

WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

LOCAL HUBS REPORT

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence	
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities, and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species	
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report	
Version	Date	25 th of August 2025
Report description	<p>This report aims to provide an in-depth description of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, marine traffic, marine pollution, construction in the marine and coastal areas) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>In order to understand and collect all existing practices, within Activity 2.1. of the project, local hubs were organized by project PPs from each country involved, with the aim to directly engage relevant local and regional stakeholders in discussion.</p>	
Deliverable responsible partner	PP2 - Blue World Institute of Marine Research and Conservation (BWI)	
PPs involved	PP2, PP5, PP6, PP7, PP8, PP9, PP11 with their ASPs	
Authorship	PP2 - BWI	Jelena Basta, Grgur Pleslić, Marinela Cukrov-Car, Marko Radulović
In collaboration with	PP 5 – CETEOR	Lejla Ramić, Eldar Bičo
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1. Introduction

Human activities in the marine environment—such as marine traffic, fishing, coastal development, aquaculture, and offshore energy production—play a vital role in global economies but also introduce a range of ecological pressures. Pollution, overexploitation, noise disturbance, and climate-driven changes all alter the delicate balance of marine ecosystems. Within this context, marine sentinel species emerge as critical indicators of environmental health. These organisms respond sensitively to ecological disturbances and can signal early signs of ecosystem stress that may otherwise remain undetected. Also, in the EUSAIR Region, by observing health, distribution, and behaviour of cetaceans, sea turtles and monk seals, researchers gain valuable insight into the cumulative impacts of human activities on marine ecosystems. The coexistence of human activity and marine sentinel species thus represents both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge, because human use of the ocean can threaten the very species that serve as its guardians, and an opportunity, because fostering conditions that support sentinel species can, in turn, safeguard the resilience of marine ecosystems.

One of the specific objectives of the Interreg IPA Adrion SAMESEA project is to ensure improvement of sentinel species conservation in highly human-impacted habitats in the EUSAIR Region. In order to identify and collect information on existing practices of coexistence of human activities and sentinel species within seven countries in the region (Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Greece) local hubs were organized. The purpose of these events was to exchange knowledge and experiences of different stakeholders, such as representatives of decision-making and management bodies at national, regional and local levels, private businesses, academic and research institutions, NGOs, fishermen, association in tourism, marine transport and trade, off-shore activities and other relevant socio-economic groups.

During the local hubs participants were encouraged to discuss on:

- existing practices present in their country for the co-existing of human activities (tourism, fishery, offshore activities etc.) with the sentinel species selected in the project
- difficulties appearing in the co-existing of human activities with sentinel species selected in the project
- solution proposals for co-existing of human activities with sentinel species selected in the project
- any other potential issues relevant to ensure improvement of sentinel species conservation in highly human-impacted habitats in their country

Results of these discussions are described in this document and will serve as valuable resource for the assessment of capacities of different countries in the EUSAIR Region to implement and accommodate innovations in sentinel species conservation efforts.

2. Existing practices of human interactions with sentinel species

In the preparation and implementation of local hubs several categories of human activities that generally interact with sentinel species which occur throughout all the EUSAIR Region were identified – marine traffic, fisheries, tourism, construction and physical changes, pollution, offshore activities and general lack of surveillance of the activities at the sea including in MPAs.

Marine traffic

Marine traffic, including cargo ships, fishing boats, ferries, and tourist vessels, exerts multiple pressures on sentinel species in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. For species such as dolphins, turtles, and monk seals, increased vessel activity brings risks ranging from direct injury to long-term disturbance of their habitats.

Dolphins are particularly affected by noise pollution from ships and speedboats. Underwater noise from ship engines and propellers can mask acoustic signals, disrupting dolphins' echolocation, social communication, and predator-prey interactions. Frequent encounters with vessels may also lead to physical injuries from collisions, especially in areas with high boat traffic, such as dolphin-watching zones. Sea turtles are at high risk of boat strikes when they surface to breathe, rest near the surface, or inhabit busy coastal waters. Injuries from propellers and hull collisions are a major cause of turtle mortality worldwide. In addition, constant disturbance from marine traffic can make turtles avoid feeding grounds or nesting beaches close to human activity. Light pollution from vessels may also disorient hatchlings during their first journey to the sea. Monk seals, which prefer quiet, undisturbed coastal caves and shallow waters, are disturbed by frequent boat movements near their habitats. Vessel noise and human presence can cause seals to abandon resting or breeding sites. Young pups are especially vulnerable if their mothers are disturbed by boats and forced to leave them unattended. In areas where marine traffic overlaps with feeding zones, monk seals may face reduced access to prey and increased stress.

Overall, marine traffic contributes to noise pollution, habitat disturbance, and direct mortality in dolphins, turtles, and monk seals. Managing vessel speeds, setting no-traffic zones near sensitive habitats, and regulating tourism activities are key strategies to reduce these impacts and ensure the survival of these threatened species.

Fisheries

In all of the countries in the EUSAIR Region fisheries interact with sentinel species. Depending on the fishing tools and techniques, different types of interactions may occur.

Cetaceans, particularly small dolphins, are susceptible to incidental capture in gillnets and trammel nets, as well as depredation conflicts in longline fisheries. Sea turtles are highly prone to bycatch in trawl, longline, and set-net fisheries, where entanglement and hooking can result in significant mortality. The Mediterranean monk seal, one of the most endangered marine mammals, faces threats from accidental capture and habitat disturbance linked to fishing activities.

Additionally, depredation by dolphins has emerged as a significant challenge for fisheries, particularly in areas where small-scale or artisanal fishing practices are common. Dolphins are opportunistic feeders and are frequently attracted to fishing operations due to the high density of accessible prey. This behaviour, while adaptive for the animals, often results in substantial damage to fishing gear.

Dolphins may bite or tear through gillnets, trawl nets, or longlines in attempts to extract fish, resulting in broken mesh, enlarged holes, or completely unusable sections of gear. In longline fisheries, they sometimes remove bait or catch directly from the hooks, bending or breaking the lines in the process.

Such damages have both economic and ecological implications. Economically, fishers face direct losses from reduced catch and indirect costs associated with gear maintenance and replacement. Ecologically, damaged or lost gear contributes to marine pollution and may continue to entangle non-target species, a phenomenon known as “ghost fishing.” Moreover, the recurring conflict between fishers and dolphins can exacerbate human-wildlife tensions, influencing conservation outcomes for protected cetacean species.

These interactions highlight the need for effective bycatch mitigation measures, gear modifications, and spatial management to reduce fisheries-related impacts on these species.

Tourism

Sentinel species such as marine mammals and sea turtles are highly valued within the tourism sector due to their visibility, charisma, or ecological significance. The interaction between tourism and sentinel species in the EUSAIR Region is therefore complex, involving both potential benefits and risks.

On one hand, ecotourism branded around sentinel species can provide strong incentives for conservation. For example, dolphin-watching not only generate significant economic revenue but also promote public awareness of marine ecosystem health. By attributing economic value to the presence of sentinel species, tourism can foster community support for conservation initiatives and reduce exploitative practices.

However, since sentinel species are particularly sensitive to environmental stressors, they may be disproportionately impacted by poorly managed tourism. Disturbances from vessel traffic, excessive human presence, or habitat modification can induce stress, alter behavioural patterns, and reduce reproductive success in these species. For instance, close boat approaches to cetaceans may disrupt foraging behaviour, while excessive use of the beaches in the nesting areas can decrease sea turtle’s breeding success.

The interaction of tourism with sentinel species is characterized by a delicate balance between conservation opportunities and ecological risks. The dual role of tourism as both a potential threat and a conservation tool highlights the importance of management frameworks that prioritize the well-being of sentinel species.

Marine pollution

Sentinel species such as dolphins, sea turtles, and monk seals occupy high trophic levels or rely on vulnerable coastal habitats, making them particularly susceptible to the cumulative impacts of chemical, plastic, and acoustic pollutants. Their sensitivity also makes them valuable indicators of ecosystem health.

Dolphins often suffer from chemical pollution, such as heavy metals and toxic substances, due to their long lifespan, high trophic position, and blubber-based fat reserves where toxins accumulate. These can weaken their immune systems, reduce fertility, and cause health problems in young dolphins. Sea turtles are strongly affected by plastic pollution. They sometimes eat plastic bags and other debris, mistaking them for food, which can lead to intestinal blockages, reduced feeding efficiency, or death. Heavy metals and hydrocarbons also accumulate in turtle tissues, affecting growth and reproduction. Furthermore, oil spills degrade the nesting and foraging habitats essential for turtle survival. Health of monk seals can also be compromised by toxic chemicals. They may also become entangled in plastic, or swallow harmful debris causing ingestion-related injuries. Since monk seals depend on clean coastal caves and beaches for breeding and resting, pollution-driven habitat degradation (e.g., eutrophication, coastal runoff, and microplastic accumulation) further reduces their already limited reproductive success.

Mitigation of this threat requires integrated management approaches in the entire EUSAIR Region, including stricter regulation of chemical discharges, global reduction of plastic use, and enforcement of marine protected areas where human disturbances are minimized. Protecting these species from pollution not only supports biodiversity conservation but also safeguards the resilience of marine ecosystems.

Construction and physical changes

Human activities such as coastal construction, harbour expansion, dredging, and tourism development cause major physical changes in the marine environment in the EUSAIR Region. These changes disturb or destroy the habitats that dolphins, turtles, and monk seals rely on for feeding, breeding, and shelter.

Dolphins are highly sensitive to underwater noise created by construction, shipping, and drilling and habitat loss from coastal development that can also reduce the availability of fish and safe resting areas. Sea turtles depend on sandy beaches for nesting, but construction of hotels, ports, and sea walls often reduces or blocks access to these areas. Artificial lights from coastal buildings can disorient hatchlings, leading them away from the sea. Dredging and seabed modification can also destroy seagrass beds, which are important feeding grounds for Mediterranean turtle species. Monk seals, which need quiet caves and undisturbed beaches for resting and raising pups, are especially vulnerable to human construction. Coastal development and tourism reduce the number of safe sites, forcing seals into more exposed areas where survival is harder. Physical changes like beach erosion, caused by construction and climate change, also reduce the small amount of habitat they have left.

In general, construction and physical alterations of the marine environment increase stress, reduce food availability, and limit breeding opportunities for these species. Careful planning, habitat protection, and stricter controls on coastal development are necessary to reduce these impacts and ensure the survival of dolphins, turtles, and monk seals in the region.

Offshore activities

Offshore activities such as oil and gas exploration, wind farm construction, dredging, and large-scale fishing operations are growing rapidly worldwide. While these activities provide energy and economic benefits, they also create serious challenges for marine wildlife, including dolphins, turtles, and monk seals.

Dolphins are strongly affected by underwater noise produced during seismic surveys, pile driving, and drilling. These loud sounds interfere with their echolocation and communication, making it difficult to navigate, find prey, or maintain social bonds. Prolonged exposure can cause stress, displacement from important habitats, or even hearing damage. Sea turtles are impacted in several ways. Construction of offshore structures can damage or remove seagrass beds, which are vital feeding habitats. Light pollution from platforms and vessels may disorient turtles, especially hatchlings trying to reach the sea. Oil spills linked to offshore drilling pose a severe threat by contaminating turtle nesting beaches, poisoning food sources, and coating turtles' shells, which reduces mobility and survival. Since monk seals already live in small, fragmented populations, any additional disturbance from offshore activity has a serious impact on their survival.

In general, offshore human activities in the EUSAIR Region create a combination of direct risks, such as collisions, entanglement, and pollution, and indirect risks, such as habitat loss and chronic stress.

