



**GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION
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GENERAL FISHERIES COMMISSION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

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MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE FAO REGIONAL PROJECTS

1. This document summarizes the most significant activities carried out by the FAO Regional Projects, namely, *AdriaMed*¹, *MedSudMed*², *CopeMed II*³, and *MedFisis*⁴, during the intersessional period of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), and reports on the status of newly emerging projects, namely *EastMed*⁵, the GEF-supported Partnership for the Mediterranean (MED-LME)⁶ and *ArtFiMed*⁷. Project activities include research and training programmes, workshops and working groups, as well as the technical assistance provided to some countries, the SAC and its Sub-Committees and Working groups.

¹ “*Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea*”. The project is financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF) and has been cofinanced for 12 months (April 2007-March 2008) by the European Community.

² “*Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily*”. The project is financed by the MiPAAF.

³ “*Coordination to Support Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Mediterranean – CopeMed Phase II*”. The second phase of the Project is co-financed by the Secretaría del Mar de España, and the European Community.

⁴ “*Mediterranean Fisheries Statistics and Information System*”. The project is jointly financed by the European Community and FAO.

⁵ “*Scientific and Institutional Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Eastern Mediterranean*”. The preparatory phase for this project has been financed by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Policies (MiPAAF). The project will be co-financed by the MiPAAF, the Government of Greece and the European Community.

⁶ “*Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Large Marine Ecosystem – Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas*” – *Conservation of Biological Diversity – Implementation of SAP-BIO and related NAPs*. The Programme is prepared under the responsibility of UNEP/MAP on behalf of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

⁷ “*Sustainable development of Mediterranean artisanal fisheries in Morocco and Tunisia*” funded by the Spanish Government through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AECID).

AdriaMed

2. The activities carried out during the intersessional period, followed the methodological approach used by the Project, and are presented according to the main components. They followed the workplan for 2008 as approved by the 9th AdriaMed Coordination Committee (Croatia, December 2007), which included the continuation of research programmes, workshops, training programmes as well as the technical assistance given to the countries and the cooperation of the Project with relevant institutions, primarily the GFCM, through the SAC and its Sub-Committees.

3. The tenth meeting of the Coordination Committee of the AdriaMed Project was held from 26th to 27th January 2009, in Chioggia, Italy, hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies of the Republic of Italy. During the meeting the workplan for 2009 was discussed and agreed.

4. The project performed the following main activities:

Demersal and Small Pelagic Fishery Resources

- Working Group on Demersal Fishery Resources (Montenegro, June 2008): The Working Group reviewed the information available on demersal stocks and the support to provide to the SAC/Sub Committee on Stock Assessment (SCSA) in the testing phase of the criteria for identification of priority species and in the assessment of the demersal fisheries stocks (in particular of *Merluccius merluccius*).
- Working Group on Small Pelagic species (Montenegro, June 2008): The meeting reviewed the knowledge and information on small pelagic fish stocks and discussed the progress on monitoring activities with particular attention to the echo survey exercise. The activities carried out by the newly established Coordinating Team on echo surveys in the Adriatic Sea were also reviewed;
- The Project continued to support the research programme “Stock Assessment of *Solea solea* in the northern and central Adriatic Sea and evaluation of the impact of the different fishing activities (SOLEMON)”. On February 2008 the programme, and consequently the associated survey, was extended from Italian and Croatian waters to include Slovenia, Montenegro and Albania waters;
- Ad-hoc meeting on data evaluation of the spatial distribution and abundance of common sole (*Solea solea*) in the Adriatic Sea (on the basis on the surveys carried out in 2007 and 2008) (Italy, May 2008): the related results as well as a joint analysis of the data from the surveys carried out from spring 2005 to autumn 2007, were presented during the SCSA Working Group on Demersal Species (Turkey, September 2008);
- The project continued to assist the newly established Coordinating Team on echo surveys in the Adriatic Sea and in this framework organized 2 events: i) the second AdriaMed workshop for the standardization of acoustic surveys protocol at subregional level to verify the feasibility of joint analysis of data on small pelagic fisheries resources from national echo surveys was held in Ancona, May 2008; A step-by-step comparison of the methodologies used by the Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries of Split (IOF) and the CNR-ISMAR of Ancona was carried out, underlining the similarities and dissimilarities. The results of this activity were presented at the SAC/SCSA (Turkey, October 2008); and ii) a training course, in cooperation with the

MedSudMed Project, on the Echoview software, which is used to analyse acoustic data (Ancona, May 2008).

