

# 1. INTRODUCTION

A healthy marine environment is critical to human wellbeing and economic prosperity. The Mediterranean Sea represents only 0.8% of the global ocean surface but is home to up to 18% of the world's known marine species. However, this biodiversity hotspot is subject to a growing number of anthropogenic pressures.

In response, since 2017, 46 organisations have worked in partnership to address some of these pressures, combining their diverse experiences and expertise in biodiversity conservation and sustainable fishing. Together, we have supported interventions in 17 countries to reduce the impact of fishing, restore vulnerable habitats, and reinforce Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for the benefit of ecosystems and local communities.

**Following key strategies, we have focused our efforts on:**

- promoting sustainable fishing
- engaging Mediterranean community
- improving legal and policy frameworks
- promoting transition to sustainable seafood
- fostering financial transition for sustainability

To secure MAVA's legacy, we also created the [Together for the Med](#) (TGFM) platform to coordinate common efforts and deliver lasting impact.

## PARTNERSHIP

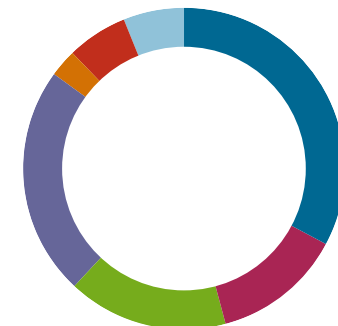
TOGETHER  
FOR THE MED

## BUDGET ENGAGED

€ 22,800,000

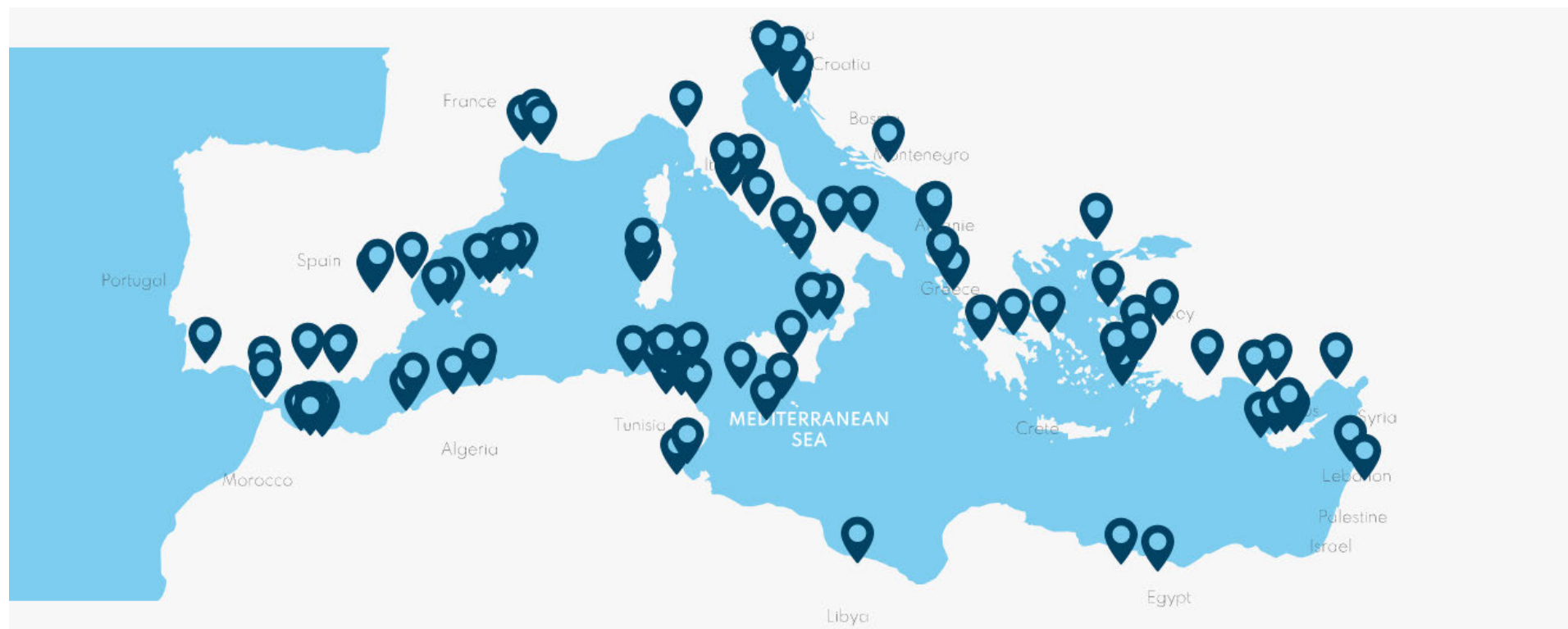
## BUDGET PER STRATEGY

- Site-level demonstrations 33%
- Scaling-up 13%
- Policy and advocacy 16%
- Technical solutions 23%
- Market incentives 3%
- Financial sustainability 6%
- Partnership 6%





