Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), Fisheries and Offshore Wind (OW) in the Mediterranean: interactions and pathways for coexistence.

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Background

"Maritime spatial planning (MSP) is the tool to manage the use of our seas and oceans coherently and to ensure that human activities take place in an efficient, safe and sustainable way" (EC)

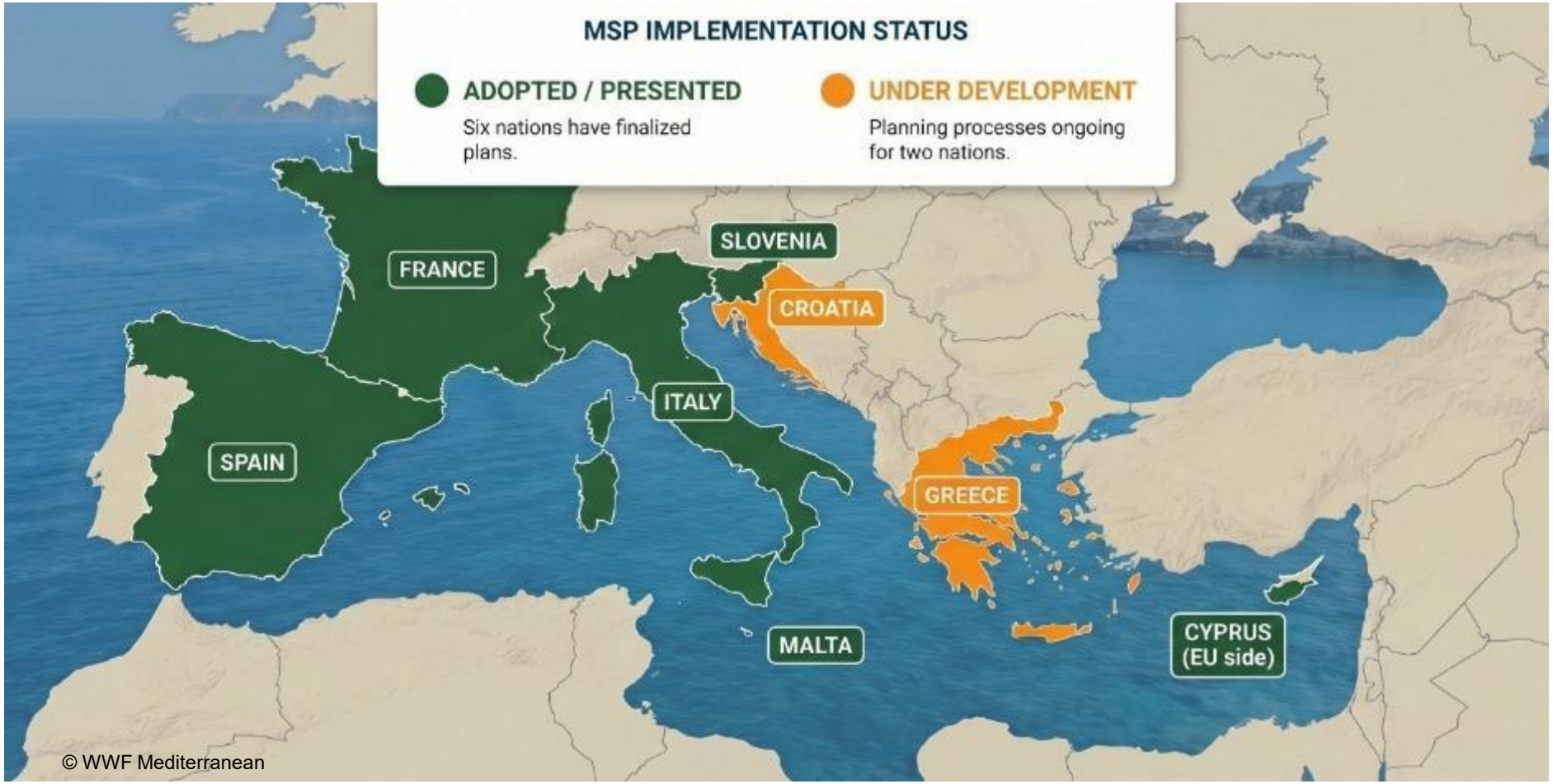
Why does the interaction between fisheries and offshore wind matters?

