



MSPMED Case Study: Characterizing the ecological stakes and their interactions with offshore activities in the Gulf of Lion to support the Maritime Spatial Planning processes in the Mediterranean Sea

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* Illustration credits: Folco Soffiatti (IUAV – MSPMED Project)



What is the MSPMED project?

The MSPMED project (*Towards the operational implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning in our common Mediterranean Sea*), is a co-funded project by the European Commission, whose objectives are focused on:

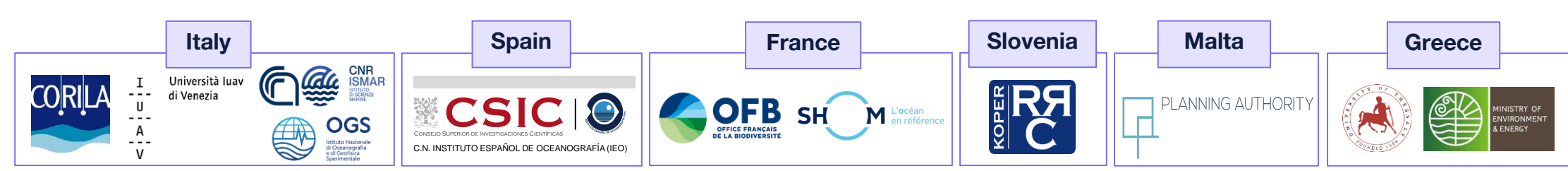
- ▷ Support Member States in the implementation of the MSP directive (2014/89/EU Directive – *Maritime Spatial Planning*)
- ▷ Promote transboundary cooperation in the establishment of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)

Main details:

Duration:
March 2020 – October 2022

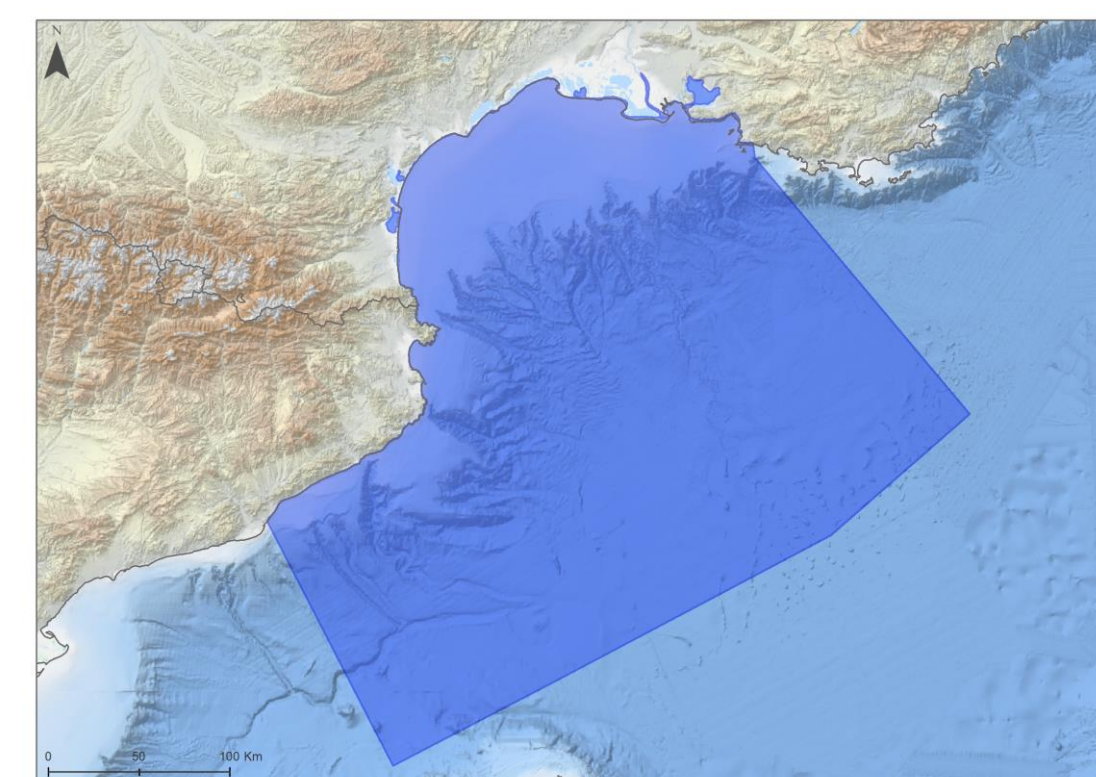
Budget:
3.135.916,25 €

Partners:
11



Case Study: Planning the offshore Gulf of Lion with respect to the ecosystems

The **Gulf of Lion** is a cross-border area between France and Spain that extends from Cap de Creus in Spain to Toulon in France, being an outstanding area for marine biodiversity (e.g. seabirds, cetaceans, marine turtles and benthic habitats), being one of the most productive zones in the Mediterranean, with particular climatic and oceanographic conditions. The high productivity of the marine waters and the aforementioned specific conditions, make this area important for economic development such as fisheries, maritime traffic and new activities (offshore windfarms, OWF).



The main objective of the case study of the Gulf of Lion is focused in assessing the knowledge available regarding the marine environment of the area and the identification and characterization of the interactions between maritime uses (especially offshore floating windfarms) and marine ecosystem components in the context of marine spatial planning (MSP).

The case study area is the same as SIMWESTMED project (*Supporting Maritime Spatial Planning in the Western Mediterranean region*), which comprise the Gulf of Lion from Barcelona to Marseille and an offshore extended area.

MSPMED added value for MSP national processes:

To support the establishment and implementation of Maritime Spatial Plans, the MSPMED project develop **pilot case studies** in different areas of the Mediterranean sea. The results of the case studies could help to feed MSP national process. It is important to highlight that EU MSP transboundary projects are the **best opportunity** to create a first link between countries at the technical level, which in the long term may lead to real cooperation at joint decision levels, and integrate results (coming from case studies) as recommendations into MSP national processes.

Tasks developed

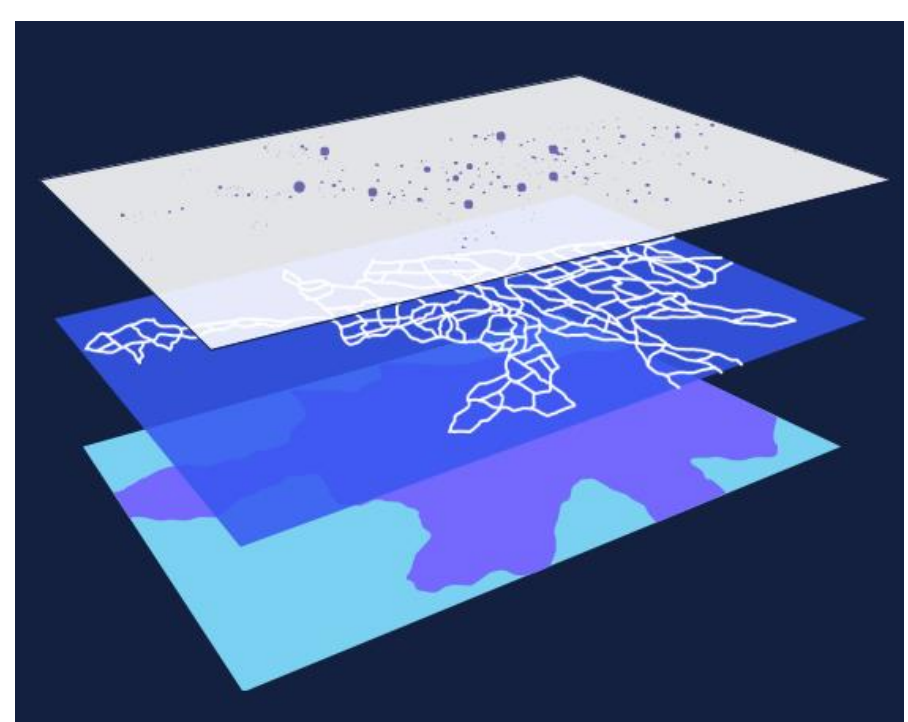
1 Production of a knowledge synthesis about ecological stakes in the Gulf of Lion

