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Fourth Steering Committee Meeting of the EU-funded EcAp MED III Project

Videoconference, 30 June 2023

Agenda item 3: Status of Implementation

Progress Report on EcAp MED III Project Implementation

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1. Introduction

1. The project “*Support to Efficient Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach-based Integrated Monitoring and Assessment of the Mediterranean Sea and Coasts and to delivery of data-based 2023 Quality Status Report in synergy with the EU MSFD - (EcAp MED III)*” is funded by the EU/DG ENV. It is coordinated and implemented by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat with MAP Regional Activity Centres (RACs). It has a total budget of USD 2,494,790 for 42 months (end date 29/02/24), covering seven Beneficiary Countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia). The overall aims of EcAp MED III are to a) further assist these Southern Mediterranean Contracting Parties to implement the Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme (IMAP) and b) to contribute to the preparation and delivery of the 2023 Mediterranean Quality Status Report (2023 MED QSR).
2. The Third project Steering Committee (SC) meeting took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 29 November 2022, at the invitation of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat. It was attended by all its Members and by the Representative from Slovenia of the EcAp Coordination Group Vice President.
3. Based on the working documents prepared by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat (UNEP/MED WG.537), the discussion focused two main points: the progress of the project during the period April – September 2022, the workplan revision linked to the no-cost six months extension and the budget reallocations.
4. The SC welcomed the good progress in the implementation of project activities, despite the challenges and constraints and agreed, under some conditions, with the proposal of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat for the a) six months no-cost project extension and related work plan revision and b) project budget reallocations.
5. Following the discussion at the Third SC meeting and the formal submission by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat of a) the request for six months no-cost project extension and the revised work plan and b) the request for the budget reallocations, the EC project Task Officer formally approved the two requests respectively on 19 February 2023 and on 31 March 2023.
6. The objective of this report is to inform the SC in its Fourth meeting about the status of the project implementation and the main milestones ahead until the end of the project in February 2024, in order to support the oversight of the project execution and the related strategic guidance.
7. This report also explains how the issues at stake identified by the Third SC have been addresses and which are the recent developments as well as the lessons learned so far that will be capitalised in the framework of the follow up phase of the EcAp MED III project, the EcAp MED PLUS project that will start in March 2024.

2. Main current achievements

The project falls under the UNEP/MAP Mid-Term Strategies (MTS) 2016-2021 and the Programme of Work (PoW) 2020-2021, as well as the MTS 2022-2027 and PoW 2022-2023.

This section illustrates the main developments of the project since the Third SC held on 29 November 2022 until May 2023 (Section 2.1), including an update on the budget implementation (Section 2.2) and on the project management (Section 2.3).

2.1 Main developments of the project since the Third SC until May 2023

During the Third SC, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat presented the project progress from April until September 2022.

All the information has been included, further framed and detailed within the 2022 Annual Report of the EcAp MED III the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has submitted in mid-February 2023 and covering the period January-December 2022.

In parallel the Annual Report 2022 highlights the relevance of the no-costs six months project extension until 29

February 2024 in order to ensure an efficient achievement of the project planned Outputs, specifically with reference to the following activities that will be implemented in 2023 and finalised by February 2024:

- a) the full development by the Beneficiary Countries of the already signed Small-Scale Funding Agreements (SSFA) for the implementation of the national IMAP and for those countries that by end of 2022 had not signed yet an SSFA (Egypt and Libya for the cluster on pollution and marine litter; Algeria for the cluster on biodiversity);
- b) the finalization of the project activities that are propaedeutic to the delivery of the 2023 MED QSR, as one of the key deliverables of EcAp MED III that will be presented and validated during the COP23 meeting, taking place in Slovenia on 8 December 2023;
- c) the development and launching of the full-fledged website version of the 2023 MED QSR, immediately after its validation of the QSR during the COP23;
- d) the finalization of the expansion of the IMAP Info System and the subsequent support to the Beneficiary Countries.

Since the Third SC of November 2022 until May 2023, project activities have well advanced, partially recovering the delay cumulated in 2021 and in 2022, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has jeopardised the timely implementation of meetings and activities on the ground, coupled with the administrative, technical and in some cases political hurdles faced by some project Beneficiary Countries.

In particular on **Outcome 1** “*Effective ‘on-the-ground’ national IMAP implementation by the beneficiary countries providing quality-assured data that will enable the development of the quality-assured, region-wide and data-based 2023 MED QSR*”, the progress is mainly on track, despite the delays on ‘on-the ground’ monitoring activities for those Beneficiary Countries whose SSFAs for the clusters on pollution and marine litter have been **signed in October/November 2022, namely Tunisia, Lebanon and Algeria (Output 1.1)**.

Given the time constraints for 2023 MED QSR data gathering, the data provided by these Beneficiary Countries will not feed the 2023 MED QSR, however they will keep updating both the IMAP Info System with updated quality ensured data, as well as the constant process of collecting data for next QSR.

Concerning **Egypt**, after a number of efforts, on 28 March 2023 the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has formally communicated to the Ministry of Environment of Egypt the decision to reallocate the funds originally earmarked to support the Country in the implementation of EcAp MED III activities on pollution and marine litter cluster. The decision has been taken in coordination with the project EC Task Officer and after coordinated attempts that have equally involved the EU Delegation in Egypt.

The related unspent budget, summed to the additional amount assigned to Output 1.1 in the framework of the approved project budget reallocations, is being used to **provide Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria with additional funds to implement their national IMAPs on pollution and marine litter cluster**. Negotiation for amending the SSFAs are in the finalisation process (detailed information are provided in the following Sessions). Concerning **Libya**, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has selected the national expert who will implement the EcAp MED III project activities related to the national IMAP pollution and marine litter cluster. Related activities should start indicatively in June.

Concerning **Algeria**, after a number of requests and meetings, SPA/RAC in early June will inform the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy for Biodiversity of Algeria about the decision to reallocate the funds originally earmarked to support Algeria in the implementation of EcAp MED III activities on **biodiversity**. The related unspent budget will be used to provide other Beneficiary Countries with additional funds to implement their national IMAPs on biodiversity.

The **detailed updated framework on the legal agreements** under the project and including those signed with the Beneficiary Countries, is provided in this report, in Section 2.3 on project management.

The implementation of the joint monitoring and assessment programs and pilots for **Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) related to Fisheries** for the agreed 7 Non-Indigenous Species (NIS) in the East Mediterranean sub-region, in synergy with GFCM, are progressing well and are nearly finalised.

The activities for **Common Indicators (CIs) 15 and 16** on coast and hydrography are completed and data collected will be included in the 2023 MED QSR.

The **IMAP Info System** has been expanded to include all mandatory CIs of IMAP, it is fully operational and 1 2023 new datasets are being uploaded.

Assistance and training sessions to Beneficiary Countries have been implemented on quality assured data monitoring and reporting and additional ones are planned.

On **Outcome 2** '*Regional scale progress and consensus for the monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes at national, sub-regional and regional levels*', the work has equally well advanced in the period November 2022 – May 2023. The main activities are related to the preparation and implementation of three Thematic CORMON meetings held in March (CORMON Pollution and Marine Litter on 1-3 March; CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries on 9-10 March; CORMON Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March), as well as the preparation on the integrated CORMON meeting that will be held on 27-29 June 2023.

These CORMON meetings represent a crucial milestone in view of advancing on the elaboration of the 2023 MED QSR, while the outcomes of the activities held in the framework of project **Output 2.1.1** '*Analysis for each IMAP cluster on knowledge gaps, with a focus on the scales of assessment/reporting prepared/agreed and scales of monitoring for all IMAP CIs agreed/progressed*' and **Output 2.1.2** '*Assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP CIs included in the current IMAP Pilot Info System as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)*' have nourished the development of the documents propaedeutic to the contents of the 2023 MED QSR.

In parallel, the time plan and the main steps for the update of the 2023 MED QSR website have been defined and the first version of the website structure has been developed and discussed with the 2023 MED QSR Task Force of UNEP MAP. The website will be launched in conjunction with the COP 2023 validation of the 2023 MED QSR.

The first pilot of the Science Policy Interface (SPI) component took place in Morocco in March, involving scientific centres and laboratories and the report, including the methodology and main outcome have been finalised.

Based on the EcAp MED III 2022 Annual Report that covers the period 1 January - 31 December 2022, the following table summarises the main developments of the project since last SC, held on 29 November 2022 and until May 2023. Related information is highlighted in blue colour for easier reference.