- Offshore wind is accelerating rapidly in the Mediterranean, driven by EU climate and energy targets
- Fisheries are already under cumulative pressures and spatial competition is increasing
- MSP is the main EU policy tool to balance energy transition, ecosystem protection and maritime uses

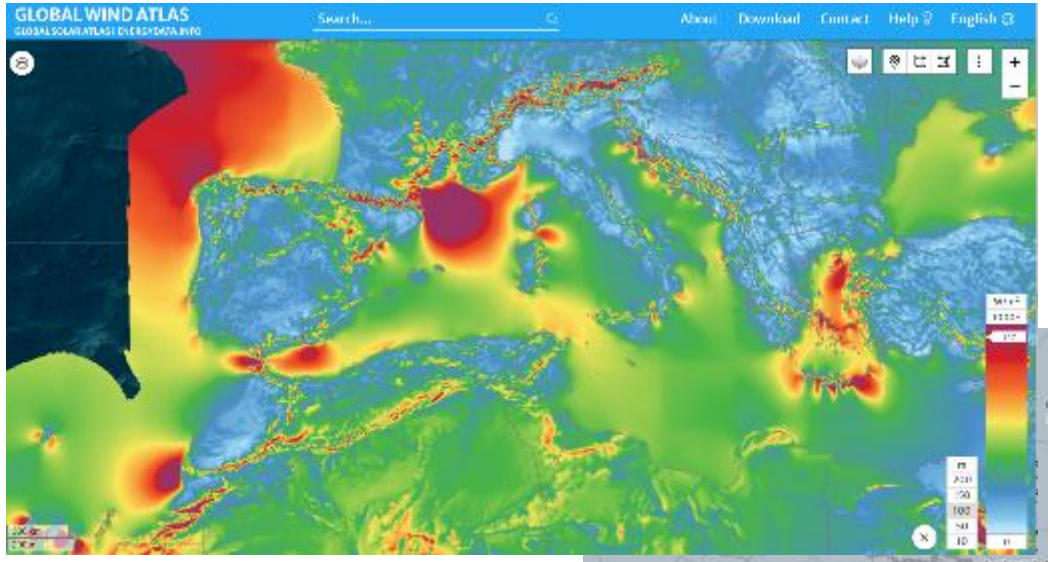
Policy Context

- MSP Directive
- European Green Deal
- Renewable Energy Directive (RED III)
- Emerging European Ocean Pact / Ocean Act agenda