Objectives:

- ▷ **boosting knowledge and methodology sharing** to complete an updated view of ecological stakes at the Gulf of Lion scale;
- ▷ highlighting important **knowledge gaps** to be bridged, and perspectives or solutions;
- ▷ informing on **how the evaluation and MPA designations mobilize existing knowledge**, in order to support MSP processes in Spain and France;
- ▷ Encourage **transboundary** cooperation, knowledge and experience sharing;
- ▷ **Involve experts** from different research fields, encouraging scientific collaborations supporting public policies, relative to cetaceans, sea turtles, seabirds, and canyon deep habitats.

Methodology:

- ▷ **Workshops** (from June to December 2021)
- ▷ **Bibliography** (Scientific literature, evaluation reports, management plans, impact studies, etc.)
- ▷ Bilateral **meetings** (OFB, researchers, managers, associations, state departments, etc.)



Technical workshops

18 technical workshops held with the participation of 51 experts (15 from Spain and 36 from France):

- ▷ 8 workshops between France and Spain experts regarding cetaceans & sea turtles, birds & chiropterans
- ▷ 10 workshops in France regarding benthic and pelagic habitats

Final cross-border workshop (January 18th, 2022) to present the main outputs and findings of the tasks to French and Spanish administrations in charge of MSP, environment and energy policies and to the experts involved in the technical meetings.

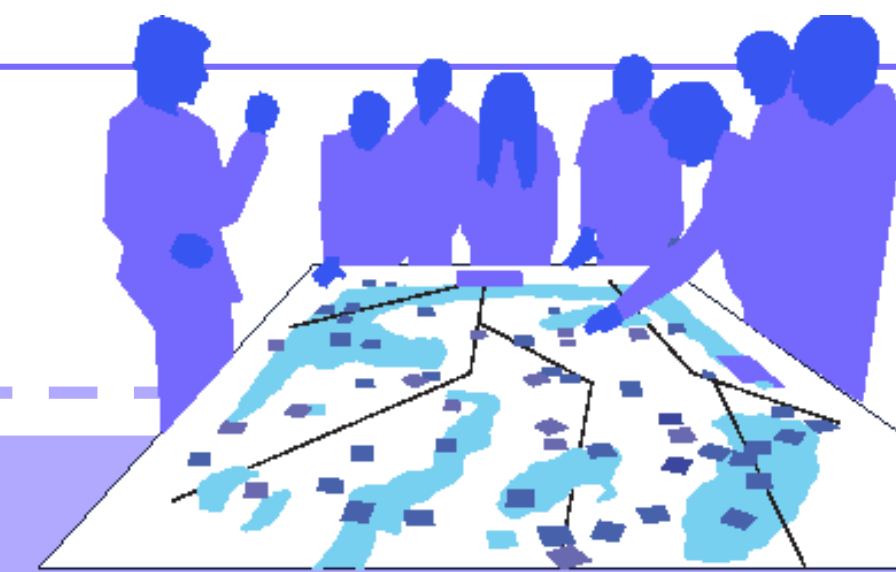
2 Provide knowledge on the interactions between Mediterranean ecosystems the development of offshore windfarms in the Gulf of Lion

Objectives:

- ▷ Implement the first steps of a **methodology** to analyse the impact of cumulative effects at sea
- ▷ Provide **knowledge** on the potential interactions between offshore floating windfarms and Mediterranean ecosystems
- ▷ Identify and characterise the existing **interactions** between activities, pressures and ecological receptors

Methodology:

- ▷ **Workshops** (from June to December 2021)
- ▷ **Bibliography** (Scientific literature, evaluation reports, management plans, impact studies, etc.)
- ▷ Bilateral **meetings** (OFB, FEM, researchers, state departments, etc.)