3. CONCLUSION

During Local hubs events at each country from EUSAIR Region, present existing practices were discussed, including identification of difficulties in coexistence of current activities with sentinel species and possible solutions. In different countries some activities cause more interactions with sentinel species than in others, due to the intensity of these activities and sentinel species presence in the area. Therefore, although in general many co-existence practices overlap throughout all the EUSAIR Region, each local hub event organized in each country resulted with some site-specific problems and solutions. All of these are described in detail in the Annex 1 – in reports provided by PPs that were organizing and hosting Local hubs.

ANNEX 1

LOCAL HUBS PPs REPORTS

WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 2 – Blue World Institute, Croatia

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report
Activity description	<p>This Activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>This is one of several local hubs organized by project PPs with the aim to directly engage relevant local and regional stakeholders in discussion. Purpose of this local event was to collect information on their experiences and knowledge on co-existence practices of sentinel species and human activities.</p>
Date of Report	28/7/2025
Authorship	Jelena Basta, Marinela Cukrov-Car
Date of the event	24/07/2025
Time	9:00 – 13:00
Location	City of Mali Lošinj, Riva lošinjskih kapetana 7, Mali Lošinj, Croatia
Participants - stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - representatives of decision-making bodies at municipality level (City of Mali Lošinj) – Matija Basta, Roberta Malenica, Robert Paljević, Tanja Jović - waste management company (KUCL) – Kristina Hofmann - NGO & research institution (BWI -Turtle Rescue Centre manager) – Grgur Pleslić, Mateja Zekan Lupić - Croatian Veterinary Institute (CVI) – online Željko Mihaljević

	<p>- representative of fishermen at Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts (HOK) – Stjepan Nedoklan</p> <p>- director of Mali Lošinj Tourist Board (TZGML) – Dalibor Cvitković</p>
Number of participants	10 (9 stakeholders at the venue, 1 online) + moderator from BWI (Jelena Basta)
Topics discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing practices present in Croatia for the co-existing of human activities (tourism, fishery, offshore activities) with the sentinel species present in the Northern Adriatic region and marine area under jurisdiction of the Mali Lošinj Municipality – predominantly bottlenose dolphins (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) and loggerhead turtles (<i>Caretta caretta</i>) difficulties appearing in the co-existing of human activities with sentinel species present in the area solution proposals for co-existing of human activities with sentinel species present in the area implementation of existing protocols in practices - management of stranding events, sampling and carcasses removal

AGENDA

Coexistence of human activities and marine sentinel species – Challenges and good practices (A.2.1.)

24th of July 2025 at 9:00

City of Mali Lošinj, Riva lošinjskih kapetana 7

Agenda:

- Introduction to IPA Adriatic SAMESEA project – Jelena Basta (BWI)
- Analysis of existing protocols and legislative framework on dealing with sentinel species (cetaceans, sea turtles and monk seals) at the Republic of Croatia - Grgur Pleslić (BWI)
- Report on Round table meeting with representatives of relevant institutions from Republic of Croatia organized at Veterinary Faculty at Zagreb as part of the IPA Adriatic SAMESEA – Jelena Basta (BWI)
- Exchange of experience of participants with co-existing of human activities (tourism, fishery, offshore activities) with the sentinel species present in the area under jurisdiction of the Mali Lošinj Municipality – predominantly bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*)
- Possibilities on efficient and responsible management of stranding events, sampling and carcasses removal at the local level
- Examples of good practices
- Discussion

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The island of Lošinj is situated in Mediterranean in the Northern Adriatic. It is popular tourist destination well known as place with great biodiversity. Large marine area (525 km²) at the eastern side of the archipelago is protected as Natura 2000 Site of Community Importance (HR3000161) recognized as important habitat of bottlenose dolphins. The coastline is extremely diverse, consisting of many large and small coves and underwater caves. The marine environment around Lošinj with its dominant sandy bottom is one of the most pristine in the northern Adriatic Sea with underwater visibility almost always exceeding twenty meters. Throughout the area, there are large underwater meadows of seagrass (*Posidonia oceanica*). It is also recognized as an important habitat of Loggerhead Sea Turtles (*Caretta caretta*), that are especially present in the area during the winter months.

The Blue World Institute Institute of Marine Research and Conservation (BWI) is a non-governmental organization based at the island of Lošinj, that is undertaking programmes of scientific research, conservation and education on marine environment with special emphasis on large marine vertebrates. Since BWI is very active in this field for the last 25 years, it is well known and recognized institution among key stakeholders at local, regional but also national level in Croatia. As such, BWI has successfully implemented several EU funded projects devoted to the topic of research and conservation of sentinel species, such as IPA Adriatic NetCet (Network for conservation of sea turtles and cetaceans in the Adriatic), LIFE Euroturtles (Collective actions for improving the conservation status of the EU sea turtle populations) and LIFE DELFI (Dolphin experience lowering fishery interaction). During the implementation of various project activities, BWI regularly organizes meetings with relevant stakeholders. In this regard, this Local Hub event was organized with representatives of local community but also some participants were representing stakeholders at the regional and national level.

2. Existing practices for the coexistence of human activities with the sentinel species

During the event several practices of human activities were identified that potentially have negative impact on sentinel species present in the region:

- Nautical tourism – intensive boat traffic during the summer period largely increases underwater noise pollution and risk of collisions with sea turtles; unregulated dolphin watching activities in some Croatian regions are causing disturbance of animals; boaters often anchor in sensitive seagrass areas, causing physical damage to *Posidonia* meadows as most important habitat that supports variety of marine species and plays key role in preservation of biodiversity in the sea.
- Fisheries – Croatian fishermen are facing many interactions with sentinel species in the region; in case of sea turtles there is a problem of by-catch and entanglement and in the case of dolphins there is a problem of damages on the fishing nets caused by the almost regular foraging of the animals on the specific types of fishing tools.
- Pollution - lack of efficient marine litter management and mitigation measures can lead to increased risk of ingestion of plastic pieces by sea turtles or of entanglement of the animals; Discharges from wastewater and runoff introduce nutrients and contaminants that can degrade water quality, leading to eutrophication and harm to marine ecosystems.

SAMESEA

In the discussion among participants, special emphasis was put on the problem of management of stranded animals and procedures with the carcasses. Although there is national protocol in place, after reporting of the finding of stranded animal, in the practice there are very often too many obstacles and unforeseen situations that are resulting with ad-hoc solutions by local governments, particularly in highly developed tourist destinations. Situation is much better in cases of reporting of finding of sick or injured animal, in most cases sea turtles, where the interventions are usually successful, resulting with providing care for animals in the two rescue centers at Croatian coast. It was concluded that all stakeholders must, in the event of finding dead, sick or injured

strictly protected marine animals, notify the 112 Center for official records of the event. In the case of injured individuals in Kvarner region, the Blue World Institute is also notified, which has a license to take samples and possibly provide care to injured animals.

3. Solutions proposed

After identifying the problems, participants of the event were discussing possible solutions such as:

- Improving enforcement of existing legislation and proposing and advocating on the development and implementation of coexistence protocols for the activities that have significant impact on the sentinel species (tourism, fisheries, coastal construction, off-shore activities).
- Ensuring funding for the implementation of existing protocols.
- Promoting stronger coordination and networking between stakeholders from different sectors involved in activities at the sea.
- Encouraging citizens to use existing tools for monitoring and notification of their observations at the sea (such as Marine Ranger App and similar). Collecting and reporting of basic data on found injured or dead marine mammals or sea turtles are of the great importance, which is easiest to do by taking photographs or video recordings, in order to contribute to monitoring.
- Informing the public about the procedures for finding injured and dead animals, primarily for the safety of citizens and tourists and to improve the flow of information, which can be achieved relatively easily through cooperation at the local level
- Improving management of marine litter and ensuring monitoring and regular clean up activities from the seabed, surface and coastal areas.
- Raising general public awareness through education campaigns with special emphasis on education of local communities, stakeholders and tourists.

4. Conclusions

In general, in Croatia, despite relatively good legislation in place, there is a need for better risk management of threats and problems listed above and stronger enforcement of existing protocols and regulations. Local communities can play significant role in these procedures. Also, the prevention measures should focus on additional efforts and resources for education of wider public on coexistence of human activities with the sentinel species.

ATTENDANCE LIST

ATTENDANCE LIST / POTPISNA LISTA

A.2.1.

Suživot ljudskih aktivnosti i morskih sentinel vrsta (dupini i morske kornjače) – Izazovi i dobre prakse

Mali Lošinj, 24. 07. 2025.




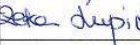


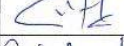
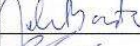
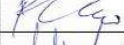

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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION





WP2 – Activity 2.1

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 5 – CETEOR, Bosnia and Herzegovina

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report
Report description	The prepared report includes the agenda, the number of participants with their respective sector, institution or target group, the date and duration of the event, a summary of the topics discussed, as well as the main conclusions.
Date	20/06/2025
Name of the partner	PP5 - CETEOR
Time	11:00 – 15:00 (Half-day)
Location	Hotel Nova Neum
Target groups invited	Federal Ministry of Environment and Tourism - Adla Kahrić, FBiH Environmental Protection Fund, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, University of Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Regional Education and Information Centre for Sustainable Development in South – East Europe - REIC, Association for biological research and nature protection - BIO.LOG, Herpetological Association in Bosnia and Herzegovina ATRA, Institute of Hydrotechnics Ltd. Sarajevo - HEIS, Department for Projects of the Municipality of Neum, Center for Economic, Technological and Environmental Development – CETEOR Ltd. Sarajevo, Port Authority of Neum, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Herzegovina-Neretva County, Environmental Protection Fund of the Herzegovina-Neretva County, University of Mostar, Diving Club of Neum,

	Tourist Board of the Herzegovina-Neretva County, Tourist Board of the Municipality of Neum, Agency for the Adriatic Sea Water Area, Fishermens, Public Enterprise Nature Park Hutovo Blato, Association for economic development REDAH Mostar, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Environmental Protection HNK, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Environmental Protection HNK, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Environmental Protection HNK, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Environmental Protection HNK, Association for Environmental Protection "Concordia".
Number of participants	12
Authorship	Project teams of the CETEOR (PP5) and Municipality of Neum (PP10)

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the meeting was to gain a deeper understanding of past experiences, best practices, and challenges related to balancing human activities, including fisheries, tourism, offshore operations, and maritime traffic, with marine conservation.

Participants exchanged information on the impacts of these activities on sentinel marine species such as dolphins, sea turtles, and marine mammals.

They also identified existing issues, regulatory frameworks, and successful approaches in Neum and the wider Adriatic region. Importantly, the participating stakeholders shaped proposals for the sustainable management and long-term protection of the marine ecosystem.

Meeting work plane:

1. Opening remarks and presentation of meeting objectives and the role of sentinel marine species
2. Panel discussion: Challenges and interactions by sector – tourism, fisheries, maritime traffic, offshore activities
3. Conclusions and next steps

2. MINUTES SUMMARY

Welcome remarks and the presentation of the SAMESEA project's activities, the role of sentinel species, and the project's objectives were delivered by the project manager on behalf of project partner 5 – CETEOR, Ms. Lejla Ramić. Before starting the official part of the program and the project presentation, Ms. Ramić emphasized the purpose and importance of organizing the local hub.

Afterwards, all key information about the SAMESEA project was briefly presented, including target species and core objectives, work packages, planned activities, and expected results.

Following the introductory remarks and presentation, a discussion was opened, and participants were given the floor to share general information and their experiences related to coexisting with sentinel species, with a particular focus on the impact of key human activities on these species in our marine area, as well as on the awareness of all relevant stakeholders about the importance of these species and their ecological functions.