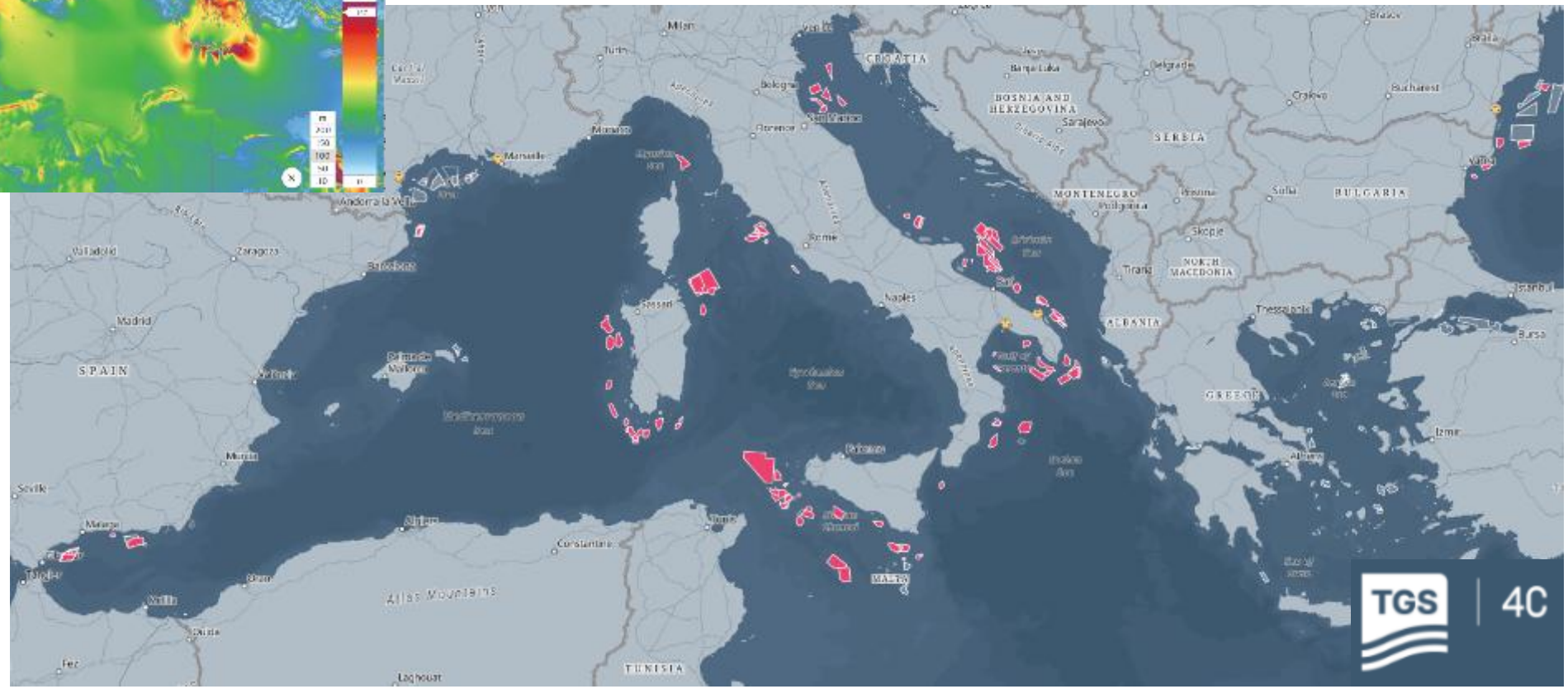
What is the status of MSP in the Mediterranean?



What is the status of OW in the Mediterranean?



Mean wind power density
Source: https://globalwindatlas.info/



[Global Offshore Renewables Map | 4C Offshore]

What is the status of ORE in MSP in the Med?

COUNTRY	STATUS IN MSP
Cyprus	Offshore renewable energy is recognised in the MSP and a 64 km² investigation area has been identified, but implementation remains at an early stage.
France	Offshore wind is well integrated into MSP through updated national planning and mapped development areas in the Mediterranean façade.
Italy	Offshore wind is only partially reflected in MSP, with limited references in planning units and no fully defined framework for suitable areas yet.
Greece	Greece has established one of the most advanced systems, with legally defined development areas and formal integration into MSP in 2025.
Malta	Offshore wind is acknowledged in strategic terms, but no dedicated zoning or operational spatial planning has yet been introduced.
Slovenia	Offshore renewable energy is only mentioned in general terms and is not supported by dedicated spatial designations.
Spain	Offshore wind is clearly integrated through ZAPERs, which provide a structured and spatially explicit planning framework.

MEDIGREEN
Mediterranean approach towards a maritime European Green Deal in MSP
Co-funded by the European Union

Case study - Italy

Italy's current Offshore Wind planning

- ❑ 150+ grid connections applications submitted
- ❑ 73GW potential capacity
- ❑ 1 pilot implementation (Taranto)
- ❑ Expected to move towards deep-sea floating technologies in the future