Main developments of EcAp MED III project since last SC held on 29 November 2022 and until May 2023

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
1.1: National and Joint Monitoring carried out of selected Common Indicator(s) (CIs) in beneficiary countries based on national IMAP	1.1.1 Number of monitored and assessed IMAP CIs per beneficiary country	Target: 12 per each project beneficiary country Baseline: 0 Actual: - Algeria: 6 - Egypt: 5 - Israel: 6 - Lebanon: 11 - Libya: 5 - Morocco: 11 - Tunisia: 9	Ongoing. The CIs under implementation per BC based on national monitoring plans is as follows: - Algeria: CIs 13, 14, 16, 17, 22, 23 - Egypt: CIs 3, 4, 5, 6, 16 - Israel: CIs 3, 4, 5, 6, 22, 23 - Lebanon: CIs 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 - Libya: 3,4, 5, 6, 16 - Morocco: CIs 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23 - Tunisia: CIs 3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 23 In the period November 2022-May 2023, the efforts to define a SSFA to implement project activities at national level with Algeria (biodiversity cluster - CIs 3, 4, 5) and with Egypt (pollution and marine litter cluster - CIs 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23) have not led to the wished developments. Egypt has been already officially informed about the decision to reallocate the funds originally earmarked to support the implementation of EcAp MED III activities at national level, while Algeria is being informed by SPA/RAC.
	1.1.2 Number of national quality assurance and quality control programmes prepared	Minimum one per CI per country Baseline: 0 Actual: - Algeria: 1 - Egypt: 5 - Israel: 6 - Lebanon: 1 - Libya: 5 - Morocco: 11 - Tunisia: 4	The available unspent budget has been allocated to other Beneficiary Countries to implement additional sample collections covering one additional season and further populate the IMAP Info System with quality data and to pilot test the CHASE + monitoring methodology. Accordingly, exception made for Israel, the SSFAs are about to be extended until December 2023. For Libya (pollution and marine litter cluster - CIs 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23) the national expert has been selected. On 6/8 December the project officers of the three EU funded projects - EcAp MED III, Marine Litter MED II and IMPA-MPA organised a joint mission to Tunisia to meet and follow-up with the designated national teams, experts and members of national IMAP committees, to review in detail the activities implemented, respective implementation workplans and budgets, and assess potential need of adaptation and corrective factors for the 3 projects. With reference to the EcAp MED III, the main outcomes concerned the follow up actions in terms of definition of a precise time plan for the monitoring and quality data reporting.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
			On 22 March 2023 a meeting took place in Athens with the project team of Lebanon. An update of the implementation of the activities in Lebanon was discussed, as well as the main activities to be included in the extension of the SSFA and related additional budget.
	1.1.3 Number of sets of data reported to IMAP Info System per country	Target: Minimum 3 for EO5, EO9, EO10; minimum 1 for EO1 Baseline: Number of Datasets as described in 2017 MED QSR Actual:	Ongoing. New available datasets per Ecological Objective (EO) have been uploaded in IMAP Info System: the total reporting is available for 371 valid datasets. More specifically the number of datasets for EO: - EO1: 4 Israel, 4 Morocco - EO2: 1 Israel, 5 Morocco - EO5: 4 Algeria, 14 Egypt, 34 Israel, 10 Lebanon, 6 Morocco, 26 Tunisia - EO8: 1 Algeria, 4 Morocco, 8 Tunisia, 1 Lybia - EO9: 2 Algeria, 5 Egypt, 23 Israel, 6 Lebanon, 22 Morocco, 14 Tunisia - EO10: 11 Israel, 3 Lebanon, 7 Morocco, 5 Tunisia Additional data are been elaborated and will be further uploaded.
	1.1.4 Number of national institutions involved in the process	Target: Minimum 2 per cluster per country Baseline: 0 Actual: - Algeria: 2 - Egypt: 2 - Israel: 2 - Lebanon: 2 - Libya: 1 - Morocco: 2 - Tunisia: 2	Achieved The Project involved up to two key national institutions and beneficiary countries appointed the national institutions that are in charge of IMAP implementation: - Algeria: the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy for Biodiversity and the National Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development (for Coast and Hydrography) and the National Waste Agency (Pollution and Marine Litter). - Egypt: the Ministry of Environment and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (for all clusters). - Israel: the Nature and Parks Authority (for Biodiversity and NIS) and the Oceanographic and Limnological Institute (for Pollution and Marine Litter as well as Coast and Hydrography) - Lebanon: the Ministry of Environment and the National Council for Scientific Research (for Biodiversity and NIS; Pollution and Marine Litter; Coast and Hydrography) - Libya: Ministry of Environment (for biodiversity). The selected national expert who will implement the activities for the pollution and marine litter cluster will liaise with relevant national stakeholders, including the Ministry of Environment - Morocco: the Ministry of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment (for Biodiversity as well as Coast and Hydrography, and the National Laboratory for Pollution Research and Monitoring (for Pollution and Marine Litter) - Tunisia: the Agency for Coastal Protection and Management Agency (for Biodiversity) and the National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technology (for Pollution and Marine Litter)