- A joint acoustic and ichthyoplankton survey using R/V “Dalla Porta” covered South Adriatic waters (GSA18) was carried out thus extending the survey generally performed in Italian waters to Albania and Montenegro waters, in July 2008. The survey was carried out in cooperation with the CNR-ISMAR of Ancona (Italy) the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (IBMK, Montenegro) and the Agricultural University of Tirana (Albania). Theoretical and onboard training activities were carried out during the survey for national staff from Albania and Montenegro. The preliminary results were presented at the SAC/SCSA meeting (Turkey, October 2008);
- A scientific survey in the deep waters of the South Adriatic Sea was performed during August 2008, in accordance with discussion held during the 9th AdriaMed Coordination Committee meeting (2007). The survey was carried out on board M/P “ANDREA” with an Adriatic mixed scientific crew. This preliminary survey was mainly aimed at a better understanding of the existing habitats and species for biodiversity and ecological appraisal.
- Further to the work carried out so far by the Project on the issue, a paper was presented by the Adriatic experts, as requested, to support, the work of the SAC/SCSA meeting (Turkey, October 2008) by proposing a methodology to identify the priority species and shared stocks for the South Adriatic (GSA 18). During the same meeting, the Adriatic experts also presented a scientific contribution to compare two different methods for the stock assessment of hake (*Merluccius merluccius* L.) in GSA 18. Data from the 1996-2006 trawl surveys carried out in the GSA n°18 were analysed by using both Empirical Indicators and SURBA method. The paper highlights the similarity of the results obtained with the application of the two methods.

Social and Economic Fishery Sciences

- A pilot study to implement a monitoring system for the Montenegrin fisheries sector, including biological, environmental, economic and social information, applying the Operational Unit (OU) concept was developed in cooperation with the IBMK and the Fisheries Directorate of Montenegro. The economic survey is performed in cooperation with IREPA (Italy). The collection of data is being executed throughout 2008. The preliminary results were presented during the SAC/Sub-Committee on Statistics and Information meeting (Turkey, October 2008).
- The AdriaMed Database on fisheries-related social survey data (AdriaMed DBS) version 1.1 that was designed and developed by the Project with the objectives of organizing, storing and undertaking the preliminary analysis of the dataset available after the AdriaMed Social survey of the fisheries sector in Albania (2003), has been consolidated and customized for storing data collected in Montenegro. AdriaMed DBS was delivered to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Montenegro in May 2008. The application was also delivered, upon request, to an NGO from South Africa.

Adriatic Fishery Statistics and Information Systems

- The Project pursued the activities carried out so far for the inclusion of Adriatic Scientific publications into the ASFA database, as well as supporting the collaboration centres created at the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IOF) in Split, Croatia, and at the Institute of Marine Biology of Kotor (Montenegro). AdriaMed is also continuing to support the FAO ASFA Secretariat: in the framework of this assistance, a five-day training course on ASFA input

methodology was organized and performed by AdriaMed staff at the National Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries of Alexandria (Egypt, March 2008).

- The updated version of ATrIS (version 2.1) the computerized system developed to manage and undertake preliminary analysis of the data sets from the AdriaMed trawl survey has been made available. ATrIS is being distributed to all the AdriaMed institutes (17 institutes and more than 20 experts are currently using it). Assistance to the Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences (MCFS) to upload Maltese data into ATrIS has been provided. In addition, following a request expressed during the European Commission Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) Subgroup on the Mediterranean (SGMED-08-01), the application has been distributed to the SGMED experts for the estimation of biological indicators. The project continues to work on the development and improvement of this application.
- The AdriaMed Information System, which is available on the AdriaMed portal, has been updated and further improved. A new home page has been created and the versions in Croatian and Italian have been updated accordingly. Currently, the Project Web site hosts 13 databases: (e.g. Fishing Ports, Fish Markets Species, Fisheries Legislation). The database containing the Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA) related to publication focused on the Adriatic Sea until 2006 was updated to 2007. Furthermore the Project is providing technical support in Albania and Montenegro for the creation/updating of web pages for the fisheries directorate and fisheries research institutions.

