# Support Mechanism for Filling Key Knowledge Gaps for Vulnerable Species (Marine Mammals, Seabirds, Sea Turtles and Elasmobranchs) Impacted by Fisheries in Priority Areas of The Mediterranean

*Terms of Reference for the Call for proposals*

***In Partnership with***:

***Financially supported by:***

## Abbreviations and Terms

**ACCOBAMS:** The Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic area. It is a legal conservation tool based on cooperation. Its purpose is to reduce threats to cetaceans notably by improving current knowledge on these animals.

**Application:** refers to the document to be filled by candidates to qualify for the evaluation process. The application can be found online on the following links (English version / French Version) along with some instructions on how to complete and submit it.

**BirdLife International:** Birdlife is widely recognised as the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables us to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all nature.

**Initiators of the Call:** refer to the partners of the Project who are a group of international organisations that are engaged in conservation and protection of species and nature. Namely, these organisations are: ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, IUCN-Med, MEDASSET and SPA/RAC.

**IUCN-Med:** The International Union for Conservation of Nature is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together. The IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation is devoted to promote sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation through cooperation and shared values and culture.

**MAVA Foundation**: Since 1994, MAVA has played a transformational role in driving forward innovative conservation across the Mediterranean, West Africa, the Alps and beyond. The foundation is closing down its activities by 2022, but its commitment to biodiversity conservation, the sustainable use of natural resources, and vibrant conservation communities remains as strong as ever.

**MEDASSET:** With roots back to 1983, Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles was founded in 1988 in England and 1993 in Greece. is an international NGO registered as a not-for profit organisation in Greece. MEDASSET plays an active role in the study and conservation of sea turtles and their habitats throughout the Mediterranean, through scientific research, environmental education, lobbying relevant decision

makers and raising public awareness. The organisation is a partner to the United Nations Environment Programme's Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and a Permanent Observer-Member to the Bern Convention, Council of Europe, since 1988.

**The Species Project:** Refers to the project of the SPA/RAC and its Partners which is titled; *Support mechanism for filling key knowledge gaps for vulnerable species (marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles and elasmobranchs) impacted by fisheries in priority areas of the Mediterranean*.

**SPA/RAC:** The Special Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre, the Coordinating Partner of the Project, was established by decision of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution (Barcelona Convention), which entrusted it with responsibility for assessing the situation of natural heritage and assisting the Mediterranean countries to implement the Protocol concerning **S**pecially **P**rotected **A**reas and **B**iological **D**iversity in the Mediterranean (SPA/BD Protocol).

**The Steering Committee of the Project (SC):** is a committee which is responsible for implementation, monitoring and assessing the progress of the Project along with the selecting of the projects to be funded. It contains members from ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, MAVA Foundation, MEDASSET, SPA/RAC and IUCN-Med as well as external experts. The latter will be recruited by the Committee to perform certain tasks necessary for the progress of the project.

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## 1. General Information About The Call

The impact of fisheries on non-target, highly mobile species, including sea turtles, marine mammals, elasmobranchs and seabirds are known to include both ecosystem impacts (e.g. removal of prey, degradation of habitat) and direct interactions (mortality, disturbance, and human conflicts). Bycatch (the incidental capture of non-target/non-commercial species) is a key conservation issue in the Mediterranean basin, and particularly affects vulnerable and highly mobile species. Information exists on the movement, distribution, population and demography of some vulnerable species, in some locations and at specific times of the year. Critical gaps remain, however on the movements in space and time for many species affected by bycatch.

In order to tackle the bycatch issue, it is imperative that 1) information is gathered on the fisheries operating within the Mediterranean, and 2) that the movements and hotspot areas of vulnerable species are identified and understood, and 3) the two types of information on fishing and species are overlaid to know more about the spatio-temporal distribution of each species. Hence, key areas are identified to focus future bycatch work.