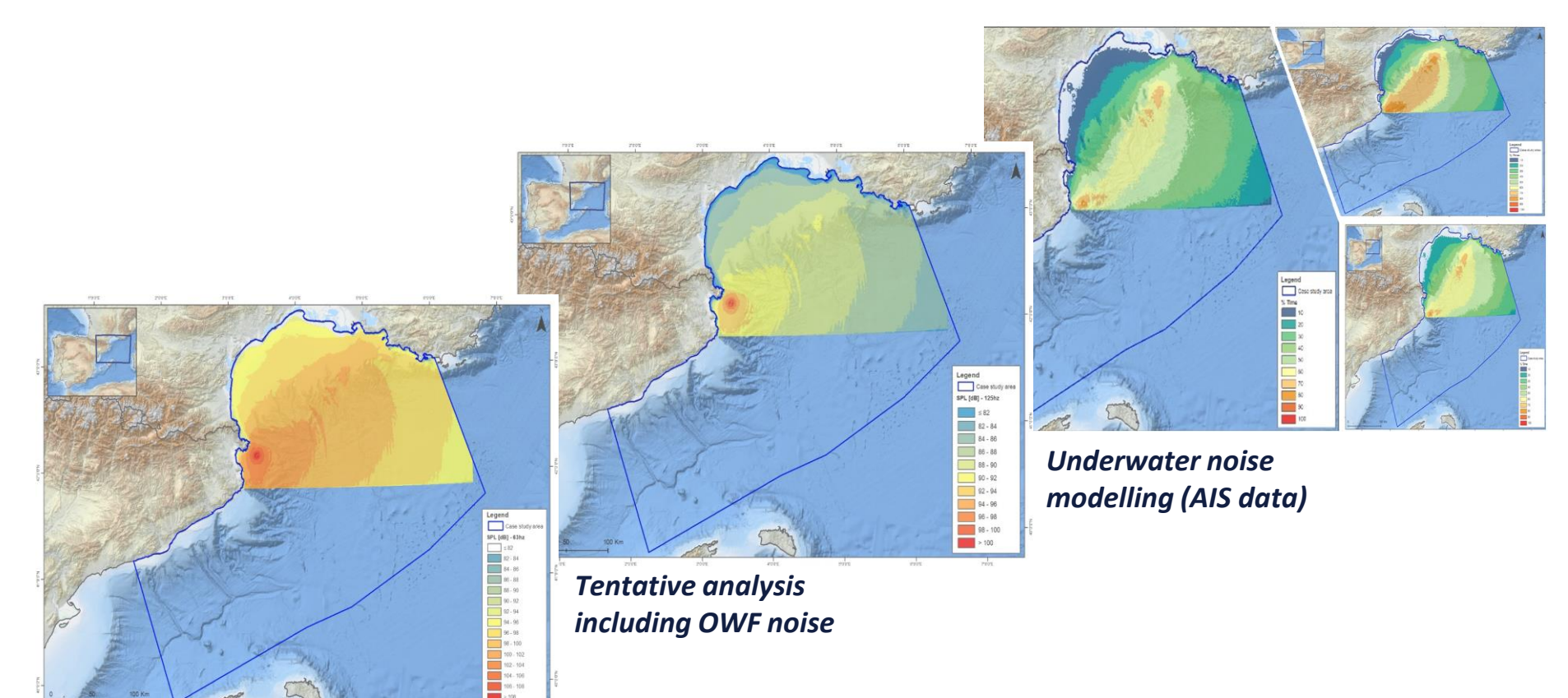
3 Estimation of noise propagation

Objectives:

- ▷ **Assessment of underwater noise** by maritime traffic and offshore windfarms
- ▷ Knowledge synthesis and scenario testing about **interaction** between noise-causing uses and Mediterranean biodiversity (species)

Methodology:

- ▷ Development of underwater **noise propagation models methodology** by maritime traffic and offshore windfarms which could affect mainly cetaceans
- ▷ Underwater noise **workshop** (held on May 10th, 2022)



Underwater noise assessment for decision support in MSP and related policies workshops

- ▷ Underwater noise workshop (May 10th, 2022) held with the participation of 44 experts from Spain, France, Greece and Italy.
- ▷ Trilateral Meeting Italy-France-Spain (May 11th, 2022) held with the participation of 35 experts from Spain, France and Italy.