2.1. MARINE TRAFFIC

Participants also discussed the issue of handling incidents involving marine species harmed by maritime traffic. It was noted that at the local level there are no clearly defined procedures or designated contact persons. According to those present, responsibility should lie at higher levels of authority — namely, the Federal Traffic Inspectorate, which also oversees maritime traffic. However, due to lengthy administrative procedures, any response is often delayed, so such cases are handled at the local level. Cooperation with the sanitary inspection, veterinarians, and utility companies in terms of the rapid removal of dead animals was acknowledged as good, but the lack of formal procedures and an official register of marine species mortality at the harbormaster's office was also pointed out. Even though all incidents are officially documented, there is still no official register.

2.2. CONSTRUCTION

In addition, construction activities that disturb marine wildlife were highlighted, especially evident during the construction of the Pelješac Bridge, when noise and vibrations threatened local marine species. However, the situation greatly improved after the completion of these works. The diving club also observed that dolphins and sea turtles have been appearing more frequently in Neum Bay, although they are far more common outside the tourist season, when the pressure from human activities is much lower.

2.3. STRANDING PROCEDURES

So far, two cases of loggerhead turtle fatalities have been recorded after collisions with scooters, with the carcasses eventually washing up on sandy beaches, creating a problem and unpleasant odors during the tourist season. These situations require prompt removal of the animals, but clearly defined legal procedures at the national level do not yet exist.

Representatives of the Association for Environmental Protection "Concordia" shared their knowledge about the exceptionally rich biodiversity of the Neum seabed and the monitoring of bioaccumulated

harmful substances in marine species, especially in sharks and rays. They emphasized that all data indicate significant pressure on these species and their habitats.

Representatives of the HNK/Ž Environmental Protection Fund noted that so far, the Fund has not dealt with these topics and has no information on similar activities, stating that they act purely as support for the relevant ministries, without an inspection role or influence on legislative processes. Their scope of action is therefore limited. However, they emphasized that in collaboration with the Federal Fund and the competent ministry, an initiative could be launched to amend legal procedures so that they also address issues concerning marine species and marine environmental protection. They also noted that the ministry is currently working on the development of a law and waste management plan that could potentially include handling deceased marine species, thus defining responsibilities and procedures in similar situations.

It was also noted that this could be one of the solutions to the problems in Neum Bay, especially concerning the clarification of responsibilities — whether they lie with civil protection, inspection bodies, or other entities. Furthermore, attention was drawn to the issue of waste disposal into rivers and lakes, especially the Neretva and Jablanica Lake, which belong to the Adriatic basin, and how frequent floods further contribute to pollution of these water ecosystems.

2.4. MARINE POLLUTION

Representatives of the Diving Club noted that waste disposal and plastic pollution continue to pose a significant problem. Even though they regularly conduct seabed clean-ups, often in collaboration with diving clubs from neighbouring countries, these actions produce only short-term results. This is because residents, tourists, and visitors continue to irresponsibly dispose of waste, which then accumulates in Neum Bay. The lack of environmental awareness and understanding of the importance of sentinel species and marine ecosystems was therefore recognized as the main issue.

A REIC representative shared their experience with activities carried out under the Interreg IPA project Aquatic Plastic in the Danube region, while a representative of the Association for Environmental Protection “Concordia” spoke about an educational workshop conducted as part of that project. This encouraged the organization of similar initiatives in the Adriatic basin and Neum Bay. They highlighted the importance of competitive clean-up actions for rivers and the sea as an effective way to raise public awareness.

Particular attention was given to focusing on plastic pollution in river flows and inland water ecosystems to reduce the amount of waste reaching the sea, as plastic waste is virtually impossible to recycle once it reaches the marine environment. The need to strengthen cooperation with the Republic of Croatia and to implement already established legal procedures and practices from neighboring countries was also emphasized.

2.5. FISHERIES

Regarding fishing, as a human activity that negatively impacts target species, fishermen and harbormaster representatives noted that there are occasional, unintended catches of protected species. However, local fishers are generally aware of the species that must not be harvested and return them to the sea if they are not severely injured. Nevertheless, the main issue lies in the Fishing

Law, which neither defines closed seasons for species during spawning periods nor adequately protects certain species.

It was noted that Neum currently has no registered fishing businesses (except for fish farms) and no official register of individual fishers and their vessels, which poses a serious threat to marine ecosystems and sentinel species. Moreover, there is no official fishing documentation, such as fishery management plans, sport or recreational fishing regulations, and similar.

Participants agreed that authority lies with the cantonal and federal ministries of economy, which should regulate fishing and fisheries. Besides raising public awareness and education, priorities must include the establishment of a legal framework and a fisher register, adoption of fishery management plans, imposition of penalties for violations of the law, and the appointment of fishery wardens, who are seen as the most effective means of control.

Representatives of the Municipality of Neum confirmed that their competencies and options to address these issues are very limited and that the only way to resolve the problems is to submit initiatives to higher levels of authority, as fishing in Neum is practically conducted illegally due to the absence of an adequate legal framework and register of independent fishers.

2.6. TOURISM

Regarding tourism, it was stressed that the seasonal influx of visitors exerts some pressure on sentinel marine species, but underwater tourism is not developed and therefore does not add extra stress. Even though Neum has the possibility of submarine tours, interest is low, so further development of this tourism segment is not expected.

Specific regulations for dolphin-watching or other marine wildlife tours do not currently exist, and operators do not hold special licenses. These tours are mostly led by trained divers who have undergone education on behavior in the presence of wild animals.

The only traditional event held in Neum is the squid-fishing festival, which takes place during the permitted period, with care taken to ensure that the quantities caught remain minimal. The event usually features educational workshops for children and adults on fishing methods, allowed gear, and recommended quantities, and its third day is usually competitive.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

Finally, examples of good practices and past projects related to marine and coastal protection were cited, including plastic cleanup initiatives, research by colleague Andrej Gajić, and the various efforts to protect the Klek peninsula — Bosnia and Herzegovina's only Mediterranean habitat. The need to establish a strong legal framework for tackling all of the above-mentioned issues was again highlighted.

Also mentioned was the BlueQ Interreg IPA Adria project, which aims to protect and manage *Posidonia oceanica* meadows in the Adriatic-Ionian region by precisely mapping their distribution and assessing their carbon sequestration capacity, thus strengthening the climate resilience of coastal ecosystems. The BlueQ project shares similar goals and a complementary area of focus with the

SAMESEA project and would provide a holistic approach to safeguarding the sea and coast — from conserving habitats and the ecosystems' role in mitigating climate change to protecting endangered species and reducing human impacts.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the local hub of the SAMESEA project, the complex situation in Neum Bay was reviewed, emphasizing that marine ecosystems and sentinel species are under increasing pressure from human activities. Participants recognized that plastic pollution, construction works, and the lack of environmental awareness are key problems that, collectively, degrade habitats and negatively impact sensitive species such as dolphins and sea turtles. Maritime traffic also poses a significant challenge, as there are no clearly defined procedures or assigned responsibilities for handling cases of marine life mortality, which slows down and complicates the response of competent institutions.

It was also noted that fishing in Neum is practically unregulated, with no official records of fishers and vessels, no legally defined closed seasons, and no protection for threatened species, which directly endangers the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and fragile marine ecosystems. The Municipality of Neum, although aware of these problems, lacks the authority and mechanisms to address them independently.

The only way forward is to initiate procedures and introduce regulations at higher levels of government. Participants also highlighted that tourism currently does not exert excessive pressure, but that introducing licenses and guidelines for all operators organizing marine observation tours would help protect the underwater environment and wildlife.

Finally, everyone agreed that raising environmental awareness, organizing volunteer and educational activities, and fostering stronger cooperation with national and regional stakeholders — including the exchange of experiences from other projects such as BlueQ — are essential steps toward preserving these fragile ecosystems. It was therefore recommended to encourage the relevant ministries and institutions to establish clear legal procedures and mortality registries for marine species, adopt fishing and tourism regulations that ensure long-term marine conservation and continue to strengthen regional cooperation in the Adriatic area to safeguard the marine environment and enhance the resilience of coastal ecosystems to future pressures and climate change.

AGENDA

LOKALNI HUB: SUŽIVOT Ljudskih AKTIVNOSTI I MORSKIH SENTINEL VRSTA – IZAZOVI I DOBRE/ LOCAL HUB: COEXISTENCE OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND MARINE SENTINEL SPECIES – CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES

Petak, 20. Juni 2025, Hotel Nova Neum/

Friday, June 20, 2025, Hotel Nova Neum

Cilj sastanka je razmjena informacija o uticaju ljudskih aktivnosti (turizam, ribarstvo, saobraćaj, energetski sektor) na morske vrste stražare poput delfina, morskih kornjača i morskih sisara, identifikacija postojećih izazova, regulativa i dobrih praksi u Neumu i širem jadranskom području, te uključivanje lokalnih aktera u oblikovanje prijedloga za održivo upravljanje i očuvanje morskog ekosistema. *The aim of the meeting is to exchange information on the impact of human activities (tourism, fisheries, maritime traffic, and the energy sector) on sentinel marine species such as dolphins, sea turtles, and sea mammals; to identify existing challenges, regulations, and good practices in Neum and the wider Adriatic region; and to engage local stakeholders in shaping proposals for the sustainable management and conservation of the marine ecosystem.*

Agenda

- 11:00 – 11:30 Dobrodošlica i registracija učesnika/
Welcome and participant registration
- 11:30 – 11:45 Uvodni govor i predstavljanje ciljeva sastanka/
Opening remarks and presentation of meeting objectives
- 11:45 – 12:15 Prezentacija projekta i uloga sentinel marinskih vrsta/
Project presentation and the role of sentinel marine species
- 12:15 – 13:30 Panel diskusija: Izazovi i interakcije po sektorima: turizam, ribarstvo, brodski saobraćaj, offshore aktivnosti/
Panel discussion: Challenges and interactions by sector – tourism, fisheries, maritime traffic, offshore activities
- 13:30 – 14:30 Ručak/Lunch
- 14:30 – 14:45 Zaključci i naredni koraci/
Conclusions and next steps
- 14:45 – 15:00 Završna riječ i zahvalnica/
Closing remarks and acknowledgements



ATTENDANCE LIST

LISTA UČESNIKA/ATTENDANCE LIST

Lokalni hub: Suživot ljudskih aktivnosti i morskih sentinel vrsta – izazovi i dobre prakse/Local Hub: Coexistence of human activities and marine sentinel species – challenges and good practices

Petak, 20. juni 2025, Hotel Nova Neum/

Friday, June 20, 2025, Hotel Nova Neum

IME I PREZIME/ NAME AND SURNAME	INSTITUCIJA/ AFFILIATION	POTPIS/ SIGNATURE	BROJ TELEFONA/ PHONE NUMBER
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AŠMINA ISAKOVIĆ	FOND ZA ZAŠTITU OKOLIŠA ANK		061/825-685
MELINA KALEN	REIC		061/084-634
BERINA AMIĐIĆ	UDRUŽENJE ZA ZAŠTITU OKOLIŠA "CAROŠIĆI"		061/073-661
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ANA KRMEK	OPĆINA NEUM		063/427-472
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EVOŠMIJE MAČIĆ LEŠENIĆ	OPĆINA NEUM HEK NEUM BOKALSKI KLOUŠ		063 449 753
LEJLA RAHMIĆ	CETEOR		061 172 199
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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION





WP2 – Activity 2.1 DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 6 - Morigenos – Slovenian Marine Mammal Society

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local Hubs Report
Report description	The report contains a summary of discussions on existing practices for the coexistence of human activities with two sentinel species present in the Slovenian part of northern Adriatic: the common bottlenose dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>) and the loggerhead sea turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>), as well as difficulties and proposals for solutions.
Date	7/7/2025
Name of the partner	PP6 - Morigenos – Slovenian Marine Mammal Society
Authorship	Urška Kajtna, Krista Lokar, Tilen Genov



LOCAL HUB

Date	June 24, 2025
Time	10:00 - 14:00
Location	Morigenos Dolphin Centre, Tartinijev trg 10, 6330 Piran
Target groups invited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National and regional authorities (Slovenian Maritime Administration, Police Directorate Koper - Maritime Police) - MPA managers (Debeli Rtič Landscape Park) - Academics and researchers (Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia) - other (Public agency for promotion of entrepreneurship and developing projects of Municipality of Izola)
Number of participants	5 external + 3 Morigenos staff

Representatives from five institutions responded to the local hub invitation and discussed existing practices for the coexistence of human activities with the common bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*) and the loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in Slovenia, as well as difficulties experienced by different sectors, together with proposals for solutions. The results of the discussion are summarized in Table 1.