Strengthening of the regional cooperation

- In order to strengthen international and regional cooperation the Project interacts closely with the FAO Regional Project MedSudMed. In addition, an outline of the AdriaMed activities was presented at the Copemed II Inception Meeting, (Spain, June 2008) with the view of establishing cooperation between the two projects. AdriaMed continued to support the activities of the GFCM by funding the participation of 17 Adriatic experts in 6 GFCM meetings held in the intersessional period, and actively participated by providing scientific contributions for discussion through the presentation of working papers (as reported in the previous paragraph).

MedSudMed

5. The main goals of the MedSudMed Project are to support the scientific communities of the participating countries in the development of a monitoring system for the study of fishery resources and their ecosystems (GSAs: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21), with particular focus on the standardisation of methodologies. In addition, the Project promotes the scientific cooperation between participating countries and supports national capacity building. The activities carried out in 2008 followed the work plan approved by the MedSudMed Coordination Committee and updated during the last meeting held Tunisia (February 2008) and concerned the following Project components: “Spatial distribution of demersal resources in the Project area and the influence of environmental factors and fishery characteristics”; “Small pelagic fish: stock identification and oceanographic processes influencing their abundance” and “Fishery and Ecosystem Information System” (FEIS). In addition, the Project continued to cooperate with relevant institutions, primarily the GFCM, through the SAC and its Sub-Committees.

6. The seventh meeting of the Coordination Committee of the MedSudMed Project was held from 18th to 19th February 2009, in Sliema, Malta, hosted by the Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences. During the meeting the work plan for 2009 was discussed and agreed on.

7. The Project performed the following main activities:

Demersal Fisheries Resources

- A review of the knowledge currently available on the biology, ecology, reproduction patterns, legislation, management and exploitation patterns of *Merluccius merluccius*, *Mullus barbatus*, *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Octopus vulgaris* in the MedSudMed area was produced;
- A workshop on octopus stocks and related fisheries in the MedSudMed Project area was organized to synthesise existing knowledge (spatial distribution, biological parameters, fishing segments targeting the species) on the species and plan activities that could provide scientific evidence on whether the populations of this species harvested in each country belong to a shared stock or not. (Tunisia, November 2008);
- A research programme including three main tasks regarding *Octopus vulgaris* was initiated in cooperation with INSTM in the Southern part of Tunisia to: i) compile information on the biology and ecology of the species; ii) carry out genetic studies aiming at identifying possible subpopulations of the area; and iii) collect socio-economic data describing the Operational Unit related to *Octopus vulgaris*;
- Assistance was provided for the drafting of a monitoring programme on *Posidonia oceanica* meadows along the Libyan coast. The overall objective of the activities proposed in the monitoring programme is to assess the spatial distribution of the *Posidonia* meadows, which are a sensitive habitat for larvae and juveniles of fishery resources. This activity was carried out in collaboration with the Marine Biology Research Centre of Tajura (MBRC), Libya.

Small Pelagic Fish resources

- A review on small pelagic fish resources in the MedSudMed area was prepared. The review is based on available information in each country participating in the Project and summarizes current knowledge on ecology, population dynamics and stock assessment of *Engraulis encrasicolus*, *Sardina pilchardus* and *Sardinella aurita*. It is also foreseen that the review includes a list of the data sets currently available in the Project area.
- As for the previous years, the Project supported the organization of cooperative surveys at sea with mixed teams from the Istituto Ambiente Marino Costiero of Mazara del Vallo (IAMC-CNR, Italy), the Malta Centre of Fisheries Sciences (MCFS, Malta) and the Marine Biology Research Centre (MBRC, Libya), on board the research vessels:
 - Ichthyoplankton survey (July 2008) along the South Sicilian coast, in Maltese waters and in Libyan waters (Gulf of Sirt) on board R/V “Urania” . The objective was to describe the oceanographic characteristics of the area and the composition and spatial distribution of the ichthyoplankton, hence complementing information on transport patterns of eggs and larvae of commercial fish species in the Project area;
 - Acoustic survey (August-September 2008) along the South Sicilian coast, in Maltese waters and along the entire Libyan coast on board R/V “Dallaporta” . The processing of the data collected will produce an estimate of the biomass of small pelagic fish in the area covered.