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
	1.1.5 Number of assessment factsheets at national and sub-regional and/or regional level	Target: Minimum 6 national and 6 sub-regional/regional assessment factsheets Baseline: Existing factsheets and information in the 2017 MED QSR Actual: national and sub-regional/regional assessment included as chapters of the 2023 Med QSR	Ongoing Sub-regional and regional assessments are being prepared by MAP Components as chapters for the 2023 Med QSR, also based on data delivered under Output 1.1 and other sources. As there has been an important delay by the Beneficiary Countries in implementing the monitoring activities planned under Output 1.1 and it was recognised that national factsheets were not needed per se as they could not be incorporated into the QSR. Instead, training activities on assessment have been organised by the IMAP-MPA project that have been attended also by the experts from the EcAp MED III Beneficiary Countries. In the same line, as the assessments for the 2023 Med QSR are transboundary and are carried out at the sub-regional and regional scale, rather than developing sub-regional/regional assessment factsheets, the MAP Components recognised it was more coherent to prepare sub-regional and regional assessment as chapters for the 2023 MED QSR, rather than separated factsheets. Where possible, assessments have been aggregated and presented at the whole region scale. The number of (sub)regional assessments varies per Ecological Objective, depending on data availability. The sub-regional and regional assessment have been prepared by MAP Components for consideration and discussion in the framework of thematic CORMON meetings in March 2023 (CORMON Pollution and Marine Litter on 1-3 March; CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries on 9-10 March; CORMON Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March) and will be further discussed during the meeting of the integrated CORMON of 27 and 28 June 2023.
1.2: Joint monitoring pilots designed and implemented	1.2.1 Number of joint (sub-regional) monitoring pilots designed and implemented	Target: 1 pilot implemented in East Mediterranean sub-region Baseline: 0 Actual: 0	Ongoing Activities are ongoing for the agreed NIS related to fisheries in the East Mediterranean sub-region, in synergy with the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). 1 pilot joint sub-regional monitoring pilot has been designed and has been implemented in East Mediterranean sub-region. The four Beneficiary countries, concerned with this activity are working on the collection of data on 7 fish invasive species: • Israel: finished and report provided • Egypt: surveys finished and data finalization is almost complete. Report to be provided • Lebanon: field survey is ongoing. Data finalization and Report to be provided • Libya: filed survey is ongoing. Data finalization and Report to be provided
	1.2.2 Number of countries participating in joint sub-regional monitoring programmes	Target: 3 countries Baseline: 0 Actual: 3 countries	Achieved NIS baselines were validated by the CORMON biodiversity meeting in March 2022 and endorsed by the 9th EcAp Coordination Group meeting in July 2022 for their use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR. In addition to the project BCs (Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon), other Contracting Parties, i.e. Cyprus, Greece and Türkiye were also involved in this activity.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
	1.2.3 Number of species monitored under sub-regional monitoring programmes on NIS	Target: 7 agreed species Baseline: 0 Actual: 7	Achieved The list of NIS was prepared as a first step for the elaboration of a baseline assessment, in collaboration with GFCM and in synergy, as appropriate, with the work performed at EU level by JRC. The March 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting validated the document UNEP/MED WG.520/5 and UNEP/MED baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species and endorsed by the 9th EcAp CG meeting for their use for the purpose of the 2023 Med QSR. The results of the sub-regional and regional analysis have been reviewed by the Thematic CORMON meeting of 9-10 March 2023. 7 Agreed species: 1. Saurida lessepsianus (Russell, Golani & Tikochinski, 2015)* 2. Lagocephalus sceleratus (Gmelin, 1789) * 3. Pterois miles (Bennett, 1828) * 4. Siganus rivulatus (Forsskål & Niebuhr, 1775) 5. Siganus luridus (Rüppell, 1829) 6. Fistularia commersonii (Rüppell, 1838) 7. Plotosus lineatus (Thunberg, 1787) * Species already on the priority list of GFCM DCRF for monitoring purposes.
	1.2.4 Number of baseline sub-regional assessment for NIS	Target: 1 Baseline assessment for the 7 agreed NIS for the East Mediterranean sub-region, and 1 regional baseline for the entire list of NIS Baseline: 0 Actual: 1	Achieved Based on the work done in 2021, the March 2022 CORMON biodiversity meeting discussed the document UNEP/MED WG.520/5 and UNEP/MED baseline for the IMAP Common Indicator 6 related to Non-Indigenous Species. The 9th EcAp CG meeting endorsed it for its use for the purpose of the 2023 MED QSR preparation.
	1.2.5 Number of sets of data on NIS reported to IMAP Info	Target: Minimum 1 set of data on 7 agreed NIS reported to IMAP Info System per participating country Baseline: 0	Ongoing. EO2: 1 Israel, 5 Morocco Additional data are being elaborated and will be further uploaded.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
	System	Actual: - Algeria: 0 - Egypt: 0 - Israel: 1 - Lebanon: 0 - Libya: 0 - Morocco: 1 - Tunisia: 0	
1.3: Undertake baseline sub-regional assessments for CI 15 and support implementation of monitoring of CI 16 in at least one area per beneficiary country	1.3.1 Number of baseline sub-regional assessments for CI 15	Target: At least 1 per sub-region for CI 15 Baseline: 0 Actual: 6 baseline national assessments	Achieved. According to the Guidance CI 15 (hydrographic alterations) the first set of monitoring data and related narrative reports were completed by the three remaining countries (Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt). As there were no data available for the CI 15 for the project Beneficiary Countries, first national baseline status reports had to be prepared, instead of just one sub-regional report. Such national reports were also more relevant in terms of 2023 QSR preparation.
	1.3.2 Number of sets of data reported for CI 16	Target: At least one for each of the 6 beneficiary countries Baseline: 0 Actual: 6	Achieved. The preparation of country reports has been completed in all remaining countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Israel and Algeria). The work has been completed and the results are being analyzed for the inclusion in the 2023 Med QSR (EO7).
	1.3.3 Number of reports presenting lessons learned	Target: 1 report Baseline: 0 Actual: 1	Achieved. The report on lessons learned has been prepared by an external consultant. It is being used for the preparation of the Chapters on EOs 7 and 8 of the 2023 QSR.
1.4: IMAP Info System expanded to include all mandatory CI of IMAP, fully operational enabling	1.4.1 Percentage of mandatory CIs of IMAP included in IMAP Info System	Target: 100% (all mandatory CIs included – EO3 not included) Baseline: 65% Actual: 94%	Ongoing Data Standards (DSs) and Data Dictionaries (DDs) for all mandatory Common Indicators were developed and completed by INFO/RAC in close cooperation with the competent MAP Components to be implemented as correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System. The first three (CI 3, 4, 5) have been revised with support of ACCOBAMS and the online working groups (OWGs) on marine mammals, marine reptiles and marine birds. The final version integrating inputs by beneficiary countries was adopted by the 2022 CORMON biodiversity

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
the Contracting Parties to report their monitoring data in 2020, 2021 and 2022			meeting (UNEP/MED WG.520/6, UNEP/MED WG.500/7, UNEP/MED WG.500/8). DSs and DDs for CIs 18 and 20 have been adopted by the CORMON pollution (27-30 May 2022). With the support of the EU-funded project Marine Litter MED II, Candidate Indicator 24 has been adopted by the CORMON marine litter (31 May 2022) and is pending the final revision of INFO/RAC in 2023. In 2022, INFO/RAC started the development of CI 19 in close cooperation with REMPEC which is pending approval by REMPEC Focal Points Meeting in June 2023. The implementation of the correspondent data flows in the IMAP Info System for C19 and candidate CI 24 is being implemented in 2023.
	1.4.2 Number of countries supported to facilitate quality assured reporting of monitoring data	Target: 5 additional countries Baseline: 65% Actual: 7	Ongoing During the reporting period, INFO/RAC ensured continuous and regular assistance to Beneficiary Countries, including constant contacts with IMAP User network, support in accessing the Info System, comprehension of data reporting, capacity to fill in DSs and perform the quality check, complete validation process, and replace corrected files. In 2022, INFO/RAC has also organized the workshops on IMAP training/assistance for the following Beneficiary Countries: 2 with Israel, 2 with Morocco (1 on Biodiversity, 1 on Coast and Hydrography cluster), 1 with Libya and 1 with Lebanon. Additional workshops are planned for Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt in 2023, with the specific schedule to be determined.
	1.4.3 IMAP Data policy availability	Target: IMAP Data policy available and reviewed by CORMONS Baseline: Roadmap available Actual: 0, in process	Ongoing. The IMAP Data Policy was developed in close cooperation with the MAP components and the involvement of the Contracting Parties. It was reviewed by CORMONS, adopted by the EcAp CG meeting in September and endorsed by COP 22 in December 2021. In addition, INFO/RAC has started to develop an IMAP Data Policy Annex to facilitate its implementation by Contracting Parties and to be submitted to COP23.
	1.4.4 Number of Data flows implemented	Target: Data flows for all the IMAP CIs (EO3 not included) implemented and IMAP Info System completed and fully operational Baseline: Pilot Info	Ongoing. The migration of data from MEDPOL database into the IMAP Info System was fully completed by June 2022, including also further historical data provided by some countries. The IMAP Info System is fully operational for the initial set of 11 CIs (12 modules) and has been updated in view of the implementation of the new data flows Fine-tuning of the Info System has been ensured in 2022 in view of the implementation of the new data flows for CIs 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 20. The implementation of the new data flows for candidate CI 24 has started being implemented in early 2023.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
		System available for 11 CIs Actual: 1, in process	
2.1.1: Analysis for each IMAP cluster on knowledge gaps, with a focus on the scales of assessment/reporting prepared/agreed and scales of monitoring for all IMAP CIs agreed/progressed	2.1.1.1 Number of CI analyzed with regards to knowledge gaps with focus on assessment scales	Target: At least 5 CI Baseline: Analysis provided in CI guidance factsheets Actual: 15	Ongoing. MED POL Programme implemented activities to address the following key priority needs towards a GES assessment of the 2023 MED QSR: a) Development of scale(s) of monitoring, assessment and reporting, to enable comparable data sets and assessments b) Development of the necessary methodological tools and assessment criteria to be agreed on to allow and promote integrated assessment of GES c) Development of monitoring protocols and data quality assurance and quality control for IMAP Common Indicators are to be made available to guide Contracting Parties d) Supporting national capacities and address knowledge gaps to ensure region-wide coherence and data availability e) Join forces with regional partners and streamline project implementation based on IMAP criteria to enable input process in a coordinate manner. In particular MED POL conducted research on national capacity and knowledge gaps are to be addressed to ensure region-wide coherence and data availability. With reference to the lack of data reported for all IMAP Common Indicators related to eutrophication (EO 5), pollution (EO 9) and marine litter (EO 10) alternative sources were also explored and put in use, as appropriate and feasible. As a result of the differences in the availability of data between the 4 Mediterranean subregions, several limitations were encountered in the definition of assessment criteria and the assessment of the status of marine environment. MED POL elaborated the data and information and presented its progress on CI 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and CCIs 26 and 27 at the 1-2 March 2023 Thematic CORMON meeting on pollution and marine litter. Relevant documents have been updated for further discussion in the framework of the integrated CORMON meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023. The activities implemented by SPA RAC on Output 2.1.2: '<i>Assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP CIs included in the current IMAP Pilot InfoSystem as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)</i>', equally covered knowledge gaps with focus on assessment scales related to EO 1 and EO 2. SPA/RAC has also conducted a desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean and under MSFD for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage for review by CORMON in view of supporting the development of Common Indicators under EO6.
	2.1.1.2 Number of CI covered by monitoring and assessment scales	Target: At least 5 CI Baseline: As provided for in respective CI guidance factsheets Actual: 0, in process	

