



Maritime Spatial Planning
Country Information

Cyprus

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Background Information

Basic facts on Marine Waters



— Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) — Territorial Sea

The marine waters of the Republic of Cyprus, as defined in the Marine Strategy Law (No.18(I)/2011), include the waters, the seabed and subsoil on the seaward side of the baselines from which the extent of territorial sea is measured, extending to the outmost reach of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). They also include the coastal waters, as defined in the Protection and Management of Waters Law (No.13(I)/2004), namely the surface water on the landward side of a line, every point of which is at a distance of one nautical mile on the seaward side from the nearest point of the baseline, extending where appropriate up to the outer limit of transitional waters.

The maritime zones of the Republic of Cyprus consist of the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf. The legislation governing the maritime zones of the Republic of Cyprus is based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982, which was ratified by Cyprus in 1988.

According to the Territorial Sea Law (45 of 1964, as amended), the Republic of Cyprus, established a territorial sea of 12 nautical miles, as measured from its baselines, as those were established by the Republic in 1993 and formally submitted to the United Nations in compliance with the deposit obligations pursuant to UNCLOS. In 2004, Cyprus declared a contiguous zone up to 24 nautical miles as measured from the baselines (Contiguous Zone Law - No. 63(I)/2004) and an EEZ, the limits of which are defined in accordance with the principle of the median line/equidistance between the coasts of Cyprus and the opposite states (Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Law (No. 64(I)/2004, as amended). The Republic of Cyprus, also, asserts its inherent rights over its continental shelf in relation to the same marine area, through the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Law. The Republic of Cyprus concluded bilateral agreements concerning the delimitation of the EEZ with Egypt (2003), Lebanon (2007) and Israel (2010), based on the internationally accepted principle of the median line/equidistance and in accordance with the UNCLOS.

The terrestrial area of the island is about 9.251 km² while the EEZ and continental shelf covers 98.240 km². The geographical location and the massive area of Cyprus's EEZ and continental shelf, compared to its land size, are two very important reasons for the formation of a precise and global MSP.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General

The MSP Law¹ (Law 144(I)/2017), which transposed the MSP Directive 2014/89/EU, was approved by the House of Representatives in October 2017. It was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic on 13.10.2017.

Planning on national level

There is no formal MSP Plan developed in Cyprus, yet. Nevertheless, pilot plans (not legally binding) have been realised in the framework of European projects.

National MSP authority

The Minister of Transport, Communications and Works (Department of Merchant Shipping) is the MSP competent authority, which is responsible for coordinating the necessary actions for MSP implementation.

Planning on regional level

No planning at the regional level is available.

Regional MSP authority

MSP is a national level process in Cyprus. No regional MSP authority has been nominated.

Details

The MSP Law (2017) defines the responsibilities and the role of various institutions involved in MSP implementation and defines the Minister of Transport, Communications and Works (Department of Merchant Shipping) as the competent authority. It clarifies the development and approval of MSP Plan and sets the provisions for approval of MSP Projects. In addition to defining the competent authorities, it establishes an MSP Committee involving 15 members (from different ministries, departments and services of the Government) which oversees the preparation of the draft Maritime Spatial Plan. As far as MSP is concerned, this Committee has replaced the Working Group on MSP and ICZM, created in 2013, which however remains in place for issues dealing with integrated coastal zone management. The Law also identifies an Inter-ministerial Committee (involving 6 Ministries) as the body responsible for the pre-approval of the MSP Plan) and establishes that the Council of Ministers is in charge of the final approval of the MSP Plan.

Also, at the national level, the inter-ministerial Committee has the overall responsibility for formulating environmental policy. Environmental policy is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MARDE), with the exception of land-use and spatial planning which is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior.

At the regional scale, spatial plans are developed at three levels, namely the Island Plan, the Local Plans and the Area Schemes. The coastal zone is not a unified planning area. Therefore, there is no separate institutional or land-use planning framework specifically pertaining to the coastal areas. Coastal land-use zones form part of several development plans applying to different local administrative areas. Moreover, there is no single legal or functional planning definition of the coastal zone or the coastal area.