MedSudMed Fishery and Ecosystem Information System (FEIS)

- The web interface of the regional component of the MedSudMed Fishery and Ecosystem Information System (FEIS) was finalized. The regional component includes geo-referenced metadata concerning the information available in the Institutes that provided information. Metadata on the information entered in the AdriaMed Trawl Information System (ATrIS) were also incorporated in the FEIS.

Training

- A joint AdriaMed-MedSudMed training course on Echoview (Italy, May 2008) was organised to strengthen the skills of those scientists who either carry out acoustic surveys regularly or have already been involved in acoustic data collection and processing and who are involved in assessment of small pelagic fish biomass;
- On-the-job training was carried out during the surveys at sea for scientists from the MBRC. Ten scientists were trained on: measurement of physical-chemical parameters of the water column; collection of current profiles; zooplankton sampling; collection of sediments samples; water sampling; collection of multi-frequency acoustic data related to small pelagic fish; biological sampling of small pelagic fish;
- A training course on bacteriological and virological investigations for controlling bivalve mollusc was carried out (Italy, 2007);

Regional Cooperation

- A joint training course was organized in cooperation with the AdriaMed Project and MedSudMed was involved in the organization and execution of (i) the AdriaMed Workshop for the standardization of acoustic surveys protocols at sub-regional level (Italy, May 2008); and (ii) the AdriaMed Working Group on small pelagic fish, (Montenegro, June 2008). An outline of the MedSudMed activities was presented at the CopeMed II Inception Meeting, (Spain, June 2008) with the view of establishing cooperation between the two projects. In addition, due to the overlap in the geographical areas covered by MedSudMed and CopeMed II, it was agreed to coordinate the participation of national scientists in meetings organized by the GFCM, in order to optimize the use of human and financial resources. The Project provided support to the activities of the GFCM by funding the participation of 18 experts from the Project area in 5 meetings organized by the GFCM during the intersessional period.
- A presentation was given on the FAO Regional Projects at the workshop organized by the Profet Policy Project (France, June 2008). This initiative is funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Programme and aims at delivering information to aquaculture and fisheries stakeholders on the European policies and research efforts that affect their sectors.

CopeMed II

8. Phase II of CopeMed “Coordination to support Fisheries Management in the Western and Central Mediterranean” was launched in March 2008 to ensure the continuation of the previous COPEMED Project that was carried out during the period 1986-2005. Its aim is to maintain the sustainability of the marine resources in the Western and Central Mediterranean sub-regions and their

ecosystem, taking into account environmental, biological, economical, social and institutional issues, and promoting scientific cooperation among the regions. The Long-term objective is to support the establishment and implementation of science-based updated management plans for relevant specific fisheries at national and sub-regional level. This will be pursued through coordinated scientific investigations and data gathering as well as joint multidisciplinary analysis. In addition the Project will continue reinforcing the capacity of the countries by supporting their participation in the SAC of the GFCM.

9. According to the guidance given by the Steering Committee at the Inception meeting (Spain, June 2008), the Coordinator visited four member countries (Algeria, Malta, Morocco and Tunisia,) in order to reinforce the role of the National Focal Points in relation with the national institutions and to identify national priorities. So far, the project undertook the following activities:

Strengthening national capacity in the field of fisheries statistics

- A questionnaire related to the identification of weaknesses of the national fisheries statistical system was circulated to the national focal points. Three answers to the questionnaire were received
- An informal meeting was organized with the experts from the North African countries during the Antalya Sub Committees meeting to discuss ways to solve the main problems concerning the national fisheries statistics related to GFCM Task 1. Information was first received from Morocco and Tunisia and later from Malta. Algeria sent a document on priority actions, including the statistics issue. New initiatives were started with Morocco to solve the issues with the use of the MedStat software in the country and with the link INRH-MAYA (ONP's Data Base).
- A visit to Morocco (Fisheries DG, INRH and ONP), to assist in solving statistical problems, was carried out by GFCM-FAO experts, and the corresponding visit to Tunisia is being organized;