Italy's current MSP

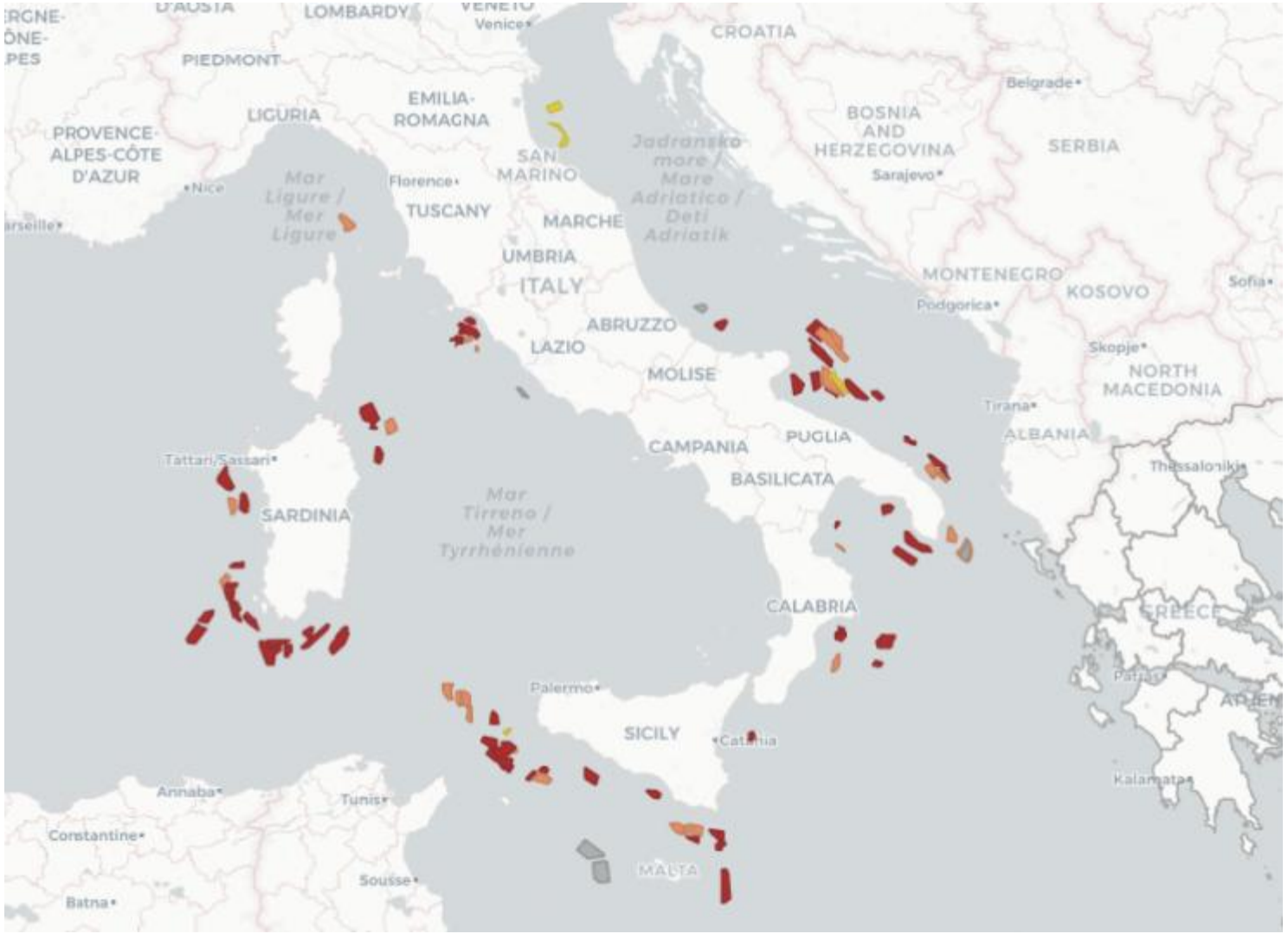
- ❑ 3 MSP plans sucessfully adopted (2024)
- ❑ Vocation areas for marine uses (e.g. fisheries) but not identifying OW suitable areas
- ❑ MSP plans viewed for now as procedural rather than « outcome-oriented »
- ❑ 4 projects with completed EIAs

•Recent Italian legislation has progressively simplified the authorisation framework for renewable energy and introduced rules for identifying suitable and unsuitable areas, including marine areas, for offshore renewables.

•The Decree-Law of 21 November 2025 marked a major step for offshore wind by stating that offshore areas identified in MSP are considered suitable, while also automatically recognising decommissioned platforms and some port areas as suitable locations under specific conditions.

•**Identification of suitable areas is expected very soon.**

Case study - Italy



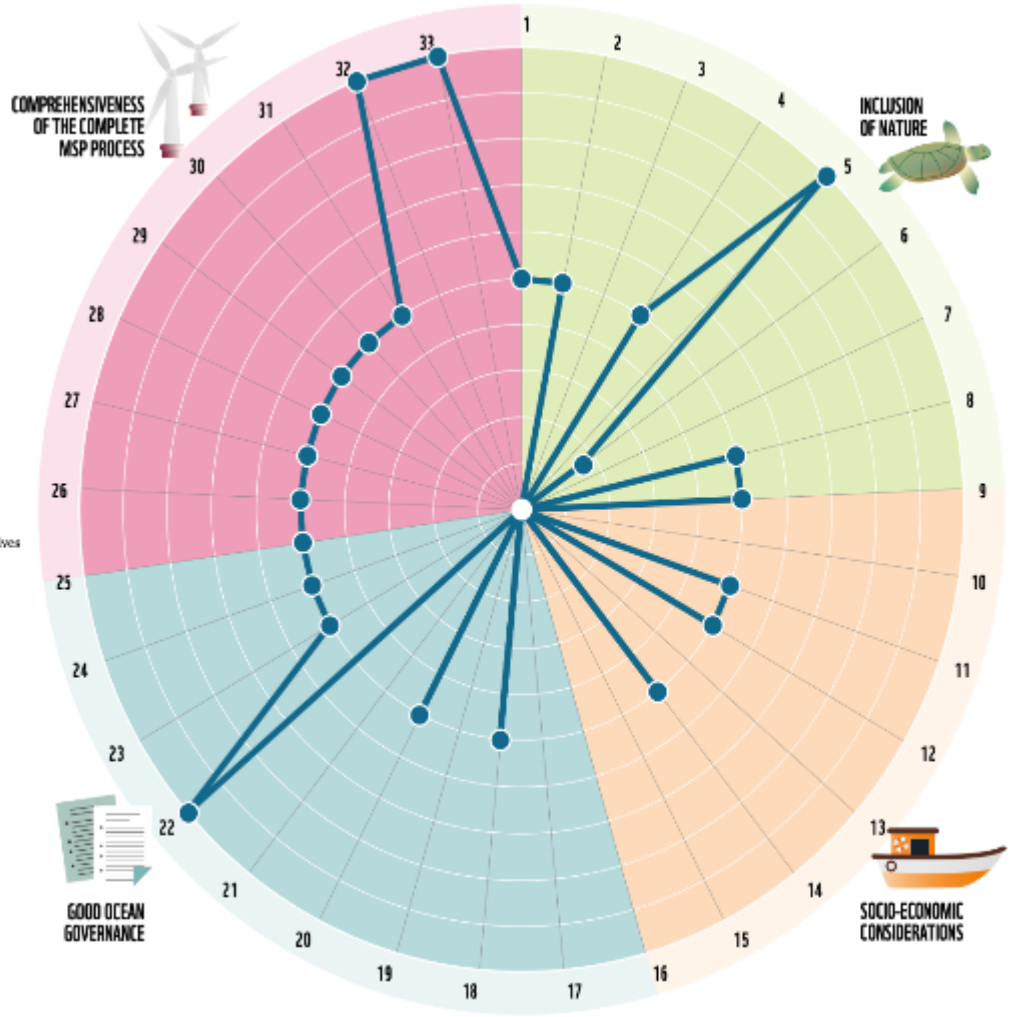
- Preliminary study
- Permitting (EIA ongoing)
- Permitting (EIA completed)
- Authorized
- Under construction
- Operational
- Archived

MARINEWIND

Assessing the Italian MSP

HOW STRONG IS ITALY'S ECOSYSTEM-BASED MSP FRAMEWORK?

50%	1	Strategic environmental assessments (SEA) conducted
50%	2	Consideration for ecologically-sensitive areas
0%	3	When data is missing/ insufficient, Precautionary Principle applied
50%	4	Planned activities fall within environmentally-sustainable limits
100%	5	Land-sea interactions identified and analysed
16,67%	6	Network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas included
0%	7	Essential marine habitats connected via blue corridors/ green infrastructure
50%	8	Areas for nature restoration included
50%	9	Blue Carbon ecosystems protected
0%	10	Marine ecosystem services assessed and included
50%	11	Risk in conflicts among users addressed
50%	12	Sustainable blue economy objectives and finance priciples defined
0%	13	Industry employment and income generation forecasted
50%	14	Sea use by fisheries assessed and included
0%	15	Offshore renewable energy targets included - CO_2 neutrality respects biodiversity objectives
0%	16	Results from cross-sectoral public consultation incorporated
0%	17	Temporal and spatial uncertainties in the era of climate change addressed
50%	18	Aligns with EU policies for seafloor and habitat protection
0%	19	Aligns with EU policies for reduction of noise pollution
50%	20	Aligns with EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive
0%	21	Vision for sustainable development in next 20 years included
100%	22	Legally-binding plan
50%	23	Cross-sectoral policies and timelines harmonised
50%	24	Competent authority for delivering EBA-MSP in place
50%	25	Various scenarios of sustainable sea uses considered
50%	26	Planning based on best-available scientific evidence
50%	27	Industrial, ecological, cultural and societal functions included
50%	28	Cross-border cooperation for good planning, monitoring and enforcement
50%	29	Adaptive management framework applied
50%	30	Interdisciplinary science supported decisions
50%	31	Sustainable multipurpose use through time and space included
100%	32	Tools for monitoring progress and aligning with key policies included
100%	33	Entire sea area covered

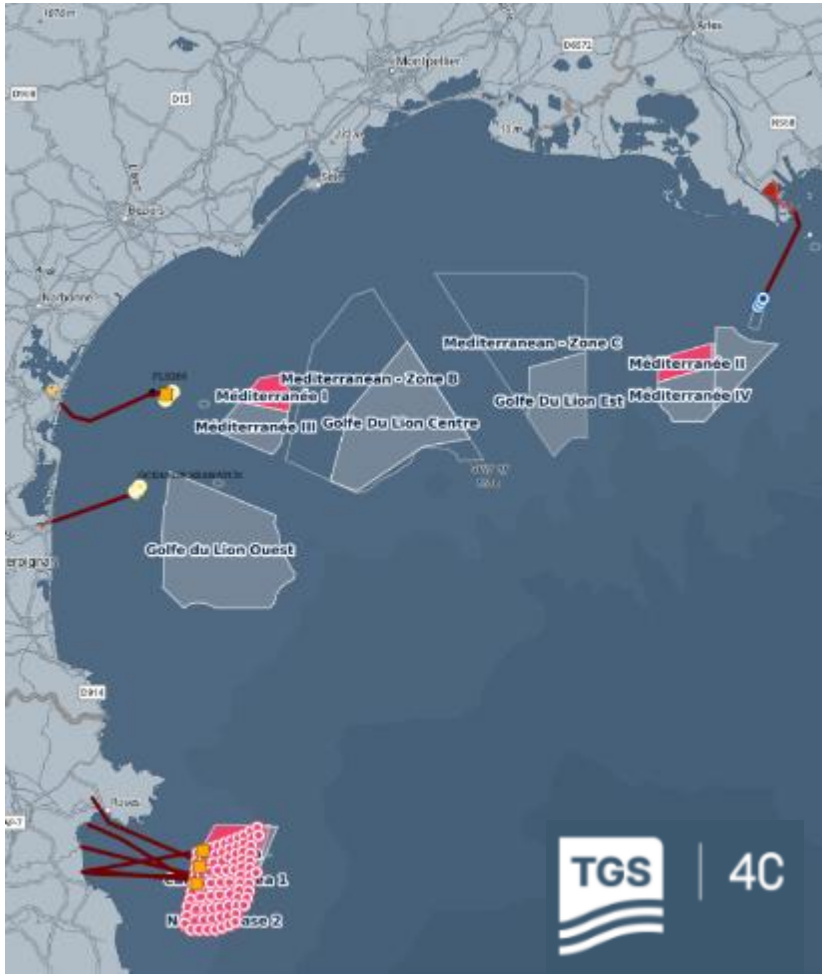


WWF EB-MSP Methodology (2021)

Key findings:

- Environmental requirements are not consistenly integrated (e.g. CIA, precautionary principle);
- Limited operational alignment with other policy frameworks (e.g.MSFD, HD);
- Stakeholder participation is largely procedural and compliance driven;
- Available data is not effectively translated into MSP & monitoring systems remain weak;
- Implementation and enforcement remain limited and uncertain .

The French model



- Strong top-down MSP framework with political backing

Key strengths

- Early identification of offshore wind zones within MSP
- Strategic Environmental Assessment guiding choices
- Continuous and structured stakeholder engagement

Result

- Reduced conflict and higher predictability for all users

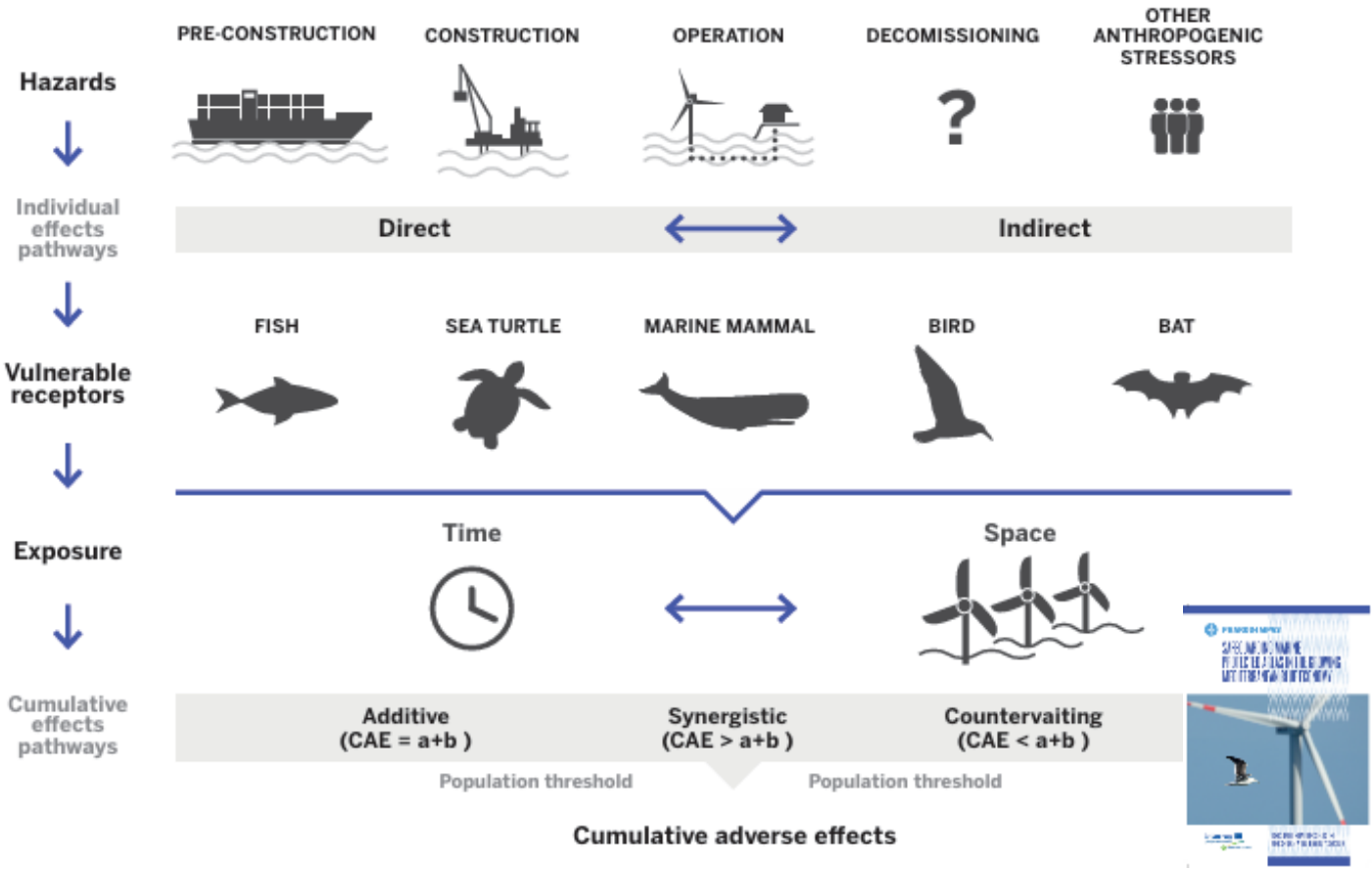
Fisheries and offshore wind: interactions

