Med projects launched since 2012. Its beneficiary countries are **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia**.



Updating national IMAPs into a more integrated format covering biodiversity, pollution, and coast/hydrography together;



Strengthening national capacities and ownership;



Updating programmes of measures and national action plans;

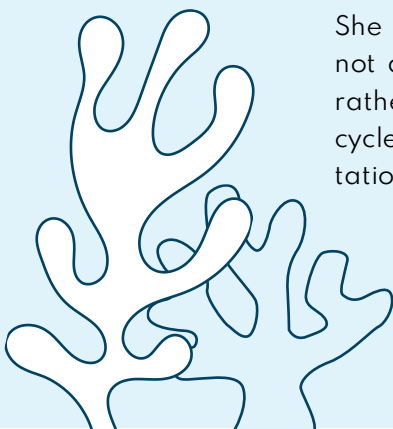


Reinforcing regional governance synergies and the science-policy interface.

She explained that the updated national IMAPs should be completed by **2026** and stressed that the national steering committees established through the project are intended to continue beyond the end of the project, ensuring that monitoring remains dynamic and regularly updated over time.

She also described the practical process for updating national monitoring programmes: assessing gaps in the previous frameworks, coordinating across the main thematic clusters, preparing draft documents, and validating them through national steering committees.

She emphasised that this is not a one-off exercise, but rather part of a long-term cycle of revision, implementation, and improvement.



TECHNICAL PRESENTATION ON BIODIVERSITY MONITORING UNDER IMAP

The third presentation was delivered by **Yassine Ramzi Sghaier**, who provided a detailed and practical explanation of how IMAP biodiversity indicators work, and how they can be applied by NGOs and MPA managers in the field. He framed IMAP as a way of making local observations useful at multiple levels: for site management, for national reporting, and for regional assessment of the state of the Mediterranean Sea.

Yassine explained that IMAP includes **11 ecological objectives**, with biodiversity mainly covered under **EO1** and non-indigenous species are addressed under **EO2**, while Marine Food Webs (**EO4**) and Seafloor Integrity (**EO6**) have been newly developed under IMAP. For **EO1**, he described the monitoring of three priority habitat types: **Posidonia seagrass beds, coralligenous habitats, and Rhodolith beds**. He clarified that monitoring focuses both on habitat distribution and mapping, and on habitat condition, including parameters such as density, fragmentation, leaf mass, and associated fauna.

He then reviewed the species groups monitored under IMAP: **seabirds, marine turtles, cetaceans**, and the **Mediterranean monk seal**. He explained that the programme does not simply aim to confirm species presence or absence, but also to assess distribution, abundance, demography, breeding success, and other population-level parameters using standardised approaches. Regarding non-indigenous species, he noted that countries compile a full inventory every six years and then identify a shortlist of

the most impactful species for more regular monitoring, with particular attention to introduction hotspots such as **ports and marinas located near MPAs**. He also mentioned **eDNA** as an emerging complementary method alongside classical transects and field observation.

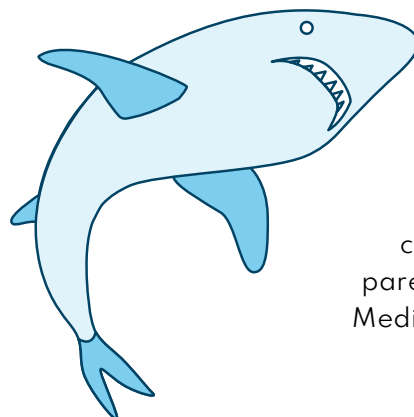
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A CENTRAL MESSAGE OF YASSINE'S PRESENTATION WAS THAT REPEATABILITY MATTERS MORE THAN TECHNICAL SOPHISTICATION.

He stressed that fixed sites, consistent seasons, standard methods, and clear metadata are more valuable than expensive technologies that cannot be maintained over time. He

also explained the importance of minimum metadata, standard Excel-based reporting formats, data dictionaries, and submission through the **IMAP**

InfoSystem, so that data collected locally can be compared and aggregated across the Mediterranean region.



PRACTICAL CASE STUDIES FROM MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES



A further presentation was delivered by **Lobna Ben Nakhla**, who shared concrete examples of how the IMAP framework is being applied in practice in several countries. She explained that SPA/RAC has supported several contracting parties in developing biodiversity monitoring programmes aligned with IMAP, and that current work is focused on updating those programmes in line with the latest EcAp and IMAP decisions.

She presented case studies from **Libya, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia**. In **Libya**, she noted that the **Sheikh Marine Protected Area** in the Gulf of Sirte was delineated using IMAP ecological reports and gap analyses, and that **Farwa Lagoon MPA** has served as a primary testing site for IMAP-related field monitoring. In **Egypt**, she explained that the **Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA)** integrated IMAP ecological objectives into its post-2020 MPA strategy, and that field teams in **Ashtoum El Gamil** were trained to collect harmonised data on issues such as sea turtle nesting and invasive species.

For **Lebanon**, Lobna highlighted bird monitoring carried out at **Tyre Coast Natural Reserve** and **Palm Island**, where **five out of the eleven priority seabird species** were recorded, as well as long-term marine turtle monitoring in southern MPAs. For **Tunisia**, she described the ongoing update of the national IMAP across all three clusters and cited the long-term **loggerhead turtle monitoring at Kuriat Island** as a successful multi-stakeholder example involving public institutions, researchers, MPA authorities, and the NGO **Notre Grand Bleu**.