Progress

Cyprus prepared and undertook public consultation on a draft Strategy for Integrated Maritime Policy in late 2013. The Strategy entitled: "Strategy of Cyprus for a National Integrated Maritime Policy - Vision: Sustainable Use and Development of the Seas of Cyprus" was approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2014. In that context, MSP, ICZM and MSFD were all mentioned as horizontal tools for achieving the goals of the Strategy. The work on Integrated Maritime Policy is being led by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (Department of Merchant Shipping) that chairs the Coordination Group on IMP. The group has developed a draft IMP Integrated

¹ Document available in Greek :

[https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/53BE71C2812A0FB1C22581B80026B100/\\$file/4622%2013%2010%202017%20%20PARARTHMA%201o%20MEROS%201.pdf](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/53BE71C2812A0FB1C22581B80026B100/$file/4622%2013%2010%202017%20%20PARARTHMA%201o%20MEROS%201.pdf)

Action Plan that has been submitted to the IMP Inter-ministerial Committee for approval and then to the Council of Ministers for final approval.

The preparatory work on MSP was delegated, by a decision of the Council of Ministers to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (Department of Merchant Shipping) in July 2012. Moreover, the National MSP Law established the MSP Committee for the preparation of the draft maritime spatial planning of Cyprus. In 2015, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (Department of Merchant Shipping), coordinated the Interreg IV project THAL-CHOR I project, that aimed at developing MSP methodology and its pilot implementation for the preparation of marine spatial plans in selected areas of Cyprus and Greece, through cooperation among the two countries. Those general objectives are pursued in the second project THAL-CHOR II.

Overview of MSP-related uses and issues

EUNETMAR (2014) identifies the 7 largest marine/maritime sectors and stakes for Cyprus which are:

Deep-sea shipping

It is the second largest blue activity of the country. There are six Cypriot ports; Larnaca and Limassol serve the largest percentage of sea cargo. Cyprus has the third largest fleet within the European Union and is classified as the 10th largest merchant fleet globally and the largest third-party ship management centre in Europe (Johnson et al., 2018).

Securing fresh water supply

The sector developed during the last years after the severe drought problems of the island. Cyprus faces the problem of limited water resources, which became more intense in the 1990's due to drought. At the same time, there is excess demand for drinking water consumption and for use in agricultural activities. Part of the demand is satisfied by the operation of three desalination plants. Currently, there are permanent and mobile desalination units for serving all the areas of the island while there are studies and further planning for the expansion of existing plants and the construction of new ones. The development of desalination units presents positive growth rated mostly due to the number of implemented projects for securing uninterrupted supply of water both for human consumption and commercial reasons.

Marine aquaculture

Mariculture is the main type of aquaculture in Cyprus and it is carried out along the southern coast of the island. Major species cultivated are gilthead seabream and European seabass. In terms of geography, the activity is mostly concentrated in the eastern part of Limassol. It is an important activity in Cyprus showing increased rates of growth during the last 10 years. Moreover, a spatial planning study was developed by the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research for the identification of candidate sea areas for the establishment of marine aquaculture zones, to mitigate problems and ensure a sustainable future for the sector.

For instance, the Vasiliko-Moni sea area (along the southern coasts of Cyprus) is considered as an 'unofficial' mariculture zone. The designation of aquaculture zones is of primary consideration by the Department of Fisheries and Marine Research. The relatively large amount of capital needed for the development of mariculture makes MSP, and the creation of (official) mariculture zones in particular, a pressing need for the sustainability of the sector. The creation of official mariculture zones avoids competition for space with other maritime activities and this certainty improves the investment climate.

Coastal tourism

It ranks first among the largest economic sectors in Cyprus, with significant contribution to national GDP. Cyprus is a major tourism destination in Europe and especially in the Mediterranean area.

Cruise tourism

Cyprus is among the major ports of call in Europe. It serves the European cruise industry mostly as destination market. Although, the island has many advantages, its geographical location in the centre of Eastern Mediterranean and its proximity to major cruise destinations such as Greek islands and Israel are a major draw.

Off-shore energy

The development of oil and gas in Cyprus's waters is quite important due to recent discoveries of hydrocarbons, and especially gas, implying additional exploration is likely in the near future. Cyprus and Egypt have signed a Framework Agreement for the development of cross median line hydrocarbon resources. In 2019, 9 exploratory licences were delivered by the Cyprus Government.

The government of Cyprus has plans to build an onshore energy centre in the Vasiliko-Moni area, which will include facilities for the import, storage of strategic and operational stocks, management, distribution and export of oil products, as well as facilities for the import, storage and regasification of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). The Vasilikos Energy Centre is expected to significantly increase maritime traffic in the area.

Protection of the Marine Environment

Finally, 8 Natura 2000 marine sites (6 SCI and 4 SPA) are defined in Cyprus, accounting for a total of 131.74 km² protected area at sea (MOA, 2017).

Maritime Spatial Plans

Existing Maritime Spatial Plans

There are no legally binding Maritime Spatial Plans available for Cyprus.