## FIELD SITES

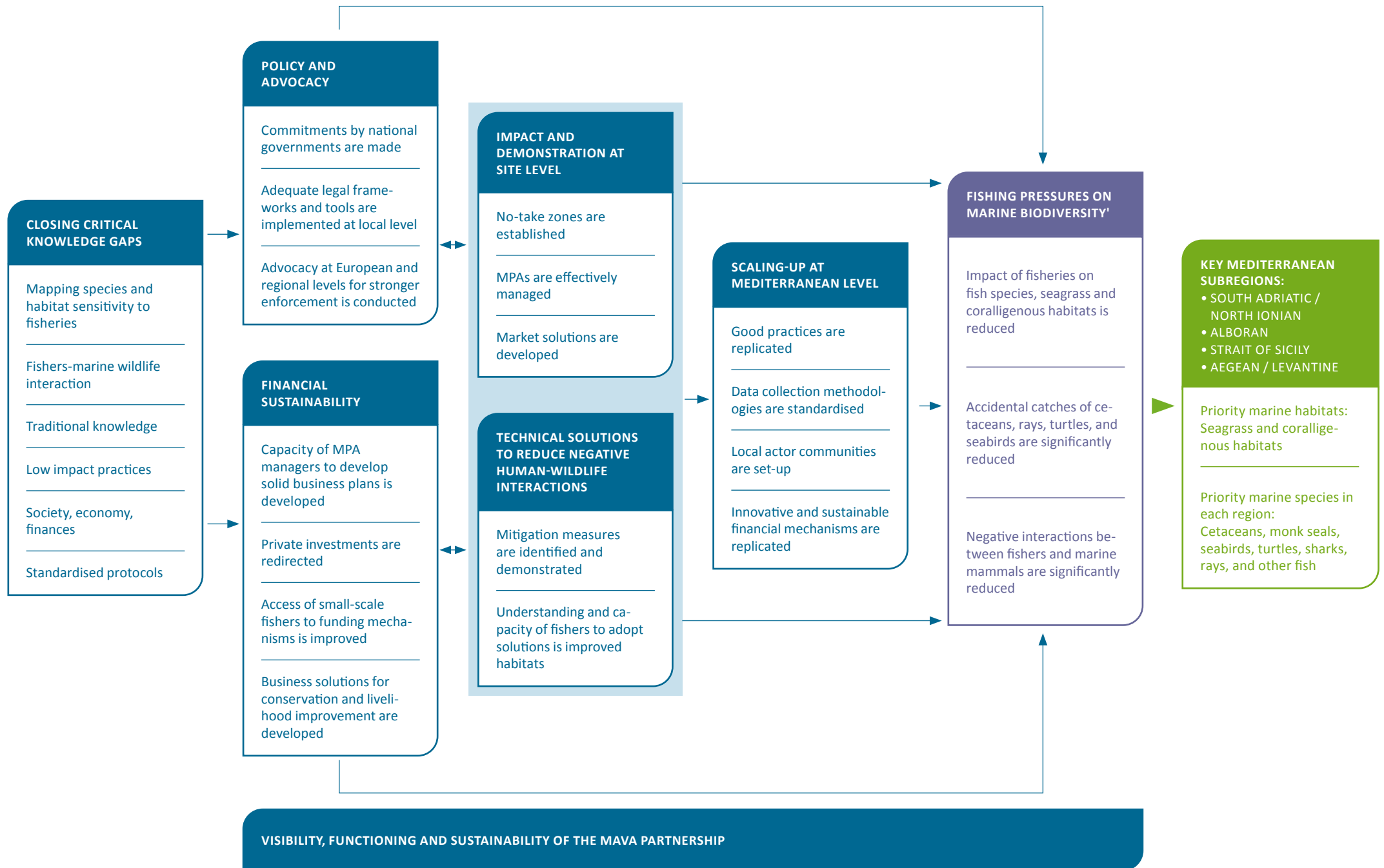


## MAIN COORDINATING PARTNERS



Local activities were supported through a large network of partners listed [here](#).

MARKET INCENTIVES AND PARTICIPATIVE PROCESSES TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE FISHING AND DRIVE TRANSFORMATION OF SEAFOOD CONSUMPTION



## 2. PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES

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The partnership sought to reduce fishing pressure on marine biodiversity and increase the socio-economic sustainability of fisheries in the Mediterranean. Our theory of change (see page 4) evolved as our work progressed – from data collection and information-sharing to policy and advocacy work, conservation action, and market and sustainable finance activities – resulting in a framework of seven strategies after a preparatory phase aimed at closing critical knowledge gaps. Our work was built on taking a number of key approaches as described below.

- **Multi-level interventions** - investing at local, national, regional, and European levels in policy development, implementation of technical measures to reduce fishing pressures, market solutions development, strengthening financial sustainability, and raising awareness in Mediterranean communities.
- **Scaling up** - building on and replicating successful processes and case studies across the region to amplify the impact of our actions, including by providing scientific, policy, and financial tools, methods, and frameworks.
- **Demonstrating solutions** - piloting solutions to demonstrate effective, innovative approaches for developing highly protected and enforced MPAs, more sustainable small-scale fisheries, and sustainable financial mechanisms.
- **Participatory management** - through a bottom-up approach, building and supporting participatory processes, networking, collaboration, and capacity building for local users and actors.
- **Innovation** - improving and building on different partners' strengths, investing in innovative technological approaches, and developing compelling communications materials, and evaluation processes.

