

# Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in Greece: lessons learnt from the case of the Inner Ionian Sea – Corinthian Gulf

Beriatos E.<sup>1</sup>, Papageorgiou M.<sup>2\*</sup>, Sakellariou S.<sup>1</sup>, Christopoulou O.<sup>1</sup>, Duquenne M.-N.<sup>1</sup>, Kallioras D.<sup>1</sup>, Kostopoulou Th.<sup>1</sup>, Sfougaris A.<sup>1</sup>, Karapanagiotidis I.<sup>1</sup>, Mente E.<sup>1</sup>, Kyvelou S.<sup>3</sup>, Tzannatos E.<sup>4</sup>, Kanellopoulou K.<sup>5</sup>, Papachatzis A.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Thessaly, Pedion Areos, 38334 Volos, Greece

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University Campus, 54124, Thessaloniki, Greece

<sup>3</sup> University of Piraeus, 80 Karaoli & Dimitriou st., 18534 Athens, Greece

<sup>4</sup> Panteion University, 136 Sygrou Av., 17671 Athens, Greece

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of the Environment and Energy, 17 Amaliados st. 11523 Athens, Greece

\*corresponding author: e-mail: marpapageo@plandevl.auth.gr

## Abstract

The marine area of the Inner Ionian Sea and the Corinthian Gulf was studied in terms of MSP in the framework of the SUPREME EU project, which was undertaken by the Ministry for the Environment and Energy, with the collaboration of NTUA, UTh and NKUA.

Key task of the project was all countries participating in the project (Italy, Greece, Croatia, Slovenia) to perform analysis and maritime spatial planning at the national level.

The lessons learnt from this project, and especially from the study of the Inner Ionian Sea-Corinthian Gulf, showed that, in order to perform efficient MSP, Greece should advance: the engagement of the maritime regime and stakeholders in governance schemes, the wise management of the geo-spatial data, the consideration of the transboundary nature of the sea and of the land-sea interactions.

**Keywords:** Maritime Spatial Planning, SUPREME project, place-based approach, Greece

## 1. Introduction: about the SUPREME project

The EU MSP Directive (2014/89) was adopted in 2014, in the framework of the EU Integrated Maritime Policy. Thus, all member-states are obliged to elaborate and adopt spatial Plans for their marine waters before March 2021. In Greece, the Law harmonizing the EU Dir. passed in 2018 (Law 4546) and since then the competent Authority (i.e. the Hellenic Ministry of the Environment and Energy - YPEN) is accelerating towards the adoption of the first maritime spatial plans – under a place-based approach – of the country.

The SUPREME project, being part of the EU initiatives to assist member-states with the implementation of the MSP Dir., was undertaken by four countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin (Italy, Greece, Croatia and Slovenia). The project lasted two (2) years and ended in December 2018. Within the project's framework, YPEN undertook the study of 2 pilot areas (among which the inner Ionian Sea-Corinthian Gulf), with the support of 3

Universities (NTUA: National Technical University of Athens, UTh: University of Thessaly and NKUA: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens).

In the case of the Inner Ionian Sea-Corinthian Gulf, University of Thessaly (with the collaboration of NTUA and NKUA) under the supervision of YPEN: a) performed a thorough analysis of the study area Kyvelou, 2016 and 2017; Kotzamanis and Duquenne, 2012), b) formed and tested a set of methodologies and tools for MSP, under a place-based approach and the Ecosystem Approach (Papageorgiou, Christopoulou and Kostopoulou, 2017; Papageorgiou, 2016; Sakellariou *et al.*, 2016; Tzannatos, 2010) and c) tested multi-level governance schemes (involving central government Authorities, the local administration, the local stakeholders, as well as the public) (Karanika and Kallioras, 2018; (Papageorgiou and Kyvelou, 2018; Beriatos, 2013; Beriatos & Papageorgiou, 2011). The most important lessons learnt in the course of the project are presented, in short, in the following section.

## 2. Lessons Learnt

### 2.1. Stakeholders involvement and governance

Having organized a set of stakeholders meetings in the framework of the project (at the national and regional level), it became evident that: i) Stakeholders involvement in MSP participatory procedures is still low, due to: a) the low awareness on such matters in the country, b) the lack of motivation for marine affairs, c) the low accessibility of stakeholders deriving from the insular parts of the country, to reach the venues and attend the meetings, ii) Decision-makers at all levels (central government, regional and local authorities) need to get further familiarized with the governance complexity that marine regions are associated with (and build stronger cooperation networks) and iii) There is a need for the adoption of new techniques and tools (e.g. 3D GIS), to assist and encourage MSP actors and participators to get involved in a more meaningful way.

## 2.2. LSI – identifying the land parts of M.S.Plans

In Greece, the new Law for MSP (4546 of 2018), highly prioritizes the consideration of LSI and thus, considers the land part of the coastal zone as integral part of the MSP management units. Given that, the tasks performed in the study area, revealed that: a) The identification of the landward limit of MSPlans, is a task needing careful and *ad hoc* considerations, b) The parameters to be considered for the identification of the landward limit of MSPlans, could be: the ecosystem boundaries (e.g. natura sites), the administrative boundaries, the river basin limits, the altitude (exclusion of mountainous areas), etc and c) the Land-Sea Interactions (LSI). In the Inner Ionian Sea – Corinthian Gulf, the land parts of MSP, were identified by using: a) the outer limit of the Municipal Units (Municipalities until 2010) and b) the 600m. isocontour, to exclude the mountainous areas.

## 2.3. Definition of scales and management units in MSPlans

According to the new Greek MSP Law, two types of MSPlans are identified: a) the MSP Strategy at the national level and b) the MSPlans at the regional level (including interregional, subregional, local, etc scales). However, the identification of the MSP units in Greece and of the appropriate MSP scales, is severely challenged, because: a) Territorial Waters of Greece extend up to 6n.m. only, and not up to 12n.m. as suggested by the UNCLOS, and b) so far, no Exclusive Economic Zone has been proclaimed in Greece. Because of the above, the geographical scope of any MSPlan would be very limited.

## 2.4. Geo-spatial data management

Given the great extend of the marine areas of Greece, acquisition and management of the necessary geo-spatial data is a rather challenging task, thus national data-banks

may never be fully complete. As a result, it becomes imperative that in Greece: a) past, ongoing or future projects, share and update the geo-spatial data, b) time-series of key geo-spatial data are produced and c) efficient management and use of geospatial data is achieved.

## 3. Conclusion: the added value of the project

The SUPREME proved valuable both to the Greek competent Authority for MSP (i.e. YPEN) and to the Greek academia. The Greek competent Authority moved forward to the implementation of the MSP Directive and the new national Law for MSP (4546/2018), whilst at the same time took the opportunity to deepen the knowledge and experience on MSP issues and on how to extend (place-based) spatial planning methodologies from the land to the sea. As regards the benefit for the Greek academia, scholars earned valuable experience on methodologies and tools related to MSP and seized the opportunity to consolidate communication channels among experts, to ensure the flow of scientific knowledge among Institutions at the national and the Mediterranean level.

As regards the major outcomes of the SUPREME project for Greece, these included: a) the development of a methodology for the elaboration of Maritime Spatial Plans, b) development of a methodology for the identification of the land parts of MSPlans, c) elaboration of two case studies, assisting the competent Authority to proceed (before 2021) to the adoption of the first Greek MSPlans, d) establishment of a stakeholders' network (national and regional level) related to MSP, e) engagement of the related (sectoral) Ministries to assist the implementation of MSP in Greece, f) raise of public awareness and g) raise of the decision-makers awareness on MSP affair.

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