Strengthening fisheries research

- This includes the project support to training of experts and to their participating in regional meetings. The experts should provide stock assessments, data and information to the SAC Working Groups and/or Sub-Committees meetings in order to be financed. From the beginning the coordination with the GFCM Secretariat, including supporting the participation of experts to SAC meetings (Turkey, 2008), and with MedSudMed has been important and continuous. This coordination facilitated the participation of experts from different countries supported by both projects in order not to favour only the experts from one country. The coordination between the Projects was always positively supported by the GFCM.
- The project supported the participation of an expert from the INSTM (Tunisia) in a training course on acoustic methods for small pelagic species held at the IEO Palma de Mallorca (Spain) centre in January 2009, as well as the participation of two regional experts in the GFCM-CIHEAM stock assessment course (March 2009);

Strengthening institutional capacity at national and sub-regional levels

- This requires the involvement of national fisheries research institutions, General Fisheries Directorates in the countries, the EU DG Mare, the GFCM, ICCAT, Mediterranean Fishers Associations and other stakeholders. In this framework , the activities carried out by the Project include:

- ✓ The FAO document on “Fish Trade of Mediterranean Countries. Intra-Regional Trade and Import-Export with the European Union” was circulated for comments. As far, the comments received correspond to only one country;
- ✓ Focal points and Coordinator met specific fishermen’s associations: a meeting was organized in Tunisia with the relevant stakeholders; Coordinator also met with EuroMed TDS organisation in Rome.
- ✓ The coordinator met DG Mare officers in Madrid to discuss Mediterranean fisheries issues.
- ✓ Update Project Web page: Preparing the ToR to contract an expert on Web pages according to FAO standards to update and maintain the Project Web and documents entry;
- ✓ Prepare ToR for the Groupe d’Avis Consultatif Maghrébin. The Coordinator sent a letter to the national FP explaining the objectives and discussed with them, the GFCM and the FAO staff for a better approach. A new approach was decided considering the sub regional species working groups (GFCM proposal).
- ✓ Brochures of the Project objectives and activities in the three languages were distributed during the GFCM SAC meeting and COFI. The Project Objectives and outputs were presented during an international Seminar on the Mediterranean sea organized by the Academy of France in Paris.

Strengthening of regional cooperation

In order to strengthen international and regional cooperation the Project interacts closely with the FAO Regional Project MedSudMed. In addition, representatives from AdriaMed and MedSudMed participated at the CopeMed II Inception Meeting, (Spain, June 2008) where the main activities were presented with the view of establishing a closer coordination. A second meeting took place during the Antalya meeting to coordinate short-term activities and the support to the participation of national experts in the coming GFCM meetings. The coordinator participated at the seventh meeting of the MedSudMed Coordination Committee (Malta, February 2009) reinforcing the cooperation, coordination and synergies between the two projects.

ArtFiMed

10. ArtFiMed (Sustainable development in Mediterranean artisanal fisheries in Morocco and Tunisia) is a project coordinated and carried out under the CopeMed II framework. This project is financed by the Spanish Agency for Cooperation for Development (AECID). AECID was able to finance a pilot project in Tunis and Morocco to develop methodologies and obtain practical results and lessons learned to be implemented in the others countries and in the Mediterranean region when possible.

11. ArtFiMed is implemented in one artisanal site in Morocco (Dikky) and two (Ghannouch and El Akarit) in Tunisia. The objective of the project is to contribute to reduce the poverty of the target artisanal fishing communities by improving their livelihood in the respect of the ecosystems which they exploit and enhance their integration in the management of fisheries and coastal areas. The project objectives are in agreement with the public policy for development and poverty reduction in the two countries and the Millennium Development Goals.

12. The project is fully operative from January 2009. During the last months of 2008 the two experts in charge of the ArtFiMed activities at national level started their activity by preparing a national site report on the state of the involved fisheries. These two experts participated in the first meeting of the Project Planning Group (Málaga, 13-16 January 2009). During the meeting, the activities already carried out and the issues still pending, as well as the Workplan for the current year, were discussed and adopted. Data collection in each site and target population on poverty, livelihood, trade and fisheries issues started in February 2009.

13. The project staff prepared an annual Working Plan for the whole year and standard forms and guidelines for the methodology to be used during the first six-month phase: diagnostic and planning.

MedFisis

14. The MedFisis project was conceived to promote and develop a Mediterranean Fishery Statistics and Information System with the ultimate objective of achieving a region-wide integrated system as outlined by the MedStat adaptive approach.