Despite having invited more than twenty local representatives from various sectors (fishery, tourism, maritime traffic, academics and researchers, local authorities, marine protected areas managers etc.) only a few managed to attend the local hub. Nevertheless, a fruitful discussion had developed and many key topics were touched upon. In addition, we managed to bring together representatives from different sectors and opened up space for interdisciplinary cooperation, which we hope will continue in the future.



MINUTES SUMMARY PER TOPIC

2.1. Existing Practices Present in Slovenia for Coexistence of Human Activities and Sentinel Species

2.1.1. *Marine Traffic*

There is an on-going campaign for raising public awareness of the impact of recreational marine traffic and tourism on dolphins, turtles and other wildlife, which is a joint effort by Morigenos and the Slovenian Maritime Administration. Activities for informing the public are intensified in summer, at the height of tourist season, when the pressure of numerous recreational boats is especially severe. These campaigns are seen as a great success and will continue in the future. Raising awareness on the proper conduct at sea is very important and serves a dual purpose: ensuring the safety of both animals and people.

Maritime Police reported that most vessels stop or slow down in the presence of dolphins according to their observations. The problems typically occur when surfacing marine animals are not noticed (e.g. sea turtles).

Large vessels, such as cargo ships, likely do not present a direct threat to dolphins and turtles, at least not in terms of collisions, as they are more easily avoided than numerous fast-moving smaller craft.

2.1.2. *Fisheries*

Fishermen in Slovenia have a positive attitude toward sea turtles. They are well informed about handling practices and readily release captured turtles into the sea. In addition, many turn in deceased or injured sea turtles to the Piran Aquarium. Their perception of dolphins is substantially more negative, due to either real or perceived loss of catch or damage to fishing gear. However, Morigenos managed to establish a close relationship and a feeling of mutual trust, leading to several local fishermen reporting cases of dolphin bycatch directly to Morigenos.



2.1.3. *Tourist Awareness and Environmental Protection*

Managers of marine protected areas (MPAs) work very hard on educating visitors about the existing regulations in MPAs. In addition to working with the general public, they also focus on strengthening their relationship with fishermen, whose cooperation is essential for MPAs to achieve their full potential.

There have been multiple educational campaigns that focused on marine litter and pollution - an important aspect of protecting the habitat of marine sentinel species. They primarily targeted school children and youth, given that they are most susceptible to positive change.

According to participants, there has been a perceptible positive shift in environmental awareness: visitors and tourists have become more aware of the importance of preserving the marine environment and have even started self-regulating (reminding others not to litter, to turn down loud music etc.). Visitors have adopted the principle of “leaving nothing behind” and the amount of marine litter has noticeably decreased.

2.2. **Difficulties in Coexistence**

2.2.1. *Marine Traffic*

Collisions with animals are seemingly rare, but may occur more often than observed, as the impact might go unnoticed by the driver and passengers aboard the vessel. In addition, the body of the animal might drift to the open sea or sink and is never found.

Collisions with dolphins and turtles are more likely to occur at high speeds. There are, however, no existing speed limits for vessels, except within 250 m from the shore, which is in place for the protection of swimmers. Establishing speed limits for marine traffic in Slovenian waters is not practically feasible for multiple reasons: (1) the area is too homogenous and lacks natural structures (such as channels) that would encourage the adoption of speed limits, (2) it would require constructing signalization and other infrastructure, (3) the speed of vessels would be very difficult to monitor and enforce and (4) legislating speed limits alone would be a very complicated process that would require multiple years. Inexperienced tourists who rent speedboats present the biggest problem, as they are usually not aware of rules of conduct at sea.



In addition to the threat of collisions, noise pollution remains an unsolved issue. All MPAs within the Slovene sea are far too small to offer any protection from underwater noise originating outside of them.

2.2.2. Fisheries

Negative perception of dolphins persists among Slovene fishermen. They believe their numbers are increasing (despite data from Morigenos showing that the dolphin population in the area has been stable) and that they are getting bolder in approaching their nets, causing damage and decreasing their catch. Some fishermen are even convinced that Morigenos is somehow purposefully attracting dolphins. Such misunderstanding may stem from the many difficulties small-scale fishermen face: they are extremely financially vulnerable and every damaged net means a great expense.

Dolphins and turtles get entangled in fishing nets, but no specific mitigation measures for decreasing entanglement are currently in place.

2.2.3. Surveillance in Marine Protected Areas

The total area covered by MPAs in Slovenia is very small (a little over 3 km²). Despite this, managers of MPAs cannot patrol as often and as thoroughly as would be necessary, because they are understaffed. Moreover, the Rt Madona v Piranu MPA currently has no management plan or management authority whatsoever.

Penalties for disregarding regulations within MPAs are either not implemented or are ineffective. Rangers may see signs of misconduct, however in order to write a penalty, one must catch the perpetrator in action. Even if the person is caught in the act, rangers do not have the authority to prescribe penalties, nor can they restrain the offender until the police arrive. Lastly, in some cases monetary penalties are too low to discourage people from breaking the rules (e.g. a fisherman may still make more money by fishing in a restricted area and paying the fine than they would if they didn't fish there at all).



2.2.4. *Other Relevant Issues*

The marine environment is often overlooked by responsible ministries and other authorities. Especially pressing is the disregard for the need of a modified approach when dealing with the marine environment (compared to working in a terrestrial setting). For example, environmental issues such as marine litter, dangerous runoff and improper anchoring should be addressed by the Environment and Energy Inspectorate. However, because the institution is set up to process misconduct on land only, its response to environmental harm at sea is highly inefficient at best (there is only one inspector in charge for the whole Primorska region, they do not have access to a boat and therefore cannot do surveillance in the field). Furthermore, regular waste control is in place only for vessels in the Port of Koper, meaning that there is no systematic oversight of other sources of pollution in the sea (industry, restaurant and household waste, oil spills etc.).

Another issue raised was the fact that existing legislation is often well-written (e.g. EU Directives) but lacks execution.

2.3. **Solution Proposals for Improved Coexistence**

2.3.1. *Noise Pollution*

Bubble curtains were mentioned as a possible way to prevent noise during construction works from spreading from ports and marinas when placed at their entrances. Such curtains could also be installed around underwater construction sites. Construction noise is a more acute (rather than continuous) threat to dolphins than marine traffic, as it is very loud and cannot be predicted by the animals. Another way to protect dolphins from construction noise would be to increase the amount of noise gradually (so-called ramp-up procedures), so the animals have time to move away from the construction site before high-amplitude impulse noise commences.

2.3.2. *Fisheries*



Continuing to strengthen the relationship between Morigenos and fishermen is essential, especially in view of coexistence with dolphins. Organizing workshops for fishermen and a more personal approach were proposed as possible solutions.

A system of damage compensation for decreased landings and damaged nets due to dolphins is currently being considered by relevant authorities. It is not entirely clear who is responsible for damaged nets - fishermen mostly blame dolphins, but the same type of damage could be caused by other sources. Should a system of damage compensation be implemented, a study would be needed to determine when a net is damaged by dolphins.

2.3.3. *Surveillance in Marine Protected Areas*

A joint patrol consisting of rangers from multiple MPAs was suggested to address the staff shortage. This would require one boat only, with one ranger from each MPA present on the vessel, which would make sequential rounds of each MPA. There is already cooperation between MPAs in place, but joint patrols have not been implemented yet.

Rangers should patrol waters within MPAs as often as possible, as their presence alone prompts visitors to respect the regulations.

2.3.4. *Other Relevant Issues*

To address the inefficient response by the Environment and Energy Inspectorate, more pressure should be placed on the government to improve the situation. The problem is not lack of equipment (they could borrow a boat from the coast guard for example), but staff shortage and lack of political will.

Lastly the importance of continuing awareness-raising campaigns before the beginning of peak tourist season in summer and educational activities for school children on the importance of coexistence with nature were emphasized.



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Table 1. Synopsis of key difficulties presented or experienced by different sectors and proposed solutions.

Sector	Difficulty	Solution
Marine traffic	Collisions	Campaigns for raising awareness (reminding people to slow down and be careful)
	Noise pollution	Bubble curtains in ports, marinas and at construction sites
Fisheries	Entanglement	/
	Negative perception of dolphins	Workshops for fishermen, more personal approach
	Misunderstanding of Morigenos function	Explaining Morigenos workflow
	Damage to fishing nets	Damage compensation
MPA	Staff shortage	Joint patrols
	Inefficient penalties	Higher monetary penalties
Environmental supervision	Marine environment overlooked by authorities	Putting more pressure on the government, campaigns for raising awareness, educational activities
	Lack of systematic control of marine pollution	
	Well written legislation lacks execution	



2.4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Slovene part of the northern Adriatic Sea can be a crowded place, especially during peak tourist season. Despite its small size, the area is used by many people and several sectors with various interests. Because of this, it is very important to keep the public informed and for the public awareness campaigns to continue. Special attention should be given to continue building trust and further improving the relationship with fishermen, as negative stereotypes about dolphins still persist within this demographic. More pressure should be placed on the government to acknowledge the importance of marine ecosystems and ensure a better system of enforcement.



**SEZNAM PRISOTNOSTI (ATTENDANCE LIST)****Lokalno srečanje: Sobivanje med človekovimi dejavnostmi na morju in morskimi indikatorskimi vrstami**

(Local hub meeting: Coexistence of human activities and marine sentinel species)

24. 6. 2025, Piran

IME IN PRIIMEK NAME AND SURNAME	ORGANIZACIJA AFFILIATION	KONTAKT (e-pošta/telefon) CONTACT (e-mail/telephone)	PODPIS SIGNATURE
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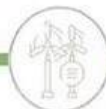


Photo documentation





WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 7 – Montenegro Dolphin Research (MDR)

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report
Activity description	<p>This Activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>This is one of several local hubs organized by project PPs with the aim to directly engage relevant local and regional stakeholders in discussion. Purpose of this local event was to collect information on their experiences and knowledge on co-existence practices of sentinel species and human activities in Montenegro.</p>
Date of Report	05/05/2025
Authorship	Aylin Akkaya
Date of the event	29/04/2025
Time	16:00 – 19:00
Location	Gymnasium, Kotor, Montenegro



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<p>Participants - stakeholders</p>	<p>The event gathered a total of 15 participants, including representatives from the Tourism Organisation of Kotor, Kotor Gymnasium, various tour boat operators, tourism agencies, students and members of the local community.</p> <p>Prior to the main event, we also had the opportunity to engage with 22 highly enthusiastic students from Kotor Gymnasium, further expanding the impact of our outreach.</p>
<p>Number of participants</p>	<p>37 (15 stakeholders + 22 students) + moderator from MDR (Aylin Akkaya)</p>
<p>Media outreach</p>	<p>The Local Hub was featured in two local media channels (https://www.pobjeda.me/clanak/izuzetan-entuzijazam-ucenika-na-temu-zastite-mora; https://radiokotor.info/clanak/drustvo/lokalni-hub-za-za%C5%A0titu-morskih-vrsta-zapo%C4%8Ceo-rad/2)</p>

Invitation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Existing Practices for Coexistence of Human Activities and Sentinel Species

1. **Traditional Fishing Practices:** Recognized as a successful example of coexistence, traditional fishing maintains strong ties with local communities, particularly in Dobrota. However, concerns were raised regarding unlicensed fishing and the general lack of enforcement of current regulations.
2. **Local Community Gatherings:** Partially informal meetings take place where locals discuss relevant issues. MDR has received open invitations to participate in future gatherings, especially during the off-season.
3. **Protected Areas:** These are viewed as potentially effective conservation tools, as they may be more culturally acceptable than directly asking communities to change long-standing traditions.
4. **Beach Cleanups:** Activities organized by NGOs like *Naša Akcija* are seen as a valuable practice. A notable cleanup on April 26 resulted in the removal of an entire container of marine litter.