Key uncertainties

- Effects on fish stocks (aggregation, etc.)
- Effects on fishing access and patterns
- Impacts of increased vessel traffic, noise, lighting, electromagnetic fields
- Impacts on operational costs?
- Cumulative impacts?

Core challenges

- In some cases, decisions are moving faster than scientific evidence



Fisheries and offshore wind: coexistence?

Current structured dialogues

- First structured dialogue between fishers, developers and authorities (e.g AERO stakeholder table in Italy)

Current reality across the region

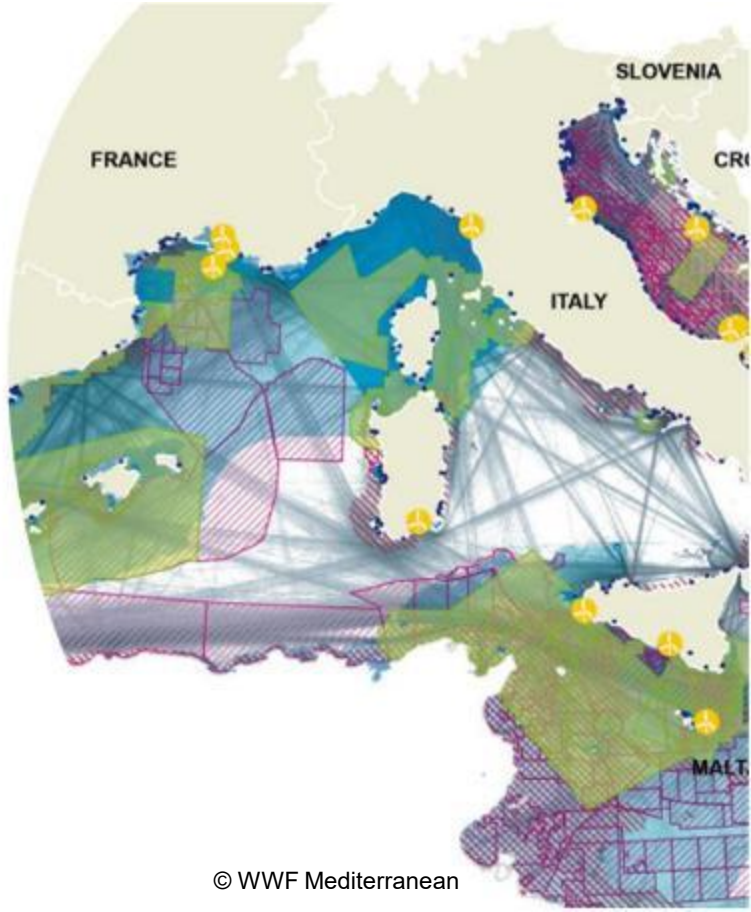
- Highly variable engagement practices
- Various models are emerging: coexistence, multiuse, compensation approaches

Policy concern

- Risk of weakened EIA under accelerated RED procedures which will have even weaker engagement with stakeholders

Conclusions

- MSP in the Mediterranean is slowly progressing
- In many countries, identification of suitable offshore wind areas is the next critical step
- This phase is decisive to structure fisheries–energy dialogue
- MSP will require revision as experience grows and that will be another opportunity to get involved
- National Restoration Plans and the emerging Ocean Act agenda offer an important opportunity to better integrate biodiversity, fisheries and energy planning in a meaningful way



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