15. During the intersessional period, the overall performance and activities of the project were much constrained and reduced compared to the previous periods of MedFisis's implementation (September 2004 to August 2005 – Year 1, and March 2006 to February 2007 – Year 2). Indeed, due to the different financial and administrative rules and regulations of the main donor and the executing agency, the funds for the second year of the project, that should have been received in 2005, have been released only in early 2006. Also, due to the requirement of the main donor to complete a verification mission of the second year of the project before releasing any funds for the third year of the project, these funds, that should have been received in early 2007, have not yet been received, leaving the project short of a significant part of the funding planned for this period. Given the vast scope and geographical coverage of the MedFisis project, it was not possible to implement the third-year activities without the full funding required. It was thus decided to await the release of the remaining funds for implementing the full set of activities planned for the third year of MedFisis.

16. Pending the release of these funds and the re-initiation of the full activities for the third and last year of the project, FAO explored appropriate ways to keep the project operational, and avoid the loss of the capacity it had already developed, while devoting a significant effort to support the audit required by the main donor, and respond to the associated requests. In the intersession period from December 2007 to December 2008, the MedFisis project undertook a number of actions and initiatives at the regional (GFCM) and national (GFCM member countries) levels as reported below.

Project management and negotiations

- Based on the lessons learned from the first and second years of the implementation of MedFisis, a DG-Mare/FAO Meeting was organised in March 2008 to discuss the current situation of the Mediterranean Projects administrated by FAO, the operational constraints experienced, and the most suitable financial and operational arrangements to implement DG-Mare co-funded projects, as well as to lay the basis for a further partnership between DG-Fish and FAO. During the meeting DG-Fish informed the FAO delegation that all DG-Mare contributions were suspended pending the conclusions of the verification mission on the second year of MedFisis.
- The EC verification mission was carried out in May 2008, with the cooperation of FAO, and its report was released in October 2008. DG-Mare then requested FAO to re-submit the MedFisis Project Document using a new template. The Project Document was re-submitted, along with the EastMed Project, in November 2008, and is currently being discussed with DG-Mare.

Database software development and implementation

- The current version of the MedStat fishing vessel register reached an advanced level of development and it is now a fully operational software, capable of meeting most of the needs and requirements of final users. This database software has been built through interconnected modules (assemblies) to ensure easy and timely maintenance and incorporation of future developments;
- The new reengineered version of the MedStat catch and effort (CAS) database software was completed and will be available for testing during the third year of MedFisis, an advance relatively to the original workplan. The package that was developed includes both logbook and a sample-based approach to CAS, and was implemented using a framework that facilitates updating a target software system. Concomitantly, the catch and effort software is being developed to be fully compatible with the fishing fleet database.

Regional level: support to GFCM Secretariat and future perspectives

- The project assisted in the handing over of the Information System for the Promotion of Aquaculture in the Mediterranean (SIPAM) to the GFCM Secretariat;
- The project also produced important contributions to the reformulation and negotiation of the EastMed project, assuring its acceptability by the main donors;

EastMed

17. The Project will support the development of regionally-consistent fisheries management plans among the Eastern Mediterranean countries through the monitoring of commercial fisheries and the developing of fishery research and management capacity. The project is planned to run for five years. The donors are Greece, Italy and the EC. The project headquarters will be based in Athens, Greece, and the project will be staffed with a Project Coordinator and a Fisheries Expert. It will work with the member countries to strengthen programmes necessary for the implementation of rational, responsible and participative fisheries management. The project will be implemented in accordance with the principles of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and will encourage the use of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF). The project, further developing and expanding the work undertaken by the MedFisis project, will support networking to encourage cooperation among the countries and to ensure the stakeholder involvement in management.

18. The technical formulation of the main phase of the EastMed project was completed in 2006. Since June 2006, options are being considered between donors and FAO on the implementation. This work was continued in the intersessional period, to prepare the final Project Document and negotiate the financial agreements with the donors.

- The project document was sent to the representatives from Greece in May 2008, and was signed in the same month. Greece has since then approved an extra contribution to the project, and the funds for the first year of activities have been released. However, the project still awaits the endorsement of the Greek parliament before the funds can effectively be used.
- The funding from Italy has been confirmed through a Ministerial decree for the preparatory and full phase of the project. After the preparatory phase, the EastMed Project Document was sent

to Italy in June 2008 for signature. FAO still awaits the final signature of the Project Document, and the funds for the full phase will be released upon this signature.