### STRATEGY 1: SITE-LEVEL DEMONSTRATIONS

We implemented a variety of local interventions to demonstrate effectiveness and impact. Our activities included:

- engaging fishers in six countries to support the establishment and effective management of MPAs, No-Take Zones (NTZ), and fisheries management plans;
- establishing fisheries co-management committees in five countries;
- restoring key habitats and setting a baseline for ecological surveys and data collection on vulnerable species in nine countries to inform the design of low-impact measures, and reduce fishing interaction with marine species (including accounting for economic losses for fishers in four countries);
- engaging local entrepreneurs in sustainable activities in and around MPAs (including sustainable fishing tourism, waste collection, and food production).

### STRATEGY 2: SCALING-UP

We sought to strengthen, replicate, and scale successful approaches and methodologies across the Mediterranean. We also disseminated best practices on the management of living marine resources and ecosystems to national authorities and fishers across the region. Our activities included:

- building capacity on MPA management, bycatch reduction, fisheries co-management, financing mechanisms, and sustainable small-scale fisheries practices;
- developing standardised regional methodologies, including for recording bycatch and depredation data, and innovative databases for compiling national legislations;
- developing communications materials (guidelines, brochures, and videos) in different languages to promote responsible fishing practices in the Mediterranean;
- developing financial mechanisms (e.g., revolving fund) to support fishers and MPAs.

### STRATEGY 3: POLICY AND ADVOCACY

We engaged in advocacy and policy support to strengthen existing policies and drive effective implementation of national, European and regional regulatory frameworks (e.g., through the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Strategy, and the European Union (EU) Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)).