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
			This inventory, that covers gaps of knowledge about EO6, served also as basis for development of the Ecological Objective 6 under the EU funded project ABBIOMED. The report was reviewed by SPA/RAC and presented to the Online Working Group on benthic habitat. During 9-10 March 2023 CORMON Thematic Meeting on Biodiversity and fisheries, the desk review has been presented as information document along with the EO 6 proposal. Relevant documents have been updated in view of the integrated CORMON meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023.
2.1.1.3 Availability of proposal on integrated scales of assessment		Target: Proposal on integrated scales of assessment submitted to CORMON Baseline: Document WG.467/7 Actual: 0, in progress	Ongoing. MEDPOL worked on setting the integration and aggregation rules for monitoring and assessment including: - the methodology for proposing the spatial scales of assessment from the scales of monitoring as defined in national IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster monitoring programmes, as well as by also considering the areas of assessment as defined in national MSFD monitoring strategies by the Contracting Parties which are EU Member States - the rules for integration of monitoring and assessment areas within the IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster (EO5, EO9, EO10), considering also interrelation with the Coast & Hydrography (EO6, EO7) and Biodiversity (EO1) Clusters - the rules for aggregation – integration of assessments for specific IMAP Common Indicators/Ecological Objectives towards integrated GES assessment for IMAP Pollution and Marine Litter Cluster Achievements also included the development, testing and implementation of the following GES and alternative environmental assessment methodologies by applying the above defined integration and aggregation rules along with the sales of assessment, the assessment criteria and the DPSIR approach within the IMAP nested scheme: i) the NEAT IMAP GES assessment methodology along the nested areas of assessment (CIs 13, 14 and 17); ii) the CHASE+ assessment methodology (CIs 13, 14 and 17); iii) the Ecological Quality Ratio (EQR) (CIs 13 and 14); iv) the simplified EQR methodology (CI 14); v) the simplified G/M assessment comparison methodology (CI 14); vi) the assessment approach for biological effects based on the use of the literature sources; vii) the assessment approach for contaminants in seafood based on the concentration limits for the contaminants regulated in EU; viii) the assessment approach for bathing water quality based on the complementary use of the assessment results as presented in the Assessment report from the European Environment Agency (EEA) on the State of Bathing Water Quality in 2020 and the assessment of monitoring data reported for IMAP; and ix) the adapted exposure index and assessment methodology as provided in the document “Setting of EU Threshold Values for impulsive and continuous underwater sound. The outcomes of this work have been presented within the thematic CORMON meeting on Pollution on 1-2 March 2023. Relevant documents are being updated for further discussion in the framework of the integrated CORMON meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
2.1.2: Assessment criteria/thresholds/baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP CIs included in the current IMAP Pilot InfoSystem as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)	2.1.2.1 Number of CIs with updated/new assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values	Target: 10 IMAP CIs and one candidate indicator (Noise) Baseline: Existing assessment criteria for Pollution/Marine litter CI Actual: 11 CIs Two candidate indicators on Noise, 26 and 27	Ongoing During the March 2022 CORMON on biodiversity, the document on monitoring and assessment elements for the IMAP Common Indicators 3, 4 and 5 related to sea birds (UNEP/MED WG.520/4) was validated, and assessment criteria were endorsed for the 2023 MED QSR. Regarding IMAP EO 10 on marine litter, also with the support of the EU-funded Marine Litter MED II project, the May 2022 CORMON presented and reviewed the guidelines for monitoring riverine inputs of marine litter and approved the Data Standards (DS) and Data Dictionaries (DD) for IMAP candidate indicator 24. The first draft document for elaborating updated baseline values and to propose thresholds values for IMAP CI 23 (seafloor macro- and floating micro-litter) is prepared. It has been presented during the CORMON Thematic Meeting on Marine Litter on 3 March 2023. Given the limited data submitted by the Contracting Parties for all IMAP Common Indicators related to pollution and eutrophication, alternative sources were also explored and put to use, as appropriate and feasible. The May 2022 CORMON Pollution Meeting provided its feedback regarding the progress related to the IMAP Pollution Cluster within the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, along with a review and approval of the proposed assessment criteria for IMAP Common Indicator 17; new reference and boundary values for IMAP Common Indicator 13; as well as the maximum regulatory levels for CI 20 that are aligned with EU regulations. Further to new and/or updated assessment criteria for Common Indicators 13, 17 and 20, the assessment methodologies set for IMAP Common Indicators 13, 14; 17 and 21, as well as the proposed use of the literature sources for IMAP Common Indicators 18 and 20, work has been progressing towards the finalization of the assessment findings per sub-divisions integrated and aggregated into the assessment findings for Mediterranean sub-regions. A SSFA was signed by the beginning of December 2022 with ACCOBAMS for the monitoring and assessment, as well as the reporting processes at national, sub-regional and regional levels on Ecological Objective (EO) 11 – Energy including Underwater Noise – and its two Candidate Common Indicator CCI 26, Proportion of days and geographical distribution where loud, low and mid-frequency impulsive sounds exceed levels that are likely to entail significant impact on marine animal and CCI 27, Levels of continuous low frequency sound with the use of models as appropriate. Accordingly, ACCOBAMS has supported the preparation of the initial assessment findings on two Candidate Common Indicator CCI 26 and CCI 27 to be presented in the framework of the thematic CORMON meeting on Pollution on 1-2 March 2023, proving the technical assessment proposal of the noise related measures for Section 6 of the IMAP Pollution Chapters of the 2023 MED QSR The technical assessment is being updated for the integrated CORMON meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
			With reference to CI 16, the comments and suggestions provided by the November 2021 CORMON meeting on the assessment criteria and the Guiding document for the application of assessment criteria for CI 16 were taken into account and the document was finalized in 2022. The document was edited and is available in English and French languages. The guiding document for the application of assessment criteria for CI 16 was tested in Morocco and the main outcomes have been shared in the framework of the thematic CORMON meeting on Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March 2023.
2.1.3: Regular regional/sub-regional expert group meetings, i.e., expert group per sub-region per topic established and operational to address monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols and assessment criteria	2.1.3.1 Number of regional and sub-regional expert group meetings	Target: At least one regional expert group meeting per cluster, and one per sub-region per cluster, per year back-to-back with CORMON Baseline: Regional and sub-regional meetings conducted under EcAp MED II project Actual: 0	Ongoing. The CORMONs in spring 2022 were held online, limiting the opportunity for back-to-back expert group meetings of national IMAP country teams. The project supports the preparation and implementation of the Integrated CORMON meeting on 27-29 June 2023 with the objective of further advancing on the development of the 2023 MED QSR.
2.1.4: Support to CORMON meetings per cluster ensuring strong participation and inputs to its work from expert networks established at sub regional level for the beneficiary countries	2.1.4.1 Number of CORMON meetings organized and supported	Target: At least one per cluster per year and two integrated Baseline: 7 CORMON meetings between 2017-2019 Actual: 7	Ongoing. 3 technical CORMON meetings took place in early 2023 which have also reviewed the draft chapters of the 2023 MED QSR: - CORMON Pollution and Marine Litter on 1-3 March - CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries on 9-10 March - CORMON Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
2.2.1: Establish and implement a communication and visibility strategy for the MED 2023 QSR; Outreach to key partners	2.2.1.1 Availability of communication and visibility strategy for 2023 MED QSR	Target: Communication and visibility strategy available Baseline: None Actual: 1	Ongoing In addition to the already reported communication and visibility activities (2023 MED QSR Communication and Visibility Strategy drafted and approved by the 8th EcAp CG during the meeting on 09/09/21; the brochure 'A push for the achievement of Good Environmental Status in the Mediterranean'; a 2-minute video: webpage dedicated to the Project which is regularly updated) achievements under EcAp MED III were illustrated by regular publication of news features on the Project webpage and press briefs in newsletters and social media. In particular during the Q1 2023 a revision of the UNEP/MAP Projects website page https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/projects has been planned and is being developed, reflecting the list of updated achievements. EcAp MED III has supported the activities of the UNEP/MAP Secretariat on media engagement in order to promote the concrete results and cooperation the projects support and promote. Accordingly, the briefing paper '<i>An action agenda for healthy marine ecosystems and coastlines in the Mediterranean</i>' has been developed and it currently under finalization.
	2.2.1.2 Availability of a collaboration mechanism and Partnership Plan for the 2023 MED QSR	Target: Collaboration mechanism and Partnership Plan available Baseline: None Actual: 1	Ongoing. The list of partners and the cooperation mechanism was identified by the EcAp CG for contribution to the 2023 QSR and was annexed to the 2021 annual report. Mechanism has been established and operational. There is bilateral cooperation between MAP Components and partner organisations to discuss whether and how their data and information could be used. Within the preparation of the 2023 MED QSR, the use of EMODnet data and COPERNICUS products was ensured as feasible and appropriate. In collaboration with ACCOBAMS, the preparation of the initial assessment findings is foreseen, further to the availability of the assessment products from the ongoing and/or realised projects related to noise monitoring and assessment across the Mediterranean. GFCM confirmed its involvement in the elaboration of the chapter on EO3 related to fisheries in the 2023 QSR as well as on the EO2 (NIS) about the sub-regional activity, monitoring and assessment of the seven invasive species related to fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean beneficiary countries under the EcAp MED III project. The cooperation continues in view of the integrated CORMON meeting that will take place on 27-29 June and will further discuss the contents of the chapters of the 2023 MED QSR.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
2.2.2: Strengthen SPI networks of scientists and policy makers for the IMAP and its implementation; Design and implement 1-2pilots at country level	2.2.2.1 Number of nationalSPI pilot networks established	Target: 2 pilot national SPI networks established Baseline: 0 Actual: 1	Achieved A consortium was selected by Plan Bleu in April 2022 to work on the SPI component from spring 2022 to spring 2023. The SPI component has been implemented in Morocco in close collaboration with the IMAP-MPA project. Work started by identifying existing relevant national mechanisms and processes as well as SPI frameworks in place involving scientific centres/laboratories and institutions that follow the implementation of environmental policies (coastal and marine particularly). The work focused on two common indicators (1 and 15). An advisory committee was set up at the launch of the activity, composed of Moroccan scientific experts and some from the ministry of environment. The deliverable “SPI frameworks and processes regarding monitoring of IMAP Common Indicators 1 & 15 in Morocco” has been developed, reviewed and finalized by Q1 2023. The national workshop in Morocco took place back-to-back with on 28-29 March 2023 CORMON meeting on coast and hydrography.
	2.2.2.2 Number of SPI workshops organized	Target: 2 national SPI workshops and 1 regional SPI workshop Baseline: 5 regional SPI workshops under EcAp MED II project Actual: 1 national SPI workshops	
2.2.3: Develop and implement a timeline for regional data sharing between partners	2.2.3.1 Availability of agreement and timeline with regional partners for data sharing	Target: Agreement and timeline for data sharing available Baseline: None Actual: Agreement and timeline for data sharing available	Achieved. Further to the meeting held in 2021 with partners on filling the science or data gaps is possible with comparable data of other regional organisations, scientific projects, pilot outcomes, or scientific literature bilateral talks were held to discuss whether and how their individual data and information could be used. Additional follow up meetings took place in 2022 between UNEP/Map and relevant partners, based on the timeline to provide thematic assessment chapters of the QSR to the relevant thematic CORMONs meetings in March 2023. In particular: - GFCM worked with SPA/RAC to provide the EO3 chapter of the QSR. - ACCOBAMS provided first noise assessment (EO11) and contributing to the litter assessment (EO10) - EMODnet data and the EEA’s report were used to on pressure on seabed habitats, contributing to EO1 - Mercator Ocean was contacted for contributing to CI 15 hydrographic parameters (EO 7) and COPERNICUS data for CCI 25 land-use change Some additional contribution might be provided by GFCM on EO3.

Output(s)	Indicator(s)	Target	Description
2.2.4: Develop and Publish 2023 MED QSR in 2 languages; make it available online and present at COP 23	2.2.4 Availability of 2023 MED QSR	Target: 2023 MED QSR Published Baseline: 2017 MED QSR Actual: Actual: 0, in process	Ongoing. The July 2022 9th EcAp Coordination Group approved a more elaborated 2023 MED QSR annotated contents that builds on the previously endorsed methodology, structure, and content of the QSR. A detailed report per CI and EO on the current state of progress and the anticipated content of the QSR 2023 – assessment criteria, baselines, threshold values, assessment methods & scales, data availability, and integration possibilities – was also presented to the 9th EcAp Coordination Group. Draft 2023 MED QSR assessment Chapters were discussed at an in-person meeting of the IMAP Task Force 3-4 November, Athens. During December 2022 and January 2023, the MAP clusters prepared the QSR chapters for the consideration of the three thematic CORMONs meetings in March 2023 (CORMON Pollution and Marine Litter on 1-3 March; CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries on 9-10 March; CORMON Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March). Plan Bleu has prepared a draft socio-economic chapter of the QSR for the consideration of a COR-ESA meeting in March 2023. In parallel, the Coordinating Unit has been drafting the introductory chapters. The Integrated CORMONs meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023, will review the draft of the whole 2023 MED QSR. The main objectives and structure of the updated 2023 MED QSR website have been discussed with the EcAp Task Force during the second semester 2022 and a detailed implementation plan defined with INFO/RAC, while discussions with University of Geneva (GRID Geneva) has advanced on website maps.

2.2 Budget implementation

On mid-May 2023, at **overall budget implementation level**, the EcAp MED III total released budget for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 is at the level of USD 2,166,787.28 (98,5% of the total approved budget) with the consumed budget reaching USD 1,644,277.08 (Commitments plus Actual Expense, equal to 75% of the approved budget and 76% of the released budget).

The project has received cash of total USD 1,925,667 and the process for releasing the 4th and final installment (USD 274,333.00) is undergoing.

Table 1: EcAp MED III overall budget implementation

Approved Budget	Released Budget 98,5% of the approved budget	Consumed budget Commitments plus Actual Expense 75% of the Approved budget 76% of Released budget	Received cash 87,50% of the Approved Budget	Projected remaining Cash Allocation
\$ 2,200,000.00	\$ 2,166,787.28	\$ 1,644,277.08	\$ 1,925,667.00	\$ 274,333.00

Detailing further the consumed budget, as showed in the following *Table 2* the level of the **consumed budget per project Outcome and project Output** is in line with the project implementation, as described in the previous Section 2.1 and reflects a sound improvement of the level of budget implementation in 2022 and in the first months of 2023.

More specifically, **project Outcome 1/Output 1.1** reflect the additional budget of 80.000USD made available for the Beneficiary Countries to implement national IMAP, following the approved budget reallocations formally approved on 31 March 2023 and reallocated from the unspent staff costs of the project management component. In addition, as already mentioned in Section 2.1, by the end of March 2023 also the funds originally earmarked to support Egypt in the implementation of EcAp MED III activities on pollution and marine litter cluster became available.

Accordingly, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has agreed with **Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Algeria** to amend the current SSFAs on the cluster pollution and marine litter by planning the implementation of one additional sample collection that will cover the season Autumn/Winter 2023, thus further populating the IMAP Info System with quality data.

To this aim, the SSFAs will be extended until the end of December 2023 and the total budget of each SSFA will be increased of 29.686 USD.

The SSFAs updated implementation plans and additional budget have already been discussed and agreed with the Beneficiary Countries. The amendment of the four SSFAs is in the stage of signature and will be finalized by the end of June, at the latest.

In addition, the **Libya national expert**, who will implement the EcAp MED III project activities related to the national IMAP on pollution and marine litter cluster, has been selected. The contract is being signed and the activities should start indicatively in June.

The level of consumed budget under **Outcome 1** will increase accordingly in June/July.

The level of consumed budget under **Outcome 2/Output 2.1.1, 2.1.3 and 2.2.4** will also importantly increase in June/July: under Output 2.1.1 the Terms of Reference for appointing an international expert to support the finalization of the 2023 MED QSR; Output 2.1.3 will support the integrated CORMON meeting that will take place on 27 and 28 June; under Output 2.2.4 the SSFA with the University of Geneva (GRID Geneva) is about to be signed for the development of a number of regional maps that will populate the online version of the 2023 MED QSR, while the costs for 2023 MED QSR translation/publication will be equally charged under this Output.

Finally, the **project management component** will include, indicatively as of August/September 2023, the 50% of staff cost of a G5 project assistant whose selection procedure has been completed, as well as the project terminal evaluation.

This in addition to the P3 EcAp MED III Programme Management Officer staff and travel cost.