- As for the third donor of the project, the EC, the EastMed Project Document was sent to DG-Mare in August 2008. Following the positive outcome of the EC Verification Mission on the second year of MedFisis, DG-Mare has requested FAO, in October 2008, to re-submit the project document and Grant Application in a new format. The final reformatted Grant Application, together with the Project Document, was sent to the DG-Mare in November 2008. This application is currently being approved by the DG-Mare services.

19. If the schedules foreseen are followed, it is expected that the full phase of the EastMed project could be initiated during the second quarter of 2009, with the recruitment of the necessary Project Personnel.

MED-LME Fisheries

20. The project “Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem. Regional Component: Implementation of agreed actions for the protection of the environmental resources of the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal areas” includes, as its component 3, the “Conservation of biological diversity: Implementation of SAP BIO and related NAPs”. This component of the Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean LME in turn has two main sub-components, 3.1: conservation of coastal and marine diversity through the development of a Mediterranean MPA Network and 3.2. Promote the sustainable use of fisheries resources in the Mediterranean through the development and application of ecosystem-based management approaches. FAO, in close cooperation with the GFCM Secretariat and with the support of the regional Projects, prepared the “fisheries component” of the project and will be the Executing Agency for subcomponent 3.2, and for part of component 3.1

21. The objective of Sub-Component 3.2 is to increase the ability of coastal nations to utilise coastal and high seas resources through the adoption of the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and the application of targeted interventions to reduce bycatch and other unsustainable fishing practices. The Sub-Component will focus on the dissemination of the ecosystem approach to Fisheries, on by-catch of regionally important species at a fleet level and on unsustainable fishing practices at regionally-representative Marine Protected Areas (MPA’s). The duration of the project is five years.

22. The Project Management Unit, that will be based at the UNEP/MAP offices in Athens, Greece, is being set up, and the Vacancy Announcements for the different staff of the project, and especially for the post of Project Manager, have already been advertised and closed. In the meantime UNEP/MAP started preparing the different draft Agreements with the Partners involved in the Action, including FAO. It is expected that these Agreements will be signed early 2009.

23. Most of the activities of the preparatory phase of the project (PDF-B) carried out by FAO during the current Intersessional period were related to the preparation of the “Fisheries Component” including subcomponent 3.1 and 3.2, and negotiation of the final project.

- The Project Document was prepared by UNEP-MAP based in Athens, on the basis of the Project Brief approved in 2007, and submitted to the GEF, in December 2007, and the final Project Document was endorsed by the GEF CEO in April 2008.

- Following this approval, UNEP started the preparations for the startup of the project, with the assistance of UNEP-MAP and FAO, in what concerned component 3, and especially sub-component 3.2, for preparation of detailed budget and project planning details.
- During the intersessional period, FAO also prepared the final report of the PDF-B grant, and submitted it to UNEP for the final approval.

24. It is expected that the Project Management Unit will be in place during the first quarter of 2009. A two to three months Inception Phase will follow, involving all regional and national project partners, to detail the work-plan, activities and budget, for agreement at the First Steering Committee Meeting, to be held most likely in April/May 2009.

Black Sea project

25. Following the project elements prepared by the secretariat and presented to the 32nd session, of GFCM (Rome, February 2008), the secretariat prepared a more detailed working document on the project with the support of a consultant.

26. Consequently, the Government of Turkey has manifested its interest in supporting the preparation of a project to enhance the capabilities of Black Sea countries for responsibly managing their fisheries in the Black Sea, and has approached the GFCM Secretariat to develop a proposal for this project. The GFCM Secretariat has responded favourably to this request and a preliminary working document has been elaborated. Based on this document, the GFCM Secretariat asked the Fisheries Management and Conservation Service (FIMF) of the FAO Fisheries Department (FI) to develop a full project document proposal.

27. FIMF has developed a proposal for the Identification and Formulation of a project to strengthen Scientific, Technical and Institutional Cooperation to support responsible fisheries in the Black Sea. During this work, a formulation mission will be fielded to meet the appropriate national institutions of the potential participating countries and participatory workshops will be organised with relevant stakeholders. The Project Document proposal will be discussed with all concerned and submitted to potential donors for funding approval.

28. This proposal was sent to the Government of Turkey, and approved by the relevant authorities in February 2009.