Pilot plans or projects

Progress has nevertheless been made in the field of MSP following the participation of Cyprus in various European projects.

- Cyprus is engaged in the [THAL-CHOR 2 project](#) (2018-2021), funded in the framework of Interreg V-A "Greece-Cyprus 2014-2020". The project is a continuation of the previous THAL-CHOR Project. The first phase of the formulation of National Maritime Spatial Planning Policy Statement for marine waters and a draft maritime spatial plan for the marine waters of Cyprus in cooperation with the MSP Committee are some of the key expected deliverables of the THAL-CHOR 2 project.
- The [THAL-CHOR Project](#) (2014-2015), involving Greece and Cyprus, aimed at developing a methodology for MSP and then using this methodology for pilot implementation in selected areas in Cyprus and Greece for drafting maritime spatial plans, as well as for preparing both countries for the imminent implementation of the EU Directive on MSP. The resolution of spatial conflicts between different uses of the sea, better coordination between stakeholders, strengthening cross-border cooperation, and creating conditions for achieving sustainable development in line with the strategy "Europe 2020", are also among the objectives of the project. In the framework of the project a [pilot plan](#) was drafted for the area of Limassol, along the southern coast of Cyprus.
- [The PERSEUS Project](#) (2012-2015) aims to identify the interacting patterns of natural and human-derived pressures on the Mediterranean and Black Seas, assess their impact on marine ecosystems and, using the objectives and principles of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive as a vehicle, to design an effective and innovative research governance framework based on sound scientific knowledge.
- [The project CREAM](#) (2011-2014) explored the effects of fishing activities on ecosystems through the perspective of the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries (EAF). It provided a critical review of the available knowledge and the methodologies applied in stock assessment and EAF with the aim of improving the current levels of research coordination. Furthermore, the project contributes to the establishment of a coordinated research network to promote operational EAF initiatives.
- [The PEGASO Project](#) (2010-2014) aimed at developing common approaches and tools to support integrated policies for the coastal, marine and maritime realms of the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins. PEGASO specifically referred to the ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean to the Barcelona Convention.

Aspects of the MSP process

Sustainable development and growth in the maritime sector

A Strategy entitled: “Strategy of Cyprus for a National Integrated Maritime Policy” was approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2014. The Vision of the Strategy is “Sustainable Use and Development of the Seas of Cyprus”.

Cyprus is also part of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which has been supporting or leading numerous regional and national initiatives for the Blue Economy for over a decade and which organize the UfM [Regional Stakeholders' Conference on the Blue Economy](#). The next UfM [Regional Stakeholders' Conference on the Blue Economy](#) was planned for March 2020, but was postponed as a result of the Covid-19 Crisis. The UfM Regional Stakeholders' Conference on the Blue Economy is considered a key step towards the UfM Ministerial Conference on the Blue Economy in 2020. The Stakeholder Conference is intended to provide an opportunity to consult with a wide range of relevant stakeholders on the priority themes identified by countries to shape the common post-2020 Blue Economy agenda; promote dialogue and exchange of experiences on common areas of work; take stock of progress on activities at the regional level; and maintain a highly participatory approach ensuring the involvement of stakeholders in the pooling of capacities, mandates and resources.



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

Cyprus is a partner of the [PHAROS4MPAs](#) project (2017-2020) which aims at enhancing management effectiveness and networking for Mediterranean MPAs, in order to contribute to the conservation of marine biodiversity and natural ecosystems, taking into account the complex ensemble of human activities developed within the Blue Growth perspective and their interaction with protected areas and marine ecosystems.

In 2017-2019 Cyprus was part of the [PANACeA Project](#). The objective of PANACeA was to streamline networking and management efforts in Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a mechanism to enhance nature conservation and protection in the region. The project aimed to ensure synergies between relevant Mediterranean stakeholders –including managers, policymakers, socio-economic actors, civil society and the scientific community – and to increase the visibility and impacts of their projects' results towards common identified strategical targets.

The [project CREAM](#) also dealt with the establishment of a research network for promotion of an Ecosystem-based approach to fisheries.

Also, the [project PERSEUS](#) was a research project that assessed the dual impact of human activity and natural pressures on the Mediterranean and Black Seas. PERSEUS merged natural and socio-economic sciences to predict the long-term effects of these pressures on marine ecosystems.

Finally, 8 Natura 2000 marine sites (6 SCI and 4 SPA) are defined in Cyprus, accounting for a total of 131.74 km² protected area at sea (MOA, 2017). Legal provisions for setting up Marine Protected Areas can be found in: Protection and Management of Nature and Wildlife Law of 2003-2012 and Fisheries Law.



Resilience of climate change impacts

To implement Cyprus's International and European obligations, the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (Department of the Environment) took over the coordination of efforts for the development of the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change. In the first phase, under the Life+ co-funded [project CYPADAPT](#), estimated future climate changes were estimated, related impacts have been evaluated, and possible adaptation actions were proposed. CYPADAPT was then followed by a specific study to assess the categorization of risks due to climate change. With the completion of the above-mentioned studies and following public and individual consultations with all relevant stakeholders, the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation was formulated and approved by the Ministerial Council in 2017. The implementation of the Strategy aims at enhancing the adaptation capacity of Cyprus to observed and projected climate change, as well as to effectively prevent and address the negative impacts of climate change. A relevant Action Plan has been prepared for the implementation of the National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation, which includes a series of medium-term actions expected to be implemented by various Ministries, Departments and/or Services. The project defines different fields of adaptation, including coastal zones and fisheries and aquaculture.

Also, the [COASTANCE project](#) (2009-2012) was implemented within the European MED programme. Its main aim was to develop practical tools (technical/administrative) to manage the coastal zone adaptation to Climate Change. The project focused on those constituents of coastal protection action, such as coastal risks, flooding and erosion, territorial action plans for coastal protection management and guidelines for environmental impacts studies focused on coastal protection works and plans.



Land-sea interactions

Land-sea interactions are important in Cyprus, considering the numerous coastal activities, including tourism, and Cyprus is historically committed to ICZM process. As early as the 1990's, the Tourism Policy (under the Hotel Accommodation Law and the Town and Country Planning Law – Countryside Policy) designated a “zone” of 3 km. from the coastline for the purpose of regulating tourism development.

The Foreshore Protection Law of 1960 defines the “foreshore” as “all lands within 100 yards (91,44 m) of the high water mark”. The foreshore area is public property falling under the jurisdiction of this Law. As such, it is an area, which can be privately or publicly owned and leased accordingly. In addition, the same Law specifies that the competent authority has the right to define any area of the foreshore or adjacent to it, within which no building of any kind shall be erected, the so-called Foreshore Protection Zone.



Stakeholder Involvement

Cyprus has prepared and undertaken public consultation on a draft Strategy for Integrated Maritime Policy in late 2013. The Strategy entitled: “Strategy of Cyprus for a National Integrated Maritime Policy - Vision: Sustainable Use and Development of the Seas of Cyprus” was approved by the Council of Ministers on 22 August 2014. Stakeholders were also consulted during the preparation of the draft MSP Law transposing the EU MSP Directive.

Stakeholder involvement was taken into account in the framework of the THAL-CHOR Project where results of the conflict analysis were shared with local stakeholders, so they understand pressures from different conflicts. It will continue to be within the THAL-CHOR II Project.



Co-existence of uses

Analyses from the [THAL-CHOR project](#) revealed a high concentration of activities near the Limassol district and around the ports of Cyprus. Over 60 sea and land activities were analysed for conflicts and compatibilities as part of THAL-CHOR (Hadjimitsis et al., 2015b, c).



Trans-boundary cooperation

Transboundary cooperation between Cyprus and neighbouring countries have been implemented, in particular through various European projects. For instance, transboundary issues were considered in the THAL-CHOR project and the ongoing THAL-CHOR II as the objective of both the projects is to implement cross-border cooperation between Cyprus and Greece.

Cyprus also participated in the workshop “[Managing transboundary impacts in priority areas](#)” in the framework of the [PANACeA Project \(2017-2019\)](#), which gathered countries of the east and west Mediterranean.

Cyprus is also member of the Union for the Mediterranean ([UfM](#)) and a contracting party to the Barcelona Convention.



Use of best available data

Within the context of the THAL-CHOR project (2014-2015), a [web-GIS service](#) was developed to map relevant maritime uses in the overall EEZ of Cyprus, including a detailed view on the coastal and marine area of Limassol, where a pilot marine spatial plan was developed. The web-GIS service was used to analyse and dynamically visualise conflicting interactions and derive density activity maps and/or conflicts maps. Moreover, during the project, the web-GIS service was made available via the THAL-CHOR website upon request by the users to share results and support stakeholder engagement.

Within the PEGASO Project (2010-2014), a [Spatial data Infrastructure](#) (SDI) was developed, as a distributed data sharing infrastructure made up of GeoNodes composed of three main components: a Map Viewer, a Data Catalogue and a Map Atlas. Thanks to the SDI metadata, services and datasets related to PEGASO project are shared and can be used by end users in a standardized, harmonized and interoperable way. A wide range of spatial information on the Mediterranean and Black sea region is made available through the SDI, covering a wide range of topics addressing ICZM issues at different geographical scales.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)

The Marine Strategy Law of 2011 (No.18(I)/2011) transposed the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) into the national legislation of Cyprus. The Department of Fisheries and Marine Research (DFMR) is the competent authority for the implementation of the MSFD, and it participates in all the activities for the implementation of the MSFD at the EU level (committees, working groups, etc.). DFMR implemented the first phase concerning MSFD Articles 8, 9 and 10 in 2011-2012. The process was completed with the submission of the relevant reports to the EC in 2012:

- An Initial [Assessment report of the marine environment of Cyprus](#), consisting of Part I (Characteristics), Part II (Pressures and Impacts) and Part III (Economic and Social Parameters),
- A report on the determination of Good Environmental Status, and
- A report on Environmental Targets and associated indicators

DFMR submitted the Monitoring Program in October 2014 along with maps of marine waters of the Republic of Cyprus in GIS format, according to the EC instructions. Revised versions of above reports were re-submitted in August 2014, following the instructions received by the European Commission based on the review of the reports previously submitted in 2012. The Program of Measures was submitted in August 2016, according to the implementation of article 11 and article 13 of the MSFD.

On 31 July 2018, the Commission adopted its report assessing these programmes, identifying whether they constitute an appropriate framework within the requirements of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and whether they address the pressures that the EU seas and oceans are facing. The Commission concluded that concerning Cyprus, not all pressures are covered properly by the measures. The Commission therefore provides recommendations to Member States to guide them in accordance with Article 16 of the Directive.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

In 2006-2008 Cyprus participated with the PAP/RAC to a [Coastal Area Management Programme \(CAMP\)](#) project. It addressed problems and issues of sustainable development in coastal areas with a view to improving further existing policies and practices. Within the broad island-wide scope of CAMP Cyprus, a local spatial dimension was incorporated, through the Larnaca Pilot Case Study Application Project.

The provisions of the [ICZM Protocol for the Mediterranean](#) (2008) are implemented due to its ratification by the EU (legally binding for EU Institutions and Member States). An existing piece of planning legislation guides development and exercises regulatory controls for the coastal area. Parallel policies for the management of coastal resources (fisheries, marine habitats, water, agriculture, tourism, liquid and solid wastes, road traffic, etc.) are formulated and implemented by separate competent authorities under their own legal and administrative framework. When competing activities or policies occur and the conflict cannot be resolved through the planning mechanisms, the case is ultimately submitted to the Council of Ministers for a decision. ICZM, like MSP, is mentioned as a tool in the National Strategy for Integrated Maritime Policy.

In 2013 the “Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management” was established. With the approval of the MSP Bill (Law 114(I) of 2017), this Working Group has been replaced by the established MSP Committee as far as MSP implementation is concerned. However, the Working Group remains in place to support ICZM.

In 2018, the National ICZM Strategy and Action Plan² were approved by the Department of Environment and determined for a period of ten years (2018-2028). The main purpose of the Strategy is to integrate policies and management bodies across sectors in coastal zones, with the aim of ensuring the sustainable use of coastal resources.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The EIA Law (No. 102(I)/2005), transposing the Directive 2001/42/EC, imposes to assess offshore public and private projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location, and are made subject to a requirement for development consent;

In the framework of the THAL-CHOR project a SEA report was developed for the MSP plan of the selected area in Cyprus, but it has not been assessed according to the provisions of the SEA Law due to its pilot character.

² See :

[http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/environment/environmentnew.nsf/All/61278835E1CEC365C225843400412297/\\$file/ALA%20Planning%20Partnership.pdf](http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/environment/environmentnew.nsf/All/61278835E1CEC365C225843400412297/$file/ALA%20Planning%20Partnership.pdf)

Cooperation with third countries

Cyprus is a contracting party to the [Barcelona Convention](#) and its Protocols. The Convention is implemented through the [Mediterranean Action Plan \(MAP\)](#), of which Cyprus is a stakeholder, under the aegis of the UN-Environment.

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Relevant legislative acts

- Various documents related with UNCLOS application in Cyprus are available at the following link:

<http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/CYP.htm>

- Links to the Legislation of the Republic of Cyprus, addressed by sectors can be found at the following link:

<http://cyprus.gov.cy/portal/portal.nsf/gwp.getCategory?OpenForm&SectionId=government&CategoryId=Legislations&SelectionId=none&print=0&lang=en>