Our activities included:

- building capacity through national and regional training for authorities on bycatch, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and social welfare support;
- developing recommendations for improvements in marine biodiversity and fisheries policies at national, EU, and Mediterranean levels;
- facilitating awareness raising, and building capacity through regional training and workshops for project partners, including partners outside the region.
- under the aegis of the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (SPA/RAC) and the Mediterranean Protected Areas Network (MedPAN), developing a Post 2020 Mediterranean Roadmap for MPAs with a highly consultative process, the Mediterranean MPA Forum.

### STRATEGY 4: TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

We developed technical solutions and mitigation measures to reduce interactions between fisheries and marine species, including marine mammals, sea turtles, sea birds and sharks and rays. Our activities included:

- collaborating with professional fishers in eight countries to collect data and better understand human-wildlife interactions (e.g., bycatch and dolphin depredation);
- developing and testing practical and effective mitigation measures in eight countries to reduce negative interactions between small-scale and large-scale fisheries and marine species;
- training fishers in six countries on the safe-handling and release of vulnerable species caught as bycatch.

### STRATEGY 5: MARKET INCENTIVES AND PARTICIPATIVE PROCESSES

We developed market incentives and tools to support sustainable fishing and seafood consumption. Our activities included:

- fostering implementation of improvement action plans to address management gaps and environmental impacts identified in fisheries in four countries;
- analysing supply chains in four Spanish fisheries (blue and red shrimp, striped soldier shrimp, European anchovy, European sardine);
- conducting Ecological Footprint Analysis for fisheries value chains in pursuit of sustainable and fair food systems;
- establishing communities of practice to move towards fairer and sustainable food systems in four countries.

## STRATEGY 6: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

We sought to ensure long-term financial sustainability in the small-scale fishing sector through developing a clear procedure for securing access to available funds and promoting alternative funding mechanisms. Our activities included:

- identifying needs and constraints to accelerating access to available funds to improve fisheries sustainability;
- prototyping and creating financial mechanisms (pre-financing facility, business incubators) and policy support to facilitate access to funds;
- engaging stakeholders (fishers, national administrations, European authorities) in the testing phase of prototypes.

## STRATEGY 7: PARTNERSHIP

Through this overarching strategy we facilitated flow of information between partners to ensure knowledge- and experience-sharing and coherence of action for maximum impact. We also communicated our work and sought funding for post-MAVA. Our activities included:

- establishing the Together for the Med partnership, giving visibility to partners conducting activities via the website, newsletter, social media and a joint documentary;
- establishing Task Forces for communications, fundraising, and policy and advocacy activities;
- representing the partnership and best practices at major external events to promote its work and impact (UN Ocean Conference, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IUCN World Conservation Congress, etc.);
- supporting joint fundraising activities.



## KEY LESSONS

1. Ensuring key networking events to mobilise the whole Mediterranean marine community, with stakeholders at all levels, is crucial to ensure a shared vision for the future of the Mediterranean.
2. Meaningful engagement of all stakeholders through co-management is of critical importance for obtaining results, incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and increasing co-responsibility and compliance with adopted regulations.
3. Developing and maintaining productive and impactful collaboration may take more time and financial investment than anticipated, and building on established relationships can increase project impacts.
4. Implementing activities at the local level needs a comprehensive understanding of human and social processes such as trust building, gender dynamics, leadership roles within the community, and best avenues for collaboration.
5. Peer-to-peer mutual learning processes and networking are key to enabling inspiration, building trust, and ensuring replication of good practices. This is especially relevant within the fishing sector as well as with MPA stakeholders.
6. Online meetings and workshops have proven valuable, for example, in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in-person meetings are essential for developing mutual trust and long-term engagement.
7. Working with fishers is undoubtedly complex, and there is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution. There is therefore a need to work closely with them to find solutions appropriate to each local context.
8. Technical assistance to fishers fosters access to available funds and the implementation of improvements that move fisheries towards sustainability. Further capacity in fisher organisations is needed to improve the sector's autonomy.
9. Productive partnerships involving diverse organisations are key to enhancing impact and effectiveness and to tackling complex problems.
10. Unexpected global events, such as the pandemic or international instability, can heavily impact project improvement and delivery of results.