Table 2: EcAp MED III current budget implementation *further detailed by project Outcomes and Outputs*

Project Outcomes and Outputs	Total approved budget	Released budget	Commitments	Actual Expenses	Consumed Budget (Commitments PLUS Actual Expenses)	Remaining budget (on Total approved budget)	% Remaining budget
Outcome 1: Effective 'on-the-ground' national IMAP implementation by the beneficiary countries providing quality-assured data that will enable the development of the quality-assured, region-wide and data-based 2023 MED QSR"	\$1,195,600.00	\$1,189,999.00	\$687,135.63	\$360,633.80	\$1,047,769.43	\$147,830.57	12%
Output 1.1: National and Joint Monitoring carried out of selected Common Indicator(s) (CIs) in beneficiary countries based on national IMAP	\$598,600.00	\$593,000.00	\$269,991.52	\$183,113.49	\$453,105.01	\$145,494.99	24%
Output 1.2: Joint monitoring pilots designed and implemented	\$35,000.00	\$34,999.00	\$20,964.22	\$11,695.25	\$32,659.47	\$2,340.53	7%
Output 1.3: Undertake baseline sub-regional assessments for CI 15 and support implementation of monitoring for CI 16 in at least one area per beneficiary country	\$132,000.00	\$132,000.00	\$35,702.89	\$96,301.16	\$132,004.05	-\$4.05	0%
Output 1.4: IMAP Info System expanded	\$430,000.00	\$430,000.00	\$360,477.00	\$69,523.90	\$430,000.90	-\$0.90	0%
Outcome 2: Regional scale progress and consensus for the monitoring, assessment, and reporting processes at national, sub-regional and regional levels	\$1,004,400.00	\$976,788.28	\$164,489.50	\$432,018.15	\$596,507.65	\$407,892.35	41%
Output 2.1.1: Analysis for each IMAP cluster on knowledge gaps	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$5,989.79	\$13,809.14	\$19,798.93	\$10,201.07	34%
Output 2.1.2: Assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP Common Indicators included in the current IMAP Pilot Info System as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)	\$107,000.00	\$107,000.00	\$55,632.80	\$41,660.86	\$97,293.66	\$9,706.34	9%
Output 2.1.3: Regular regional/sub-regional expert group meetings	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.22	\$17,388.91	\$35,238.55	\$52,627.46	\$7,372.54	12%
Output 2.1.4: Support to CORMON meetings per cluster	\$123,000.00	\$122,998.98	\$40,575.02	\$72,333.79	\$112,908.81	\$10,091.19	8%
Output 2.2.1: communication and visibility strategy for the MED 2023 QSR	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0%
Output 2.2.2: Strengthen SPI networks of scientists and policy makers	\$80,000.00	\$80,000.00	\$20,881.00	\$59,118.62	\$79,999.62	\$0.38	0%
Output 2.2.3: Develop and implement a time-line for regional data sharing	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0%
Output 2.2.4: Develop and Publish 2023 MED QSR in 2 languages and online	\$100,700.00	\$99,999.80	\$11,692.36	\$12,315.81	\$24,008.17	\$76,691.83	76%
Project Management	\$503,700.00	\$476,789.28	\$12,329.62	\$197,541.38	\$209,871.00	\$293,829.00	58%
Grand Total	\$2,200,000.00	\$2,166,787.28	\$851,625.13	\$792,651.95	\$1,644,277.08	\$555,722.92	

The budget includes 7% PSC (Programme Support Costs) as the sub-total cost of each output

In the final part of this Section, the details on the level of commitments and expenditures of the Regional Activity Centres (RACs) is also presented. The **budget implementation progression** shows that the **50% of the total budget allocated to the RACs has been paid** while only the **18% remains to be committed**.

Given the extension of the project duration until February 2024, also the perspectives of the level of expenditures are reassuring.

The UNEP/MAP Secretariat will keep monitoring each three months the level of commitments and payments to cross check the budget implementation progression is confirmed, and act in due time in case difficulties are identified.

Special attention is being dedicated to INFO/RAC and SPA/RAC with monthly verifications.

Table 4: RACs budget implementation progression

	Total budget	Commitments Oct 2022	Commitments from November 2022 to mid May 2023	Expenditures reported on 31/12/2022	Expenditures from 1 Jan to mid May 2023	Balance Commitments	Balance Expenditures
SPA/RAC	\$ 369,526.00	\$ 168,059.88	\$ 86,789.78	\$ 115,722.00	\$ 61,821.54	\$ 114,676.34	\$ 191,982.46
PAP/RAC	\$ 211,682.00	\$ 156,771.00	\$ 15,600.00	\$ 150,420.00	\$ 36,464.70	\$ 39,311.00	\$ 24,797.30
PB/RAC	\$ 74,766.00	\$ 41,198.00	\$ 6,506.00	\$ 53,885.00	\$ 9,377.59	\$ 27,062.00	\$ 11,503.41
INFO/RAC	\$ 401,869.00	\$ 124,000.00	\$ 267,972.00	\$ 41,393.00	\$ 49,047.00	\$ 9,897.00	\$ 311,429.00
	\$ 1,057,843.00	\$ 490,028.88	\$ 376,867.78	\$ 361,420.00	\$ 156,710.83	\$ 190,946.34	\$ 539,712.17

3. 2023/2024 Workplan: main activities, milestones and related timeframe

The following table presents an overview of the main activities to be implemented from June 2023 and until the end of the project, in February 2024.

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[illegible]

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ID	Project Outputs & Activities	Responsible Division/RO ¹	Year 1 2020		Year 2 2021				Year 3 2022				Year 4 2023				Year 5 2024	Main activities to be implemented until the end of the project, in February 2024
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
	prepared/agreed and scales of monitoring for all IMAP Common Indicators agreed/progressed																	
2.1.1.1	Undertake in-depth analysis of knowledge gaps related to scales of assessment for all mandatory CI as applicable	MED POL	x	x	x	x												MED POL elaborated the data and information and presented its progress on CI 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and CCIs 26 and 27 at the 1-2 March 2023 CORMON meeting on pollution and marine litter. Relevant documents have been updated for further discussion in the framework of the integrated CORMON meeting on 27 and 28 June 2023.
2.1.1.2	Propose updated/new scales of monitoring and assessment for all mandatory Common Indicators as applicable	MED POL			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x					
2.1.1.3	Prepare GIS atlas for scales of monitoring and scales of assessment to be integrated into IMAP Pilot Info System	PMU/MED POL							x	x	x	x	x	x	x			
2.1.1.4	Develop a proposal on integrated assessment scales as appropriate across clusters	MED POL					x	x	x	x	x	x	x					
2.1.1.5	Undertake a desk review of available data sources, best practices and methodologies in the Mediterranean and under MSFD for the monitoring and assessment of seafloor damage	CU, PAP/RAC	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x				
	F) Project Output: 2.1.2: Assessment criteria/thresholds/ baseline values proposed/updated for the 10 IMAP Common Indicators included in the current IMAP Pilot Info System as well as one candidate indicator (Noise)	MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC																
2.1.2.1	Update/upgrade and develop assessment criteria using trend and threshold approach as appropriate for 10 CI already included in the IMAP Info System (CI 1, 2, 6, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23)	MED POL		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							Achieved
		SPA/RAC	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							
		PAP/RAC		x	x													
2.1.2.2	Develop guiding documents for the application of assessment criteria, thresholds and baseline values for all IMAP clusters at the national level	MED POL						x	x									Main outcomes will be progressively integrated in the 2023 MED QSR.
		SPA/RAC	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x							

ID	Project Outputs & Activities	Responsible Division/RO ¹	Year 1 2020		Year 2 2021				Year 3 2022				Year 4 2023				Year 5 2024	Main activities to be implemented until the end of the project, in February 2024
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
		PAP/RAC				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
2.1.2.3	Test integrated assessment approaches/methodologies, including approaches to interrelate pressures/impacts/state of the marine environment	MED POL						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			ACCOBAMS will update the regional technical assessment for IMAP EO11 – Energy including Underwater Noise and its two Candidate Indicators 26 (impulsive noise) and 27 (continuous noise) - and provide revisions of the noise related sections of the IMAP Pollution Chapters of the 2023 MED QSR. ACCOBAMS will also prepare and/or update the IMAP Guidance Factsheet for IMAP EO11 - Energy including Underwater Noise - Candidate Indicators 26 and 27.
2.1.2.4	Adjust and further develop IMAP methodology on integrated assessments	MED POL										x	x	x	x			
	G) Project Output: 2.1.3: Regular regional/sub-regional expert group meetings, i.e., expert group per sub-region per topic established and operational to address monitoring and assessment scales, monitoring protocols and assessment criteria	PMU, MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC Plan Bleu																
2.1.3.1	Support organization of regional/sub-regional expert group meetings to share experience between countries	PMU/MED POL			x									x	x			The Integrated CORMON meeting will take place on 27-29 June 2023 with the objective of further advancing on the development of the 2023 MED QSR.
		SPA/RAC								x	x							
		PAP/RAC											x					
	H) Project Output: 2.1.4: Support to CORMON meetings per cluster ensuring strong participation and inputs to its work from expert networks established at sub regional level for the beneficiary countries	MED POL, SPA/RAC, PAP/RAC																
2.1.4.1 2.1.4.2	Support organization of CORMONs (for all three clusters as well as integrated CORMON), with	MED POL		x	x	x				x			x	x				Achieved

[illegible]

ID	Project Outputs & Activities	Responsible Division/RO ¹	Year 1 2020		Year 2 2021				Year 3 2022				Year 4 2023				Year 5 2024	Main activities to be implemented until the end of the project, in February 2024
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
2.2.2.2	Provide inputs to CORMONs and EcAp CG meetings on issues related to regional/sub-regional topic-specific SPI work	Plan Bleu			x	x				x			x	x				Main activities to be implemented until the end of the project, in February 2024
2.2.2.3	Develop ToRs and set up 2 national SPI pilots in 2 beneficiary countries	Plan Bleu		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x			
2.2.2.4	Organize national thematic events/workshops in line with the respective country priorities and needs	Plan Bleu							x									
2.2.2.5	Undertake a desk review of existing literature with the view to identify and propose an emerging list of priority contaminants in the Mediterranean, to be also supported by the results and data coming from implementation of monitoring programmes on the ground	PMU							x	x	x	x	x					
	L) Project Output 2.2.3: Develop and implement a time-line for regional data sharing between partners	PMU/CU																
2.2.3.1	Map sources of data and partners to address 2023 MED QSR data gaps, and establish mechanisms and a timeline for data sharing, technical advice and peer review	PMU/CU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				Some additional contribution might be provided by GFCM on EO3
	M) Project Output 2.2.4: Develop and Publish 2023 MED QSR in 2 languages; make it available online and present at COP 23. This should include the chapter on the assessment of fish stocks and bycatch indicators to be prepared in collaboration with GFCM	PMU/CU																
2.2.4.1	Define the methodology, outline, structure and contents of 2023 MED QSR	CU/PMU	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x								Achieved
2.2.4.2	Collect, analyse data, prepare thematic assessment products and 2023 MED QSR including maps and graphics	CU/PMU					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				Some fine tunings might be needed in the 2023 MED QSR finalization process
		MED POL					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
		SPA/RAC					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
		PAP/RAC					x	x	x	x	x	x						

ID	Project Outputs & Activities	Responsible Division/RO ¹	Year 1 2020		Year 2 2021				Year 3 2022				Year 4 2023				Year 5 2024	Main activities to be implemented until the end of the project, in February 2024
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
		INFO/RAC					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		INFO RAC will coordinate the finalization of maps and graphics and ensure the coherence with the web version of the 2023 MED QSR
		Plan Bleu							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		Achieved Some fine tunings might be needed in the 2023 MED QSR finalization process
2.2.4.3	Establish a web-based platform to host the contents of the 2023 MED QSR online, including procurement, design, content management and maintenance	CU/PMU							x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		INFO RAC will develop the 2 nd and 3 rd test of the web version of the 2023 MED QSR respectively by mid-June and mid-July. After the feedback from the 2023 MED QSR task force, the final offline version will be developed by mid-December. The web version of the 2023 MED QSR will be formally launched during or immediately after the COP23.
2.2.4.4	Review, revise and finalize 2023 MED QSR publication and present it at COP23 in two languages (including editing, layout, translation and printing)	CU/MED POL, PAP/RAC, SPA/RAC, INFO/RAC, Plan Bleu,									x	x	x	x	x	x	x	After the validation by the COP23 on 8 December 2023 in Slovenia, if needed the 2023 MED QSR will be revised for subsequent publication.

2.3 Project Management

In the period from the Third SC of November 2022 until May 2023 the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has successfully submitted both the **request for six months no costs project extension** as well as the request for **budget reallocations**.

Both requests have been formally approved by the EC Task Officer respectively on 19 February 2023 and 31 March 2023.

The **Project Cooperation Agreements (PCA) with the RACs** have been extended to reflect the updated project workplan.

In particular, the Amendments to the PCAs with PAP/RAC and Plan Bleu have already been signed, while the Amendments to the PCAs with INFO/RAC and SPA/RAC are in the signature process.

With reference to the **legal agreements** finalized/amended with the Beneficiary Countries, the following table presents the updated status since the 2022 EcAp MED III Annual Report covering the period January-December 2022.

Updated information is highlighted in blue, for easier reference.

Beneficiary Country	SSFA managed by UNEP/MAP <i>Pollution and marine litter cluster</i>	SSFA managed by SPA/RAC <i>Biodiversity cluster</i>
Algeria	SSFA signed in October 2022 with the Agence Nationale des Déchets (AND). SSFA extension until December 2023, with an additional budget of 29.686USD to implement and additional sample collection and pilot test the application of the CHASE + methodology. SSFA amendment is in signature process.	In the period November-May 2023, the efforts to define a SSFA to implement project activities at national level with Algeria (biodiversity cluster - CIs 3, 4, 5) have not led to the wished developments. In early June 2023 SPA/RAC will inform the Ministry of Environment and Renewable Energy for Biodiversity of Algeria about the decision to reallocate to other BCs the funds originally earmarked to support the implementation of EcAp MED III activities at national level.
Egypt	In the period November-May 2023, the efforts to define a SSFA to implement project activities at national level with Egypt (pollution and marine litter cluster - CIs 13, 14, 17, 21, 22, 23) have not led to the wished developments. Egypt has been officially informed in March 2023 about the decision to reallocate to other BCs the funds originally earmarked to support the implementation of EcAp MED III activities at national level.	The Arab Federation for WildLife Protection (AFWP) was designated by the EEAA for the implementation of the project activities. The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed July 2022
Israel	SSFA signed on 29/09/21 with the Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research (IOLR). Ongoing implementation.	SSFA signed (by the UNEP/MAP Secretariat) on 10/05/22 with Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA).
Lebanon	Signed SSFA the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-L) in early November 2022. SSFA extension until December 2023, with an additional budget of 29.686USD to implement a field survey	SSFA signed 29/09/2022 with CNRS-L.

	campaign covering the MPAs already identified in the framework of the SSFA signed between CNRS-L and SPA/RAC for the implementation of the IMPA-MPA project and covering (CIs 13 and 14), the EO 9 Pollution (CIs 17 and 21) and the EO 10 Marine Litter (CIs 22 and 23). CNRS-L will also implement the pilot test the application of the CHASE + methodology. SSFA amendment is in signature process.	
Libya	As it has not been possible to establish a legal agreement with the Ministry of Environment yet. A proposal was sent to the Focal Point and Minister and numerous follow-ups and communication have taken place, most recently by end November 2022. TORs were launched by the end of March 2023 to engage a consultant to conduct the activities. The national consultant has been selected at the beginning of May. Contracting procedure are in process and should be finalized by Mid-June while the expert should be able to start the activities by end-June.	SSFA signed on 23/12/21 with the Ministry of environment and amended on 25/05/22.
Morocco	SSFA signed on 30/11/2021 with the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development. SSFA extension until December 2023, with an additional budget of 29.686USD to implement and additional sample collection and pilot test the application of the CHASE + methodology. SSFA amendment has been signed.	SSFA signed on 01/12/21 with the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development.
Tunisia	SSFA signed with the Institut National des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (INSTM). SSFA extension until December 2023, with an additional budget of 29.686USD to implement and additional sample collection and pilot test the application of the CHASE + methodology. SSFA amendment is in signature process.	SSFA signed on 26/11/21 with the Coastal Protection and Planning Agency.

The contract of the **P3 EcAp MED III Programme Management Officer**, who joined the UNEP MAP in October 2022, has been extended until the end of the project duration in February 2024.

This will further reinforce the coordination of the project and the cooperation with the implementing partners as well as with Beneficiary Countries, while ensuring a stable level of expenditure under the Project management component.

In addition, the selection procedure for the **G5 project assistant** has been completed. The G5 project assistant will join the UNEP MAP indicatively in August/September 2023, being charged 50% on the project management component of EcAp MED III.

The SSFA with the University of Geneva (GRID Geneva) is in the signature process and will be finalised by mid-June at the latest. It supports the development of a number of regional maps that will populate the online version of the 2023 MED QSR.