2. Difficulties in Coexistence

- **Overfishing and Lack of Enforcement:** A recurring issue is the insufficient enforcement of fishing regulations, with many operating without licenses.
- **Awareness Gaps:** Both local residents and tourists often lack awareness of their environmental impact, contributing to marine pollution and ecosystem degradation.
- **Cruise Ships:** These pose a major environmental threat, particularly in areas like Dobrota and Orahovac, due to minimal regulation and oversight.
- **Economic Pressures and Mindsets:** The pursuit of short-term profits often overshadows conservation efforts, making sustainable behavior difficult to promote.
- **Marine Litter and Ghost Nets:** Incidents such as a recent sea turtle entanglement highlight the threat posed by ghost nets and marine debris.
- **Scepticism Toward Certification Schemes:** There is a general reluctance among locals to adopt or value eco-certifications, especially during peak tourism seasons.
- **Wildlife Tours:** Operators are hesitant to offer dolphin-watching tours due to unpredictable sightings and high tourist expectations, creating logistical and ethical dilemmas.

3. Proposed Solutions for Improved Coexistence

- **Pilot Protected Areas:** Implement no-fishing zones as pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits of ecosystem recovery while respecting traditional practices.



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- **Seasonal Engagement Strategy:** Focus outreach and conservation education efforts during the off-season (starting September/October) to better connect with local communities.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch initiatives aimed at reducing marine litter and encouraging more respectful interactions with marine life.
- **Participatory Community Meetings:** Attend small community gatherings to build trust and gradually introduce conservation goals.
- **Ethical Wildlife Tourism:** Promote low-impact wildlife experiences (e.g., dolphin and turtle observation) designed for eco-conscious tourists, acknowledging the unpredictability of sightings.
- **Targeted Collaboration:** Initially work with the 10% of locals who are open to change, using their participation as a model to influence others.

4. Other Relevant Issues

- **Focus on Ulcinj:** This area currently faces acute human-nature conflict. Immediate outreach and tailored interventions are recommended.
- **Generational Shift in Values:** Respect for the sea, once a deeply held value among older generations, appears to be fading and should be revitalized through education and storytelling.
- **Jet Skis:** While viewed as dangerous, they are not considered the most pressing environmental threat compared to other human activities.

Community-Based Communication: Long-term conservation success depends on effective communication and local storytelling. As one participant noted, *“Ten people at a time can make a difference.”*



Attendance list



ATTENDANCE LIST / LISTA UČESNIKA
SAMESEA Local Hub - 29th of April 2025 - Kotor, Montenegro

Name	Organisation	email address	telephone No.	Signature	Photo/Video consent (= Yes)
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Ajla Kovačević	MDR	ajla.kovacevic@dmud.dio.hr	+382 6946706		Yes



ATTENDANCE LIST / LISTA UČESNIKA
SAMESEA Local Hub - 29th of April 2025 - Kotor, Montenegro

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Tonko Đorđević	J. O. KOPAR	tonko.djordjevic@jokopar.com	067 509 278		NO
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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 8 – Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania (MET)

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report
Activity description	<p>This Activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>This is one of several local hubs organized by project PPs with the aim to directly engage relevant local and regional stakeholders in discussion. Purpose of this local event was to collect information on their experiences and knowledge on co-existence practices of sentinel species and human activities in Albania.</p> <p>This local hub was organized as two-day event with introduction and discussion on first and field trip on second day.</p>
Date of Report	08/08/2025
Authorship	Alda Ndoj, Sofjan Jaupaj, Klodiana Marika
Date of the event	28 & 29/07/2025
Time	9:30 – 13:30 on 28 th of July & 9:30 – 14:00 on 29 th of July
Location	RAPA, Vlore, Albania
Participants	Attendees included the representatives from Ministry of Tourism and Environment, NAPA, RAPA Vlore, Representatives from University of Vlora, Business representatives etc.
Number of participants	16

AGENDA (in Albanian)



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SustainAble Management of marInE Sentinel spECies and human Activities interaction-SAMESEA

Zhvillimi i përbashkët i strategjisë transnacionale për bashkëjetesë afatgjatë

Aktiviteti 2.1 - Ideimi dhe kapitalizimi i praktikave të identifikuara në rajonin EUSAIR në lidhje me pajtimin e turizmit, aktiviteteve në det të hapur dhe sektorëve të peshkimit me bashkëjetesën e specieve roje.

Location: RAPA Vlore, Albania

Vlora, date 28-29 July

Axhenda

Ora	Axhenda-Dita 1
09:30-10:00	Mbërritja dhe Regjistrimi
10:00-11:00	<p><u>Ministria e Turizmit dhe Mjedisit- Prezantim (10:00-10:30)</u></p> <p><i>Klodiana Marika, Menaxher Projekti</i>- Prezantim i raportimit të aktiviteteve të kryera deri tani dhe hapat e mëtejshëm.</p> <p><u>RAPA Vlore- Prezantim (10:30-11:00)</u></p> <p><i>Nexhip Hysolako</i>- Prezantim i gjetjeve nga qendrat lokale duke përfshirë nevojat dhe pengesat me të cilat përballen përfaqësuesit e sektorëve të biznesit dhe aktivitetit njerëzor në nivel lokal.</p>
11:00-11:45	<p>Diskutim mbi rëndësinë e specieve roje për mirëqenien dhe funksionimin e ekosistemit detar me qëllim rritjen e ndërgjegjësimit midis palëve të interesuara socio-ekonomike në lidhje me ndikimet e aktiviteteve të tyre dhe qëndrueshmërinë e aktiviteteve të tyre (p.sh., shëndetësia, turizmi, transporti dhe tregtia detare, peshkimi dhe aktivitetet në det të hapur)</p> <p>Të gjithë pjesëmarrësit</p>



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11:45-12:00	Kafe
12:00-12:30	Diskutime dhe Rekomandime
12:30-13:30	Dreka

Dita 2

Ora	Axhenda-Dita 2
09:30-10:00	Regjistrimi
10:00-12:30	Takime me përfaqësues të grupeve të interes (peshkatarët dhe bizneset që kryejnë aktivitete peshkimi, operatore turistike dhe biznese që kryejnë aktivitetet e tyre në pjesën bregdetare)
12:30-13:30	Konsumimi i Drekës
13:30-14:00	Përfundime dhe rekomandime
14:00	Kthimi në Tiranë



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The aim of the meeting was to gain a deeper understanding of past experiences, best practices, and challenges related to balancing human activities, including fisheries, tourism, offshore operations, and maritime traffic, with marine conservation. Participants exchanged information on the impacts of these activities on sentinel marine species such as dolphins, sea turtles, and marine mammals. Also, the participating stakeholders shaped proposals for the sustainable management and long-term protection of the marine ecosystem.

Meeting work plane:

1. Opening remarks and presentation of meeting objectives and the role of sentinel marine species
2. Panel discussion: Challenges and interactions by sector – tourism, fisheries, maritime traffic, offshore activities
3. Conclusions and next steps
4. Day 2- Field visit

Day 1

Welcome remarks and the presentation of the SAMESEA project's activities, the role of sentinel species, presentation of the reporting of activities carried out so far and steps to be undertaken in the future, and the project's objectives were presented by the project manager on behalf of project partner 8– Ministry of Tourism and Environment of Albania, Ms. Klodiana Marika.

The representative of RAPA Vlore, Mr. Nexhip Hysolakoju also had a presentation in which introduced findings from local centers including the needs and obstacles faced by representatives of the business sector (both fisherman and tourism businesses activities) at the local level.

The opening remarks and presentations, led to a discussion by giving the participants opportunity to share general information as well as their experiences regarding coexistence with sentinel species, as an indicator for a good performance of the ecosystem, focusing in particular on how the human activities may impact on these species in our marine area, as well as on raising awareness among all relevant stakeholders about the importance of these species the wellbeing of ecological functions.



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Day 2

During the field visit, we had the opportunity to observe up close all the sentinel species of the Vlora Bay, including

- Mediterranean monk seal (*Monachus monachus*)
- Sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*)

These species often visit the bay for feeding and resting.

We also held several meetings with business and tourism representatives.

During the discussions and field visits, certain difficulties were identified in both the coexistence of species and humans as well as the impacts, such as:

1. Mass tourism and marine recreational activities:

➤ Impact on the Mediterranean monk seal habitat:

- The presence of increasing tourists in cave areas (Karaburun) pose stress and avoidance of those areas for reproduction.
- Motors and noise from boats and speedboats create acoustic pollution, which negatively affects the communication and orientation of the species.

➤ Impact on sea turtles: Ships moving quickly in the area with the presence of turtles increase the risk of collision. Artificial lights at night in coastal areas disrupt the orientation changes of turtles, especially during the years of coming ashore to lay eggs.

2. Uncontrolled and illegal fishing:

- Accidental capture of turtles and other species in the fishing nets (bycatch), which often end up strangled.
- Destruction of ground underwater habitats, issues of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows, due to the use of bottom fishing gear (dredgers, etc.).

3. Pollution from Land-Based Sources:

- Urban and agricultural discharges in areas near the Vjosa River and along the coastline lead to:
- Eutrophication of waters → oxygen depletion → risk to marine life: *Cystoseira* algae, as an indicator of clean waters, is among the first to disappear when pollution increases.

4. Coastal Construction and Physical Interventions

- Erosion and destruction of coastal habitats affect feeding and resting sites for species.
- Disruption of ecological connectivity between protected areas on land and at sea.



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Conclusion and recommendation

Everyone agreed on the importance of raising environmental awareness, organizing volunteer and educational activities, and fostering stronger cooperation with national and regional/local stakeholders, including also exchange of experiences from other projects.

Positive Practices:

- Installation of ecological anchors in Karaburun-Sazan.
- Monitoring of turtles and seals by environmental organizations.
- Education of tourism operators on sensitive areas.

Proposed Solutions:

- Banning temporarily activities during the breeding seasons.
- Enhancing control and monitoring of fishing and tourist vessels.
- Establishing sector-specific coexistence protocols (tourism, fishing, marinas).
- Awareness-raising and involving actively local communities and tourists.