### 3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

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The preparatory phase of our work focussed on **closing critical knowledge gaps**, including mapping species and habitat sensitivity to fisheries, documenting traditional ecological knowledge and low impact practices, analysing interactions between fisheries and vulnerable species, and documenting stakeholder financial needs and aspirations.

We developed and/or tested technical, market, and financial measures and mechanisms to support **fishers** to transition to lower impact practices and reduce conflicts with vulnerable species. These included measures such as fishing gear modification, changing the bait - to reduce bycatch and depredation, with the potential for rollout in relevant small-scale and large-scale fisheries. In total, we engaged over 2,500 fishers and defined more than 60 measures, management plans, and roadmaps for improving the sustainability of fisheries. As a result, we saw a notable positive shift in attitudes and behaviour amongst collaborating fishers, e.g. safe-handling and release of vulnerable species.

In addition, more than 750 **fisheries management legislations** from the Mediterranean were documented in an open access regional repository.

We have progressed the establishment and effectiveness of **MPAs**, including of 23 new **NTZs**. We pioneered and promoted co-management models for three MPAs – Al Hoceima (Morocco), Kuriat (Tunisia) and Gyaros (Greece) – and in Tunisia, changed the legislative framework for MPA management. We also formally established co-management committees in five other MPAs, and four more MPAs are implementing management plans which include fisheries management. We trained more than 350 stakeholders on financial solutions, alternative financing, sustainable solutions, gear manufacturing, MPA management, and management effectiveness, and engaged more than 900 local actors. And we established two national (Croatia, Morocco) and one regional alternative self-financing mechanism for MPAs.

We sought to create the conditions for **scaling up** action and are already seeing tangible results at the national and regional level.

- A Regional Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries developed by GFCM has been agreed by governments and is being implemented with participation from our partnership.
- The governments of Malta and Tunisia are utilising our co-management methodology as the basis for their entire MPA system.
- A Regional plan of action to mitigate bycatch and depredation is under development by GFCM.
- The new European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund no longer requires co-financing from applicants thereby accelerating access to funding for small-scale fisheries whose transition to sustainability can now be fully funded by public aid.

The partnership also played a vital role in strengthening the integration of key topics (e.g., bycatch, MPAs) in regional strategies such as the Post-2020 Strategic Action Programme for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Mediterranean Region (Post-2020 SAP BIO) of the Barcelona Convention.

The **Together for the Med** partnership has inspired a common vision amongst partners. Its identity, visibility, and credibility has been strengthened through advocacy and communication, including through a documentary and 22 success stories published on the partnership's [website](#). And partners have designed six collaborative projects for the post-MAVA period. Funding for three projects covering fisheries legislation, fisher access to financial mechanisms, and secretariat coordination, has already been largely secured.

### CASE STUDY 1: UNDERSTANDING BYCATCH AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

Harmonised monitoring at a regional level is crucial in understanding and addressing the impacts of fisheries on vulnerable species. A [common methodology](#) for data collection on bycatch of vulnerable species was developed and then adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean for use by its Contracting Parties. The methodology was followed to conduct more than 4,500 observations onboard fishing vessels and administer more than 13,000 questionnaires in ports with fishers in seven countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Morocco, Tunisia, Türkiye). This significantly increased knowledge on bycatch at the regional level, and provided vital information for identifying the times, areas, and fishing gears of greatest concern, as well as measures for mitigating impacts. The approach offers a model for tackling bycatch in other regions.