The Terms of Reference for an international expert supporting the finalisation of the 2023 MED QSR have been finalised and will be launched in early June. The international expert will provide his/her services in the period September-December 2023.

The Terms of Reference for the **project terminal evaluation** will be launched by end-July/Mid-August.

In terms of reporting, the UNEP/MAP PMU has submitted within the set deadline of 17 February 2023, the **2022 EcAp MED III Annual Project Progress Report**, covering the period January-December 2022.

The **Q4 2022 and Q1 2023 relevant periodic ENRTP/GPGC traffic light reports** required during the period from the Third SC of November 2022 until May 2023, have equally been successfully submitted within the set deadlines.

4. Follow up issues at stake identified by the Third Steering Committee

During the Third project SC the following issues were identified as object of follow up actions in order to mitigate/prevent high level of unspent budget:

a) Recruitment of the G5 project assistant

Issue: Being a time-consuming process, it might imply a further delay in the level of expenditures of staff cost category under Project Management Component and due to delayed selection/appointment.

Follow-up: As mentioned in the previous Selection 2.3, the procedure for the G5 project assistant has been completed. The G5 project assistant will join the UNEP MAP indicatively in August/September 2023, being charged 50% on the project management component of EcAp MED III.

The approved no costs six months extension until February 2024 included, was key to the UNEP/MAP decision to finalise the procedure for the selections of the G5 project assistant. In fact, the G5 project assistant will support the EcAp MED III Programme Management Officer during the last six/seven months of project implementation, which are the crucial ones both in terms of activities to be finalized as well as in terms of budget follow up, while the preparation of the final progress and financial report will start.

b) IMAP Infosystem activities (Output 1.4)

Issue: Present a low level of commitments and expenditures that might represent a risk for the efficient project implementation.

Follow up: The UNEP/MAP Secretariat acknowledged that stronger efforts had to be put in place to maximise to the extent possible the delivery of the activities and ensure a steady progress in the level of the expenditures. Thanks to the approved project extension, INFO/RAC implementation plan has been updated until January 2024, allowing a better planning for the finalization of the activities and implementation of the related budget. Since January 2023, INFO/RAC and the UNEP/MAP Secretariat have jointly monitored each month the level of **commitments and expenditures** which have reach, by the end of May, respectively the **97% and 22,50%**. Despite the important improvement, also in terms of expenditures which were at the level of 0% by the Third SC, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has already agreed with INFO/RAC that as of early June a detailed plan of monthly expenditures will equally be shared and discussed, in order to ensure the level of expenditures progress steadily, corresponding to the intensive work INFO/RAC needs to ensure in 2023, including the support to the finalization of the maps and graphical of the 2023 MED QSR and the related website version.

c) Implementation of IMAP in Egypt on pollution and marine litter cluster

Issue: The SC asked the UNEP/MAP Secretariat to continue the efforts with Egypt, confirming that the support of the EU Delegation in Egypt would have contributed to this process.

Follow up: as already referred in Sections 2.1 and 2.3, after a number of efforts complemented also by the kind support of the EU Delegation in Egypt which was directly informed by the EC Task Officer, on 28 March 2023 the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has formally communicated to the Ministry of Environment of Egypt the decision to reallocate the funds originally earmarked to support Egypt in the implementation of EcAp MED III activities on pollution and marine litter cluster. The decision has been taken in coordination with the project EC Task Officer. The funds originally earmarked to support the implementation of EcAp MED III activities at national level on pollution and marine litter cluster have been reallocated to other BCs, together with the additional budget of 80.000USD made available for the Beneficiary Countries to implement national IMAP, following the approved budget reallocations formally approved on 31 March 2023 and reallocated from the unspent staff costs of the project management component.

d) Tight timeline for delivering the 2023 MED QSR

Issue: The SC urged the UNEP/MAP Secretariat to hold the thematic CORMONs meetings as early as possible in 2023, including sharing the draft chapters well in advance of the CORMONs meetings, thus allowing sufficient time to consider comments received from thematic CORMONs for finalizing the 2023 MED QSR for the final review by the integrated CORMONs in June 2022.

Follow up: Three thematic CORMONs meetings were held in March 2023:

- CORMON Pollution and Marine Litter on 1-3 March
- CORMON Biodiversity and Fisheries on 9-10 March
- CORMON Coast and Hydrography on 28-29 March.

In addition, Plan Bleu has prepared a draft socio-economic chapter of the QSR for the consideration of a COR-ESA meeting that equally took place in March 2023. In parallel, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has been drafting the Introductory chapters.

Building further on the main outcomes of these Thematic CORMON/COR-ESA meetings, the Integrated CORMON meeting will take place on 27 and 28 June 2023 and will review the draft of the whole 2023 MED QSR.

5. Lesson learned

Approaching the third year of project implementation in September 2023, the UNEP/MAP Secretariat has identified a number of lessons learned that will be object of further refinement by the end of the project in February 2024 and based also on the terminal evaluation foreseen by the project.

The Fourth project SC is an important occasion to discuss the following lessons learned, also in the perspective of their capitalization in the framework of the follow up phase of EcAp MED III, EcAp MED PLUS:

- a)** The EcAp MED III implementation is instrumental in delivering key outputs of the MED 2023 QSR enabling the development of a number of narrative and quantifiable assessment criteria for GES and related assessment as well as a more coherent work at regional and sub regional scale. It also contributes considerably in promoting effective collaboration with scientific community for QSR delivery creating a solid basis for future strengthening of IMAP science policy framework.

This type of projects that concretely support the South Mediterranean Contracting Parties, represent a key tool to reinforce their capacity building on EcAp implementation and review, both at national and regional level, and should be further reinforced.

- b)** The EcAp MED III project strongly supports the IMAP Info System enabling the Beneficiary Countries to report IMAP data in a harmonized way to facilitate GES assessment as appropriate for a considerable number of IMAP Common Indicators.

Despite the implementation and update of IMAP Info System is a complex process that requires constant revisions, it represents one of the key tools for the periodic and progressively improved QSRs the UNEP/MAP will produce, as well as for the progressive improvement of the capacities of the Beneficiary Countries to efficiently and autonomously utilize it.

- c) The regional and sub regional meetings/trainings/workshops that gave the possibility to diverse experts and stakeholders from different Beneficiary Countries to meet and share their work and experience, showed the importance and the interest of the Beneficiary Countries to further benefit from regularly planned best practices/lesson learned exchange sessions as structured and horizontal process the project should ensure. Given that the IMPA implementation at national level is at an early stage of development and it subject to regular update and improvement, best practices/lesson learned exchange sessions indeed represent an activity that should be further expanded and streamlined in the future.
- d) The practice of inviting the Chair of the EcAp Coordination Group to the project Steering Committees meetings and to organize the Steering Committees back-to-back to the Bureau meetings inviting the EC Task Officer, can also be considered as lesson learned/best practice to be continued in order to support guidance and support to the project from the broader perspective of the EcAp and MSFD implementation, related coordination and review process.
- e) While the coordination among EU-fund projects EcAp MED III, Marine Litter II and IMAP – MPA was further reinforced in 2022, allowing for a progressive exchange of experience and knowledge, in 2023 the process will be further operationalized and streamlined, also via common tools as the joint Common Indicators matrix per Beneficiary Country, thus facilitating a more holistic view on national IMAPs implementation, potential gaps and best practices. This approach will also improve the capacities of the Beneficiary Countries to actively participate to the IMAP review needs, while involving more strategically a broader number and type of concerned national and regional stakeholders.
To this end, projects joint tools should be further expanded and streamlined in the future.
- f) At project management level, as illustrated during the EcAp MED III Third Steering Committee meeting, the current approach risks to duplicate the efforts in terms of overall coordination by the Secretariat as well as in terms administrative burden both for the UNEP/MAP Components and for the Beneficiary Countries. With the current approach in fact each UNEP/MAP Component, including the Secretariat, work in bilateral with each Beneficiary Country based on a specific segment of project activities.
It would be advisable to revise this approach and plan the distribution of the work of UNEP/MAP Components by Countries, while the Secretariat would ensure the overall coordination and coherence.
As example, one of the UNEP/MAP Components could be in charge of Morocco and Algeria, another one of Tunisia and Libya, etc. while the Secretariat would ensure periodic Country coordination meetings on all project activities and related follow up.
This approach would also facilitate the work with the Beneficiary Countries and promote a reinforced impact of the project.