ATTENDANCE LIST

Day 1

REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM
AND ENVIRONMENT

LISTA E PJESËMARRËSVE

Aktiviteti 2.1
RAPA, Vlora

EMËR MBIEMËR	INSTITUCIONI	FIRMA	NUMËR KONKATKTI
Prodhorina Marash	MTM		+355692082872
Hida Xhaxhi	MTM		0684237331
Ardi Alina	MTM		069579860
Valentina Xhafa	MTM		0693827337
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Artiuro Dhasasaj	AdZM Vlora		0692202584
Yudrila Haskogaj	Flag Pine		0692968643
Kerol Saçaj	UV		0673557637
Qazim Zupari	ARB		0696377186
Artion Sejari	AdZM Vlora		0683996271
Alessio Shahu	AdZM Vlora		0697425029
Merita Hajdari	FlagPine		069654563
Nexhip Hysolaj	AdZM Vlora		0673847378
Labrina Bedinaj	ANM Vlora		0698788211
LINDRIT BEQIRAJ	Vlora		069261593
Saud Xhaxh			0692484982

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<https://samesea.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>



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REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
 MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENT

LISTA E PJESËMARRËSVE

Aktiviteti 2.1
RAPA, Vloca

EMËR MBIEMËR	INSTITUCIONI	FIRMA	NUMËR KONKATKTI
Aldon Ndoj	Ministria e Turizmit dhe Mjedisit	[Signature]	0684237331
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Alessio Shehu	AdZM Vloca	[Signature]	0697425029
QETAR ZYBERAJ	ARB Vloca	[Signature]	0696377186
Kerol Sacy	LLV	[Signature]	0693557637
Mirjeta Hoxhaj	Flap Time	[Signature]	0692968643
Marta Hajdari	Flap Time	[Signature]	0696545653
Arshid Hajdari	AdZM Vloca	[Signature]	0692207584
Nexhip Hysaj	AdZM Vloca	[Signature]	0673847375
Labrina Bediari	AdZM Vloca	[Signature]	069788211
Ilirida Bexiraj	Vloca	[Signature]	06972201543
Ilirida Bexiraj	Vloca	[Signature]	0697484982

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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 9 – ARCHIPELAGOS, Institute of Marine Conservation, Greece

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.1	Local hubs report
Activity description	<p>This Activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>This is result of several local hubs organized by project PPs with the aim to directly engage relevant local and regional stakeholders in discussion. Purpose of this local event was to collect information on their experiences and knowledge on co-existence practices of sentinel species and human activities.</p> <p>In Greece, it was organized as compilation of events organized throughout the year with the same topic and goal with more details in the report.</p>
Date of Report	<i>15/08/2025</i>
Authorship	Marta Azzolin
Period of the events	<i>From 18/11/2024 to 10/05/2025</i>
Location	Island of Samos, Greece



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

Based in the Eastern Aegean Sea, Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation operates research bases and field stations on multiple islands, combining applied scientific research, direct conservation actions, policy engagement, and environmental education.

Over the years, Archipelagos has acted as a conservation hub where stakeholders from diverse backgrounds can exchange knowledge, identify challenges, and co-create strategies for the coexistence of human activities — such as fisheries, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic — with the conservation of sentinel species, including dolphins, monk seals, sea turtles, seabirds, and ecologically important fish stocks. In the last two decades, Archipelagos work for conservation and stakeholder engagement encompassed Greek waters and the broader Eastern Mediterranean.

The institute works closely with local communities, governmental bodies, fishermen, tourism operators, maritime transport actors, academic institutions, and international organizations to address threats to marine ecosystems and sentinel species such as overfishing, unsustainable tourism, marine pollution, and climate change and to promote the design and implement of solutions that safeguard marine life while sustaining local livelihoods. Specifically, Archipelagos work is focused on the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources through applied scientific research, direct conservation actions, and awareness-raising.

This hub role aligns directly with the objectives of SAMESEA Work Package 2, which focuses on developing a transnational strategy for long-term coexistence between human activities and sentinel species across the EUSAIR region. Activity 2.1, in particular, seeks to collect, analyse, and capitalize on best practices and lessons learned by engaging local and regional stakeholders in structured discussions.

Given Archipelagos' continuous engagement in these activities and because its role as a convening hub predates the formal start of SAMESEA Activity 2.1, the events listed in the present report also include activities organized before March 2025. These earlier events, such as community meetings, educational sessions, professional exchanges, and parliamentary briefings, are relevant to Deliverable 2.1.1, as they engaged diverse stakeholder groups in discussions and educational exchanges directly related to the coexistence of human activities (fisheries, tourism, maritime transport, offshore activities) with sentinel species conservation. Particularly, they directly contribute to the deliverable's aims by documenting existing co-existence practices in the EUSAIR context; identifying challenges and barriers faced by local stakeholders; gathering proposals and innovative solutions for sustainable interaction between human activities and marine ecosystems. In this way, Archipelagos' contribution to Deliverable 2.1.1 reflects not only the project's formal activities but also a longstanding, embedded process of dialogue, education, and joint problem-solving. An approach that ensures the SAMESEA strategy will be firmly rooted in both scientific evidence and the lived realities of local communities.

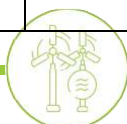


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2. Details on the events

The table here below is the record of relevant Archipelagos events that align with the objectives of SAMESEA Activity 2.1

Date	Location	Participants / Audience	Number of Participants	Topic / Content
18 Nov 2024	Lemnos	Students of 5 secondary schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Myrina Gymnasium, Livadochori - Gymnasium, Moudros - Gymnasium, Moudros - Technical Lyceum, Moudros - General High School 	490 students	Educational sessions on marine biodiversity and conservation awareness, with a special focus on the coexistence of human activities (fisheries, tourism, maritime transport, offshore activities) with sentinel species conservation.
21 Nov 2024	Lemnos	Students of 3 primary / nursery schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third primary school of Myrina, - Primary & nursery school of Kontia, - Third nursery school of Myrina 	580 students	Educational sessions on marine conservation and sustainable coexistence
25 Nov 2024	Lemnos	Local community, fishermen, local authorities	40 stakeholders from different groups	Archipelagos hub role for biodiversity and conservation of Lemnos; discussion on solutions to pressing conservation problems affecting marine life, ecosystem health, and services
13 Jan 2024	Archipelagos Research Base, Samos	Hellenic Rescue Team of Samos	60 University students and 2 Archipelagos team members	Educational sessions on marine species protection and emergency response collaboration



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Date	Location	Participants / Audience	Number of Participants	Topic / Content
4 Feb 2025	Greek Parliament	Members of permanent parliamentary committee for the protection of the environment	15	Archipelagos hub role for the analysis of key threat factors for marine mammals in the Aegean Sea
6 Feb 2025	Archipelagos Research Base, Samos	Second Experimental Primary School of Samos	35 students + 4 teachers	Educational session on sentinel species and marine ecosystem pressures
14 Mar 2025	Aegean Marine Life Sanctuary, Lipsi	Marine Mammal Rehabilitation Experts & French Ministry of Ecological Transition	7	Archipelagos hub role for a technical exchange on marine mammal rehabilitation and conservation
8 Apr 2025	Archipelagos Research Base, Samos	Students of the First experimental Primary School of Samos	28 students + 2 teachers	Educational session on marine biodiversity and conservation training
26 May 2025	Archipelagos Research Base, Samos	Vathi High School	53 students + 3 teachers	Educational session on sentinel species, marine ecosystem pressures on sustainable coexistence and marine ecosystem health
10 May 2025	Sorbonne University, Paris	Academics, researchers, policymakers, teachers (France & Greece)	N/A	Archipelagos hub role for a collaborative dialogue on integrating marine protection into education systems

In summary the organised events engaged more than 1,300 individuals belonging to at least six major target groups identified in the SAMESEA guidance: Academic and research institutions; Decision-making and management bodies; NGOs and rescue teams; Fishermen and local community representatives; Tourism and education sectors; International conservation and policy experts.

Beyond direct event organisation, Archipelagos’ work as a local hub also included active participation in events organised by other institutions, ensuring continuous networking and knowledge exchange. Notably, Archipelagos contributed to the meeting "Making the Bridge – Life CONCEPTU MARIS" held on 15 April during the European Cetacean Society (ECS) Conference. This involvement allowed Archipelagos to share its regional expertise, build partnerships, and integrate external best practices into its local hub activities for SAMESEA.



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3. Summary of Topics

a) Existing Practices in Greece for Co-existence

Discussions across the various events highlighted a broad set of ongoing practices in Greece, many initiated or supported by Archipelagos, that aim to reconcile human activity with the conservation of sentinel species (marine mammals, sea turtles, key fish populations, and seabirds):

- **Environmental Education in Schools and Communities:**
Through large-scale awareness programs in Lemnos and Samos, Archipelagos delivers interactive workshops to thousands of students annually. These programs introduce sustainable fishing practices, marine pollution prevention, and the importance of protecting species such as dolphins, monk seals, and sea turtles.
Students are encouraged to participate in citizen science projects, including beach clean-ups, microplastic sampling, and wildlife sighting logs.
- **Fishermen Engagement and Sustainable Fisheries Initiatives:**
In cooperation with local fishing communities, Archipelagos promotes the use of selective fishing gear to reduce bycatch and damage to benthic habitats. This includes the replacement of destructive nets with gear that allows non-target species to escape, and seasonal fishing restrictions to protect breeding seasons.
- **Marine Protected Areas and No-Take Zones:**
The Aegean Marine Life Sanctuary in Lipsi serves as both a rehabilitation site for stranded or injured marine mammals and turtles, and as a controlled area for research and ecosystem restoration. Similar no-take zones around sensitive habitats are being piloted to allow fish stocks and habitats to recover.
- **Monitoring and Research of Sentinel Species:**
Archipelagos maintains continuous surveys of marine mammals, turtles, and seabirds in the Eastern Aegean, producing data that informs conservation management plans and maritime activity regulations.
- **Community-Led Monitoring:**
Citizens, especially fishermen and coastal residents, contribute data on sightings, strandings, and illegal fishing activities, increasing real-time monitoring capacity.



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b) Difficulties in Co-existence

Despite existing efforts, stakeholders identified a range of challenges:

- **Economic Pressures vs. Conservation Goals:**
Many fishermen expressed concerns that stricter regulations, while beneficial for biodiversity, can reduce their short-term income — especially in areas where alternative livelihoods are limited.
- **Enforcement Gaps:**
Laws protecting marine mammals and critical habitats often exist on paper but lack consistent enforcement, due to limited patrol resources, insufficient coordination between authorities, and jurisdictional overlaps.
- **Tourism Pressure on Coastal Ecosystems:**
Seasonal peaks in tourism lead to habitat disturbance, particularly in sensitive nesting or breeding areas. Noise pollution from increased maritime traffic affects dolphin and monk seal behavior.
- **Knowledge Gaps in Specific Stakeholder Groups:**
While awareness among school children is improving, some adult community members, especially in remote areas, remain unaware of legal protections or the ecological role of sentinel species.
- **Fragmented Data Sharing:**
Scientific and monitoring data are sometimes siloed between NGOs, academic institutions, and government agencies, slowing policy responses.

c) Proposed Solutions

Stakeholders put forward a number of potential solutions during the local hub discussions:

- **Collaborative Co-Management:**
Develop agreements where fishermen, local authorities, and NGOs jointly manage specific areas, ensuring local buy-in for conservation measures.
- **Economic Incentives for Sustainable Practices:**
Offer subsidies or market advantages (e.g., eco-labels) for fish products harvested sustainably and promote eco-tourism packages that fund conservation efforts.
- **Improved Maritime Regulation and Enforcement:**
Introduce seasonal vessel speed limits in marine mammal habitats, regulate anchoring in sensitive seabed areas, and deploy marine patrols in collaboration with coast guards.
- **Educational Campaigns Targeted at Adults and Tourists:**
Expand awareness efforts beyond schools, using local media, port signage, and tourism operators to reach transient visitors and working-age residents.



