



## Towards Ecosystem Conservation and Sustainable Artisanal Fisheries in the Mediterranean basin

**ECOSAFIMED**



**Priority 2** Promotion of environmental sustainability at the basin level

**Measure 2.1** Prevention and reduction of risk factors for the environment and enhancement of natural common heritage



Project  
funded by the  
**EUROPEAN UNION**



**ENPI  
CBCMED**  
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION  
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

## Project in brief

It is a general assumption that benthic communities\* are relatively well preserved in areas exploited mostly by artisanal fleets. The richness of these communities depends on the presence of so-called ecosystem engineer species (corals, sponges or sea grasses), which provide a three-dimensional habitat structure and significantly increase biodiversity and productivity creating breeding, feeding and refuge locations for an important number of species of commercial value. The contribution of benthic communities to the conservation of sustainable artisanal fisheries is essential because these communities have a role as 'Essential Fish Habitats'. However, trawl-fishing can damage benthic communities: since engineer species are usually long-living and slow-growing, any disturbance can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects.

Against this threat **ECOSAFIMED** project will assess the impact of artisanal fisheries on shelf marine areas with low trawling pressure. The aim is to provide a package of scientific-based recommendations for an ecosystem-based management of artisanal fisheries whose application will combine conservation of benthic habitats with exploitation of artisanal fishing sector.

## Beneficiary

Biodiversity Foundation (Spain, Andalucía)

## Partnership

1. Spanish Research Council, Institute of Marine Sciences - ICM-CSIC (Spain, Cataluña)
2. University of Genoa (Italy, Liguria)
3. National Institute of Marine Sciences and Technologies - INSTM (Tunisia, Tunis)

## Specific objectives

- To assess the impact of artisanal fishing on benthic communities
- To maintain a good environmental status of benthic communities in the Mediterranean Sea while ensuring artisanal fishing industry in areas preserved from trawling pressure

\* A benthic community is made up of organisms that live in and on the bottom of the sea floor. These organisms are known as benthos. Benthos include worms, clams, crabs, lobsters, sponges, and other tiny organisms that live in the bottom sediments.

## Expected results

- Areas on the continental shelf with low trawling pressure identified
- Local activities having potential interaction with benthic communities evaluated
- Benthic communities' health status in the study areas assessed
- Technical knowledge transferred among project partners
- Dialogue between different sea users - NGOs, municipalities, fishermen - strengthened
- Artisanal fisheries management and benthic ecosystems conservation improved in 8 marine areas
- Ecologically valuable areas for conservation to be proposed as Marine Protected Areas under EU directives, the Barcelona Convention and national schemes detected

## Main activities

- Signing of at least 5 marine stewardship agreements between fishermen and entities such as NGOs and municipalities to ensure that fishermen commit to carry out their commercial activity in line with conservation criteria
- Inventory of species potentially impacted by fishing
- Characterization of local artisanal fleets (including number of artisanal fishing units and fishermen, type of gear, seasonality of the fishing activities, target species)
- Oceanographic surveys performed by remotely operated underwater vehicles and environmental cartography of the surveyed areas in GIS format
- Training seminar on image processing and analysis
- Evaluation of the status of benthic communities using specific qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Diffusion of management guidelines for the preservation of benthic communities and sustainable artisanal fisheries

## Target groups

- Authorities involved in protecting marine biodiversity and in fisheries management
- Fishermen associations and fish markets
- Municipalities
- Policy makers at local and Mediterranean level
- Coastal water advisory and management bodies

## Final beneficiaries

- Regional agencies for tourism development
- Environmental NGOs
- Scientific community
- Local populations

## Duration

24 months (December 2013 - December 2015)

## Budget

- Total budget: € 1.915.883
- Programme contribution: € 1.569.235 (82%)
- Project co-financing: € 346.648 (18%)

## Website

Under construction

## Contact person

Mr. Víctor Gutiérrez

Project director

Fundación Biodiversidad

[vgutierrez@fundacion-biodiversidad.es](mailto:vgutierrez@fundacion-biodiversidad.es)

+34 214.748.3647