Bycatch observer conducting a questionnaire with a fisher in Türkiye. © Mahmut Koyas, Doğa Derneği

## CASE STUDY 2: COMMUNITY LEVEL PROTECTION OF MARINE ECOSYSTEMS IN GHANNOUCH, TUNISIA

Fishers from Ghannouch in Tunisia face significant threats to their livelihoods, including pollution from a nearby chemical plant, competition with illegal trawlers and industrial fishing boats, climate change, and the invasive blue crabs. In response, in 2019, fishers asked for WWF's support in designing a voluntary No-Take Zone (NTZ) and signed an agreement for its establishment that included all the main stakeholders. Within the new NTZ, fishers built artificial reefs to restore the habitat, using local materials. A few months later, cuttlefish, one of the target species, started to reproduce on the reefs, and within six months the cuttlefish stock was rebuilt. This successful approach was then replicated in other localities along the Tunisian coast. To strengthen this work, a co-management committee was then created. In addition, the women of Ghannouch, who received entrepreneurial development training, are now producing nets for catching invasive blue crabs, creating a profitable new market. Together, these activities are helping build the resilience of local fish populations in Ghannouch with the involvement of the whole community.



Fisher woman capturing invasive Blue Crabs with pot traps in Tunisia. © Marion Payr, WWF Austria

### KEY IMPACTS

1. In Albania, Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia, national legislations on fisheries management and control measures were amended and harmonised with the regional legal framework (GFCM decisions).
2. No-Take Zones covering ~505 km<sup>2</sup> have been endorsed, with around 390 km<sup>2</sup> officially established.
3. The effectiveness of reduced fishing effort in MPAs, supported and ensured by an effective surveillance and guarding regime, was demonstrated in Gyros MPA (Greece) through scientific surveys that showed an increase in fish biodiversity of 36% and increased size in 66% of caught fish species compared to neighbouring non-protected areas. Some indicator species, such as groupers, were three times more abundant inside the MPA.
4. For the first time, sufficient regional and temporal data was collected to provide baseline information that supports better fisheries management, bycatch reduction, and increased post-release survival rates for vulnerable species.
5. The trawl fleet in Palamos (Catalonia, Spain), a critical area for this fishery in the Western Mediterranean, adopted technical gear modifications to reduce their impact on overexploited stocks. This included an increase in mesh size of 25% that led to a 60% reduction in juvenile mortality.
6. Six Communities of Practice were established and brought together key actors in the food value chain who are now engaged in developing a participatory certification scheme.
7. As a result of the funding mechanism developed by the partnership, a nine-fold revenue increase was leveraged from an initial investment in transitioning small-scale fisheries to lower impact fishing practices.
8. An innovative revolving fund was developed in Lastovo Island MPA (Croatia) to generate benefits for the community and entrepreneurs through sustainable business opportunities (e.g., sustainable fishing tourism, waste management).



## 4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

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**Together for the Med** is a dynamic partner collaboration implementing projects supported by MAVA. Varied expertise and diverse partner backgrounds support the delivery of sustainable fisheries, effective and new Marine Protected Areas, sustainable financing, and strengthened policy. Capitalising on results to date, and determined to continue working together, the partnership will continue scaling up efforts to restore Posidonia meadows and coralligenous beds, foster stronger protection, management effectiveness and sustainable financing of MPA and promote their co-management, improve sustainable coastal small-scale fisheries (SSF), improve community livelihoods, minimise negative interactions, and increase survival rates for vulnerable species such as sharks, marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds. The partnership will expand its scope, by working on social and gender inclusiveness, human rights, equality, and climate change, and will continue advocating at the local, national, regional, and international levels for the achievement of 2030 global biodiversity targets.

For the partnership to sustain long-term conservation impact, additional funding support and stronger synergies are necessities. To secure these, the partnership will foster collaboration with regional initiatives, such as the [MedSea Alliance](#), the [Friends of the SSF](#), and the [Union for the Mediterranean](#).

*“Up until today, we thought that the sea was an unlimited resource, with an infinite capacity for regeneration. The reality is the complete opposite: we, fishers, have an obligation to work on fishing sustainably.”*

Isaac Moya, small-scale fisher from l’Estartit  
(Catalonia, Spain)

*“The Together for the Med partnership is well-placed to address the challenges faced by biodiversity and fishers in the Mediterranean. The diversity of actors from NGOs to international institutions is unique and we want to support this dynamic.”*

Jérôme Petit, Senior Manager, Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy