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- **Integrated Data Platforms:**
Create a shared, publicly accessible database for marine sightings, strandings, and bycatch incidents, enabling quicker and more coordinated responses.
- **Technology Deployment:**
Explore acoustic deterrents to prevent accidental entanglement, and real-time vessel tracking in sensitive zones.

d) Additional Relevant Issues

Other points raised, outside the main thematic areas, included:

- **Climate Change Impacts:**
Stakeholders expressed concern about the combined effect of warming waters, changing fish distributions, and extreme weather events on both fisheries and marine biodiversity.
- **Pollution Control:**
Plastic pollution, chemical runoff, and untreated sewage remain critical threats, with a need for stronger waste management infrastructure.
- **International and Cross-Regional Cooperation:**
Migratory species such as dolphins and sea turtles cross national boundaries, making joint monitoring programs with neighbouring countries essential.
- **Cultural Heritage Linkages:**
Some stakeholders suggested integrating marine conservation with the preservation of maritime cultural heritage to strengthen community connection and pride in stewardship.

4. Conclusions

The events organized and facilitated by the Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation, both before and after the formal start of SAMESEA Activity 2.1, demonstrate the institute's consistent role as a functional, long-standing local hub for marine conservation in the Eastern Aegean and beyond. By actively engaging a wide spectrum of stakeholders, from schoolchildren and fishermen to policymakers and international experts, Archipelagos has created a dynamic and inclusive hub for dialogue on the co-existence of human activities with sentinel species conservation.

The discussions revealed a strong commitment from stakeholders across diverse sectors to develop workable solutions, provided that these approaches take into account the specific socio-economic realities of local communities. Educational outreach emerged as a particularly powerful driver of change, especially among younger generations, fostering a lasting cultural shift toward the stewardship of marine resources. Direct involvement of communities in monitoring and management was shown to strengthen compliance and ensure



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that conservation measures remain relevant to local needs. Equally, the importance of cross-sectoral and transnational cooperation was underscored, as many of the threats to sentinel species extend beyond local or even national boundaries.

In relation to SAMESEA WP2, the insights gathered through these activities provide a valuable evidence base for shaping the transnational strategy, firmly grounded in real-world experience and tested practices. The challenges identified, together with the solutions proposed by participants, point to the necessity of adaptive management approaches that integrate regulatory measures with economic incentives and active community participation. The local hubs also serve as examples of effective stakeholder engagement models that can be transferred and applied in other regions of the EUSAIR area.

Looking ahead, the knowledge gained, and the relationships strengthened through Archipelagos' hub activities will play a central role in supporting the ideation and capitalization of effective co-existence practices. They will ensure that the strategy developed under SAMESEA WP2 remains practical, inclusive, and ecologically robust, while the institute's ongoing role as a conservation hub will continue to provide a dynamic feedback loop for refining and improving these measures over time.

In summary, these events did not only fulfil the formal requirements of Deliverable 2.1.1, they reinforced Archipelagos' central role in bridging scientific research, local knowledge, and policy, thereby advancing the long-term coexistence of human activities and sentinel species in the Eastern Mediterranean.



PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



Event in Lemnos island with Local community, fishermen, local authorities



Students of the First experimental Primary School of Samos





Events with Limnos primary schools



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Sessions with students of Moudros High School, Limnos, on board the research boat Triton



Event with Second experimental High School of Samos



WP 2 – Activity 2.1.

DELIVERABLE 2.1.1

Local Hub Report

Partner 11 – Ente Parco Naturale Regionale Veneto del Delta del Po

WP2	Joint development of the transnational strategy for long-term coexistence
Activity 2.1	Ideation and capitalization of practices identified in EUSAIR Region concerning reconciliation of tourism, offshore activities and fishery sectors with the coexistence of sentinel species
D.2.1.2	Contribution to the final report: Coexistence practices and innovations report
Activity description	<p>This Activity aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the past experiences, best practices and difficulties in reconciliation of human activities (fishery, tourism, offshore activities, and marine traffic) with the need to protect sentinel species within EUSAIR region.</p> <p>This will be accomplished by doing a review of existing knowledge in EUSAIR region and beyond. PPs representing each country involved will collect information on the good practices already in place.</p> <p>The Activity will also include an analysis of knowledge capitalized by ongoing and previously undertaken projects.</p>
Partner name	Partner 11 – Ente Parco Naturale Regionale Veneto del Delta del Po
Authorship	<p>Parco Delta Po: Pako Massaro, Marco Gottardi, Roberta De Faveri.</p> <p>CoNISMa-UNIPD: Guido Pietroluongo, Ksenia Orekhova, Marco Bonato.</p> <p>UNIPD: Giorgia Corazzola.</p>
Date	24 July 2025
Location	Centro Visitatori del Parco sito in Piazza Matteotti, 1 - 45014 Porto Viro (RO), Italy
Number of participants	22



AGENDA (In Italian)

SAMESEA
SustainAble Management of marinE Sentinel spECies and human Activities interaction
Supporting a greener and climate resilient Adriatic-Ionian region

REGIONE DEL VENETO

Giovedì 24 luglio 2025

“Opportunità di finanziamento per l’acquacoltura e il settore pesca. Strategie per la gestione e la salvaguardia delle specie sentinella nella regione EUSAIR”

presso il Centro Visitatori del Parco sito in Piazza Matteotti, 1 - 45014 Porto Viro (RO)

Programma:

Ore 9:00 Registrazione dei partecipanti

Ore 9:30 Apertura e Saluti Istituzionali – Cristiano Corazzari, Assessore regionale ai Parchi e alla Biodiversità

Prima parte - Progettualità del Parco

Ore 09:40 – L’approccio WEFE (Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems) Nexus, una strategia per creare paesaggi più resilienti e a rafforzare l’adattamento ai cambiamenti climatici. Il progetto PRIMA RES-MAB – Pako Massaro

Ore 09:50 - La Caretta Caretta nel comprensorio del Parco - Il Progetto ASPEH - Guido Pietrolungo

Ore 10:00 - L’importanza di protocolli condivisi. L’esperienza del progetto SAMESEA - Giorgia Corazzola

Ore 10:10 - L’anguilla europea, tradizione e salvaguardia di una specie a rischio di estinzione: L’attività di ricerca e le azioni per la salvaguardia nell’ambito del progetto LIFEEL – Mattia Lanzoni

Ore 10:20 - I progetti FEAMPA all’interno del comprensorio dell’Alto Adriatico - Giuseppe Cherubini

Seconda Parte

Ore 10:30 – TAVOLA ROTONDA: “Strategie per la gestione e la salvaguardia delle specie sentinella nella regione EUSAIR”

Ore 11:30 - Conclusione e Coffee Break

Incontro aperto al pubblico previa registrazione alla mail federica.bolisani.resmab@parcodeltapo.org



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

The Local Hub meeting in the Delta del Po brought together representatives from local and regional authorities, fishing cooperatives, tourism operators, academic and research institutions, NGOs, and maritime stakeholders. The discussion addressed how to reconcile human activities, notably tourism, fisheries, offshore energy, and marine traffic, with the protection of sentinel species identified in the SAMESEA project: bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) and loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*).

This report describes the outputs of the discussion of the Local Hub organized in Italy by the PP11 Ente Parco Naturale Regionale del Delta del Po.

The agenda and list of participants are attached as Annex 1 and 2 (a and b).

The summary and the outputs of the discussion are reported in the following sections.

2. Summary

The Northern Adriatic, including the Delta del Po, is a highly dynamic socio-ecological system where human uses of the sea overlap with critical habitats for sentinel species. It has been designated as an area of protection for bottlenose dolphin: "Northern Adriatic and Dalmatian Archipelago Important Marine Mammal Area (IMMA)" (IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force).

Existing measures, speed limits, navigation restrictions, awareness campaigns, fishery impact mitigation, and seasonal closures, form a partial but valuable framework for co-existence. Offshore energy development is currently limited, but Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) already include marine fauna monitoring, and early preparation is underway for renewable energy projects.

Dolphin watching lacks national licensing but is guided locally by voluntary codes of conduct. Broader initiatives, citizen science reporting, and eco-certification for tourism operators, indirectly enhance sentinel species protection.

2.1 Challenges Identified

- Enforcement of maritime rules outside MPAs is inconsistent.
- Limited uptake of voluntary bycatch mitigation devices in small-scale fisheries.
- Absence of comprehensive carrying-capacity studies for marine wildlife watching.
- No formal cumulative impact assessment for planned offshore activities.



2.2 Good Practices to capitalize

Delta del Po experience shows that combining technical measures with stakeholder engagement is key. EU projects offer practical, transferable approaches, blending scientific monitoring with awareness and co-management.

2.3 Recommendations

- Strengthen enforcement of navigation and speed regulations in sensitive zones.
- Facilitate access to bycatch mitigation technology through subsidies and training.
- Adopt standardized national sentinel species monitoring guidelines.
- Require cumulative impact assessments in offshore licensing.
- Maintain multi-stakeholder platforms for continuous dialogue and adaptive management.

The Italian Local Hub confirms that reconciling economic maritime uses with sentinel species conservation is feasible when technical, regulatory, and community-driven measures are aligned.

3. State of the art of existing practices on long-term human and sentinel species co-existence

3. Interactions and practices concerning boat traffic

In the Delta del Po and Northern Adriatic, maritime activity is constant and varied: fishing fleets, leisure boats, ferries, and commercial shipping lanes intersect habitats of dolphins and sea turtles. The two main risks are noise disturbance and collision.

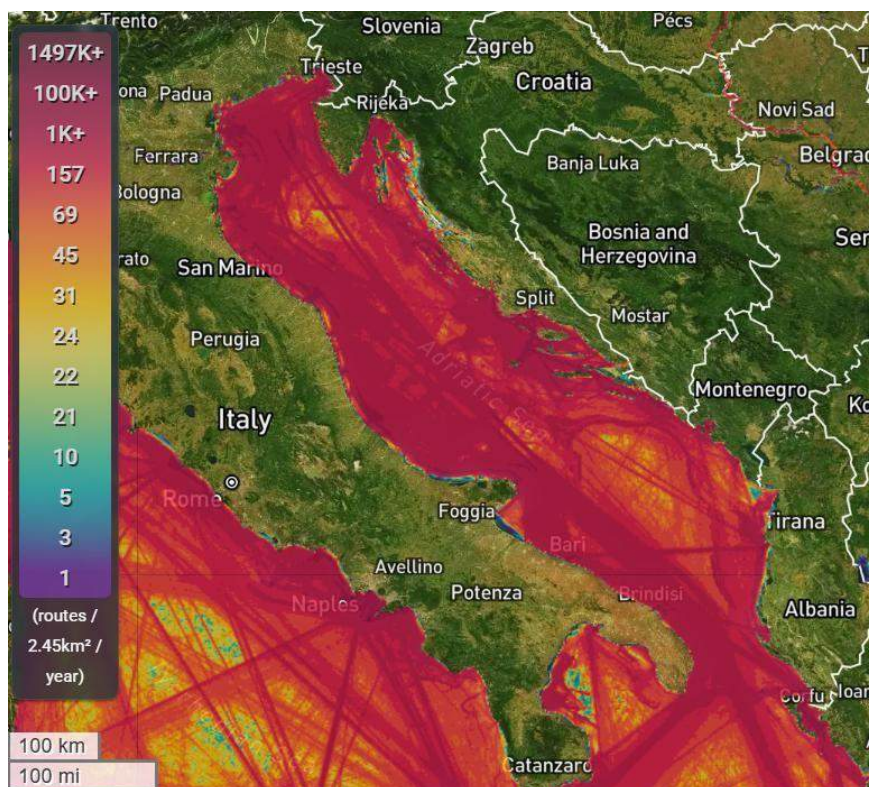
To address these, the Coast Guard enforces seasonal speed limits in sensitive lagoon channels and coastal areas, particularly during summer when boat traffic peaks. These limits not only reduce collision risk but also lessen wake turbulence and underwater noise. Navigation exclusion zones in parts of the Po delta lagoons protect shallow feeding areas. However, it is very difficult to maintain control at sea.

Awareness plays a central role: EU projects often develop education materials explaining safe navigation distances and proper behavior if encountering marine wildlife. The Italian Coast Guard ensures rapid reporting of injured or stranded animals.

While these measures have improved awareness, enforcing rules in open waters remains challenging. Adoption of low-noise propulsion systems is still rare among small craft owners, and voluntary compliance varies. Still, initiatives by sailing clubs and diving associations are fostering a more respectful boating culture.



Figure 1. Marine traffic map in the EUSAIR region (<https://www.marinetraffic.com/>).



4. Interactions and practices concerning fisheries

Both small-scale artisanal and commercial fisheries are in place in the area. Interactions with sentinel species include accidental bycatch in trawls and gillnets, entanglement, and gear foraging.

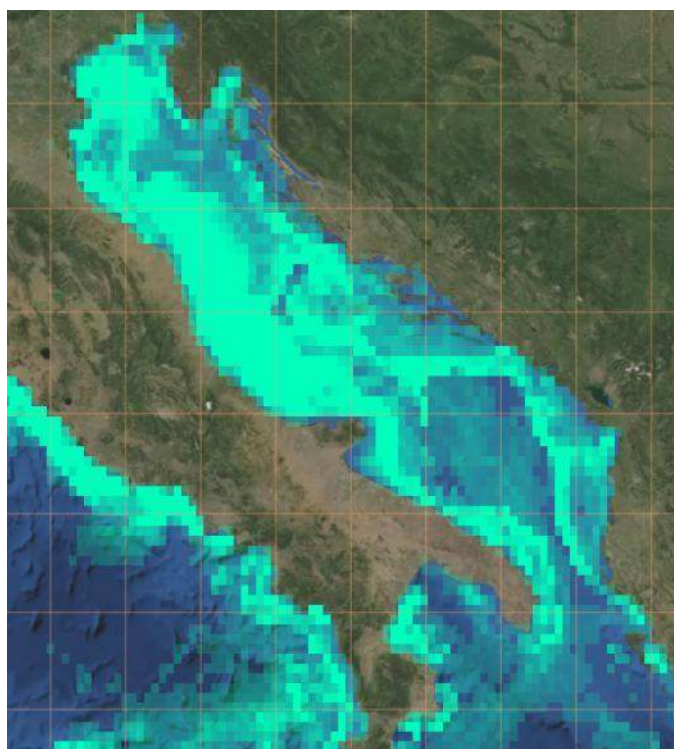
Technical measures are the cornerstone of current mitigation. Following the EU project, mitigation devices and training workshops ensured proper use and maintenance. This cooperation has strengthened trust between conservation authorities and fishing communities.

Acoustic deterrents (pingers), turtle excluder devices (TED), visual deterrent (lights), and alternative gears have been tested in trawling net and gillnet fisheries to reduce dolphin and sea turtle interaction. While effective, their uptake is limited due to cost and upkeep. Furthermore, the testing didn't continue with a definitive and coordinated adoption.



Conflicts also arise from dolphins and sea turtles damaging nets and catches. While compensation schemes exist, they are slow to process. Some fishers prefer adaptive measures, changing fishing grounds seasonally or adopting personal solutions.

Figure 2. Fishing effort map in the EUSAIR region (<https://globalfishingwatch.org/>).



5. Interactions and practices concerning offshore energy harvesting

Offshore energy in the Italian Adriatic and Ionian Seas is currently limited to a few natural gas platforms, mostly beyond 10 nautical miles from shore. While direct interactions with sentinel species are less frequent, seismic surveys and construction create high-intensity underwater noise, habitat degradation and shifting, a known risk to marine wildlife life.

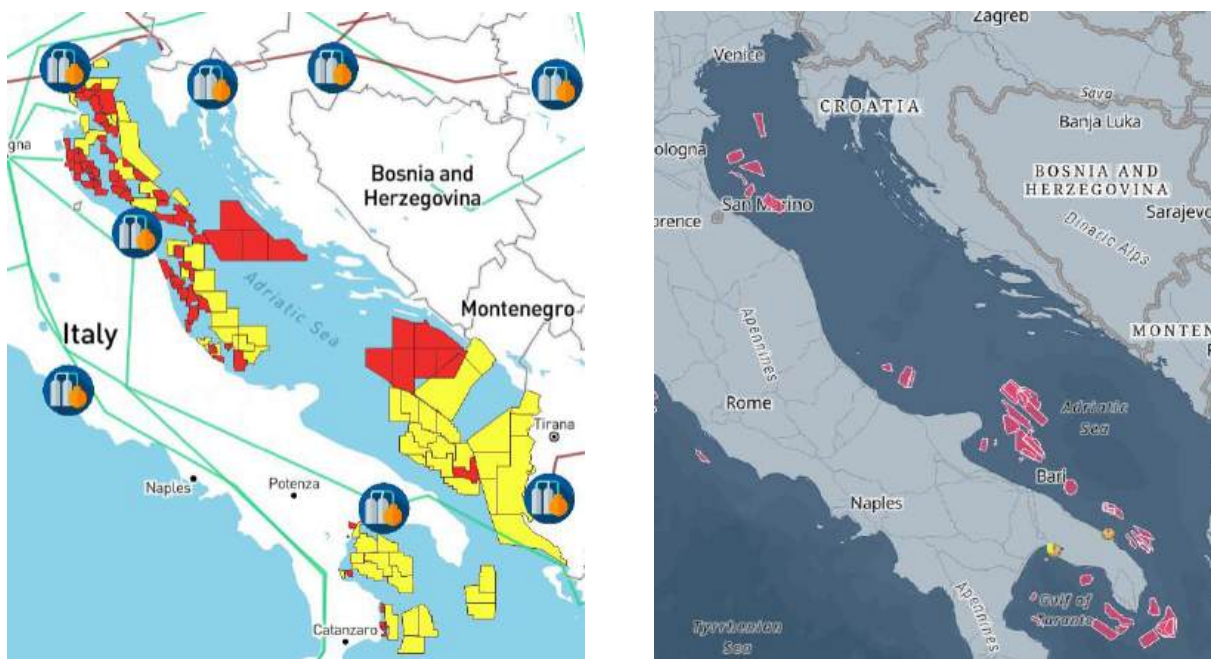
Italian law requires comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for such operations, including baseline marine fauna surveys and in-operation monitoring. Recent permits have included seasonal restrictions on noisy activities to avoid seasonal peaks in dolphin and turtle presence. Parco Delta Po, together with other regional institutions, has contributed to stop the authorization of an oil project bordering the Site of Community Importance IT3270025 Adriatico settentrionale Veneto - Delta del Po ("Teodorico" concessione di coltivazione d40 A.C.–PY Zona A Mare Adriatico presentato da Po Valley Operations PTY LTD).



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Though offshore wind farms are not yet operational here, except for the Gulf of Taranto, several proposals are under evaluation. Regional conservation agencies advocate for cumulative impact assessments that consider fishing, traffic, and energy projects together, aiming to prevent fragmented or degraded habitats.

Figure 3. Oil (left) and wind farm (right) map in the EUSAIR region (<https://www.oilmap.xyz/>; <https://map.4coffshore.com/offshorewind/>).



6. Regulation of dolphin watching activities

Eco-tourism occasionally promotes wildlife observation. While no formal licensing exists, the Park Authority has issued voluntary guidelines in accordance to the ACCOBAMS (Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Contiguous Atlantic Area) Resolution 4.7: “Guidelines for the observation of cetaceans for commercial purposes in the ACCOBAMS area”.

Although compliance is generally good among professional operators, private leisure boats remain harder to reach. No carrying-capacity studies have yet been conducted, but the Park Authority is considering adopting ACCOBAMS standards to pre-empt future tourism pressure.



7. Other examples of existing good practices

- Fishing for litter: local fishermen collect marine waste caught in nets, landing it for proper disposal.
- Citizen science: mobile platforms (e.g., AdriaticSee, Marine Ranger) encourage boaters and tourists to log wildlife sightings, enriching regional biodiversity data and code of conducts.

These initiatives indirectly improve sentinel specie's survival prospects by reducing habitat degradation and building public stewardship.

4. CAPITALIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE FROM PREVIOUS AND ONGOING PROJECTS

- Adriatic-IPA project: NetCet – Network for the conservation of sea Turtles and CETaceans in the Adriatic
- FEAMP (European Maritime Fisheries Fund) 2014 -2020 project: The impact of fishing activities on sea turtles and cetaceans in the Northern Adriatic Sea (05/RBC/2017);
- FEAMP (European Maritime Fisheries Fund) 2014 -2020 project: TartaTur1 – Assessment of the interaction of marine fisheries and aquaculture with the species *Caretta caretta* and *Tursiops truncatus* along the Northern Adriatic coastline;
- Monitoring programme by ISPRA (Superior Institute for Environmental Protection and Research) within the MSFD (Marine Strategy Framework Directive - Art. 11, Dir. 2008/56/CE): Monitoring Program D10-05: Marine litter impacts on the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* and common bottlenose dolphin *Tursiops truncatus* MADIT- D10_05;
- ACCOBAMS Pilot actions on marine litter monitoring in Adriatic 2019-2024;
- FEAMP (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) 2014-2020 project: INVASION - Implementation of vertebrate monitoring in the Northern Adriatic Sea;
- LIFE project: DELFI: Dolphin Experience Lowering Fishery Interaction;
- FEAMP (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) 2014-2020 project: TartaTur2 - Assessment of the interaction of marine fisheries and aquaculture with the species *Caretta caretta* and *Tursiops truncatus* along the Northern Adriatic coastline;
- National Center for Future Biodiversity Spoke 1 - Initiative funded by the NextGenerationEU Funding Scheme
- European Partnership on Animal Health and Welfare OOA2 Terrestrial Wildlife Diseases
- Initiative funded by the EU Farm-to-fork Strategy;



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- Interreg ITA-SLO project: POSEIDONE - Promotion of green and blue infrastructure dedicated to a new environment;
- LIFE project: NatConnect2000 - Natural connections for Natura2000 in Northern Italy to 2030;
- IPA ADRION project: SAMESEA - SustainAble Management of marinE Sentinel spECies and human Activities interaction;
- Interreg ITA-SLO: SeaInsight - Investigating the Sea: Stimulating better protection and management of the Northern Adriatic Sea through biodiversity monitoring based on environmental DNA (eDNA), with public involvement;
- Pelagos Scientific and Technical Committee consultation project CST16_2024_Inf07: Protocols and assessment of pathological effects, including mortality resulting from chemical and biological contamination in cetaceans in the Pelagos Sanctuary;
- EU's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme Mission Ocean and Waters project: SHORE Empowering students as agents of change;
- HORIZON-CL6-2023-ZEROPOLLUTION-01 project: ONE-BLUE - Integrated approach to assess the levels and impact of cONTaminants of Emerging concern on BLUE health and biodiversity modulated by climate change drivers.

Other projects: <https://www.parcodeltapo.org/pagina.php?id=67>

<https://www.parcodeltapo.org/pagina.php?id=68>



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OPPORTUNITA' DI FINANZIAMENTO PER LA PESCA, STRATEGIE PER LA SALVAGUARDIA DELLE SPECIE A RISCHIO E SENTINELLA

REGIONE DEL VENETO



DATA 24/07/2015

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