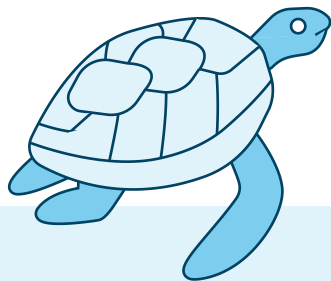


PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Imen Zribi then briefly intervened with a practical example related to marine turtle nesting monitoring.

Using a visual case, she illustrated how a nest located too close to the shoreline could be identified as being at risk and, where appropriate, carefully relocated according to conservation protocols.

She explained that such practical field interventions are an important part of effective monitoring and that these contributions should also be recognised in the preparation of the upcoming **2031 QSR**.



ROLE OF NGOS AND MPA MANAGERS

Across the presentations, a key message emerged very clearly:

“

NGOs AND MPA MANAGERS DO NOT NEED TO CREATE A PARALLEL MONITORING SYSTEM IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMAP.

On the contrary, much of their routine work can already align with IMAP requirements, provided that the monitoring is designed to be repeatable, uses standard methods, includes the required metadata, and is shared through the appropriate national channels.

The speakers outlined a practical five-step approach for MPA managers and local organisations: define the management question and relevant IMAP indicator; choose a feasible and repeatable method; record the essential metadata; transmit the information to the national focal point; and ensure quality control and validation by the competent authority. This framing was particularly useful in showing that IMAP can support local management needs while also contributing to national and regional reporting.

DISCUSSION AND PARTICIPANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS



The webinar concluded with an open discussion. **Ali Badreddin** from **Tyre Coast Reserve (Lebanon)** welcomed the initiative and called for more in-person meetings, deeper exchanges on climate change and non-indigenous species, and stronger use of citizen science approaches. He emphasised the importance of maintaining sustainable, long-term monitoring efforts, particularly in parts of the Mediterranean where data gaps remain significant.

Abdulmaula Hamza from **Libya**, who is currently working on updating the national IMAP across all three clusters, noted that IMAP is becoming increasingly sophisticated and demanding over time. He stressed that while NGO engagement is essential, it must be coordinated carefully with national authorities and scientists to avoid duplication, conflict over responsibilities, or monitoring approaches that do not meet the scientific standards required by IMAP.

In response, **Christos Ioakeimidis** reiterated that EcAp and IMAP are evolving frameworks and that the expansion to **43 indicators** reflects the need for a more complete understanding of the Mediterranean's environmental status. He described the Mediterranean as a regional model for integrated environmental assessment and reaffirmed that UNEP/MAP and its components remain available to support partners and countries in implementation.

Yassine Ramzi Sghaier added that national IMAP committees increasingly include NGO participation, that IMAP and the **MSFD** are being aligned in northern Mediterranean countries to avoid duplication, and that additional communication and awareness materials are being prepared to make the framework more accessible and easier to understand.

CLOSING REMARKS

The webinar closed with a shared recognition that local monitoring efforts can have genuine regional impact when they are embedded in a common methodological and institutional framework. The speakers emphasised that the objective is not to impose new burdens on local organisations, but rather to make better use of the valuable work they

are already carrying out in MPAs and coastal areas across the Mediterranean.

Organisers are open to holding follow-up sessions on specific species, indicators, or technical topics in the future, depending on participants' needs.

Presentations and supporting documentation are available below.

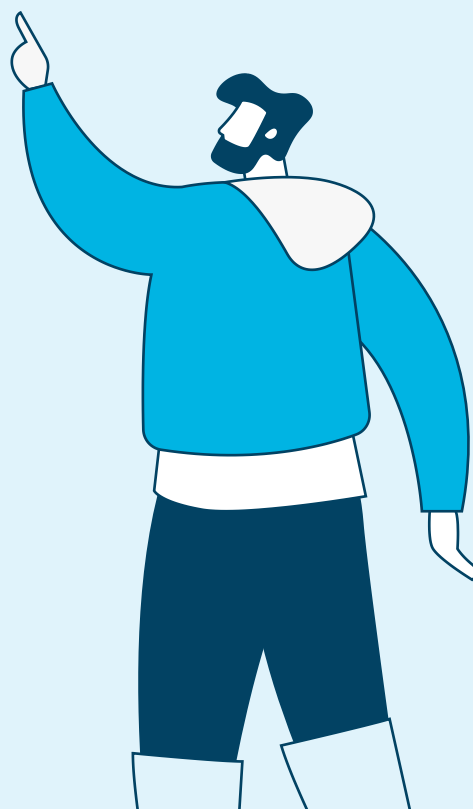
LINK TO THE WEBINAR
PRESENTATION



LINK TO PRESENTATIONS
AND SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTATION



LINK TO THE LAST
2023 MedQSR



ABOUT

TOGETHER FOR THE MED

Since 2017, the Together for the Med partnership has united 50 Mediterranean organisations across 15 countries to drive impactful, science-based conservation efforts. Our mission is to reduce fishing pressures on Mediterranean biodiversity and protect coastal ecosystems and communities.

The partnership brings together a wide range of complementary members—international and local NGOs, global organisations, private companies, and research institutes. Each contributes strengths that, together, make us more effective. Our network spans the Mediterranean basin, with partners and fieldwork sites located across all shores.



LEARN MORE AT:

www.togetherforthemed.org