Within the framework of the MAVA Outcome Action Plan 4 (OAP4), **the Multi-taxa Bycatch Project** (Understanding Mediterranean multi-taxa 'bycatch' of vulnerable species and testing mitigation- a collaborative approach) in The Mediterranean is mainly looking at points 1 and 2, while The Species Project "Support Mechanism for Filling Key Knowledge Gaps for Vulnerable Species (Marine Mammals, Seabirds, Sea Turtles and Elasmobranchs) Impacted by Fisheries in Priority Areas of The Mediterranean" is running in parallel to the Bycatch project and will complement it by adding the necessary data about the species spatio-temporal distribution. To do this, SPA/RAC and its Partners (ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, MEDASSET, and IUCN-Med) have organised this call for proposals to expand the knowledge on the spatio-temporal distribution of these highly-mobile vulnerable species in selected areas of the Mediterranean basin. The project is run and organised by a Steering Committee consisting of members from the following organisations along with external experts; ACCOBAMS, BirdLife International, MEDASSET, IUCN-Med, SPA/RAC and MAVA Foundation.

## 2. Aims of the Project

The main aim of the Species Project is to expand the state of knowledge on sea turtles, marine mammals, elasmobranchs and seabirds distribution, range, migratory routes, and habitat use and hence filling the knowledge gap in these parameters. The full list of concerned species appears in Appendix 1. This knowledge will then be linked to the Multi-taxa Bycatch Project in order to link the presence of these species to fisheries operating in each area to understand its impacts and interaction. This will not only help toward the preparation of regional bycatch strategy of 2020-2030, but will also assist in identifying new potential areas for conservation such as KBAs, IBAs CCHs…etc. This project comes in the framework of the MAVA Outcome Action Plan 4 (OAP4) under Strategy A to "Improve knowledge on species and habitats affected by unsustainable fishing practices".

The project started by gathering the existing data on species spatio-temporal distribution. This data was used to inform a gap analysis to identify these gaps for each of the targeted species. This call for proposals will provide data that will contribute to filling these gaps and to identify new (or expand already existing) areas that are important for these species (potential KBAs, IMMAs, IBAS, EBSAs, CCHs…etc.).

## 3. Priorities of This Call for Proposals

The Project has run a gap analysis in the geographical areas targeted by MAVA Outcome Action Plan 4. Based on these results, priorities for funding will be given to the following species:

1. The Alboran Sea:

   The considerable gap in the knowledge is present on the southern side of the Alboran Sea (the Moroccan/Algerian coast) for most species. Hence, priority will be given to research conducted in this region to fill that gap. Also, a considerable gap is present in regard to cartilaginous fish species in the Alboran Sea. Hence priority will be given to applications that will be surveying these species especially in relation to interaction and impact of fisheries.

2. The strait of Sicily/the Tunisian plateau:

   This area is of high importance for cartilaginous species, due to the lack of adequate information , priority will be given to the following species: Great white shark, Shortfin mako, Porbeagle, Sand tiger, Smalltooth sand tiger, Sandbar shark, Smooth hammerhead, Angular rough shark, Angelshark, Sawback angelshark, Smoothback angelshark, Blackchin guitarfish, Common skate, Maltese skate, and Spiny butterfly ray. For Marine mammals, priority will be given to the Sperm whale (especially in relation to bycatch from pelagic drift nets) and for research related to the recolonisation of monk seals. For bird species, priority will also be given to issues of interaction between fisheries and Scopoli's shearwater, the Yelkouan shearwater and the Mediterranean shag. This also apply to the Loggerhead turtle and the Green turtle.

3. The Central Aegean/Cyprus Basin:

   Again, due to the significant gap identified from the analysis, priority will be given to proposals to study cartilaginous fish species in the area and also for bird species.

**However, although priorities were given to these species, the Steering Committee will deal with each application as a unique case and assess the justification of the application. Hence, we do encourage applicants who are interested in other megafauna species (from the species list in the annex) to also apply for the fund.**

# 4. Eligibility Criteria

## *4.1. Eligible Candidates:*

4.1.1. The call is open to NGOs, Universities, scientists, Research Institutes and organisations that are working on or have research experience in the species mentioned previously and on their distribution and habitats. The candidates must provide evidence of legal status as an entity with relevant experience and managerial capacity in order to be eligible for the grant.

4.1.2. it is also recommended to provide some evidence for the entity to carry on the project successfully (e.g. previous projects, publications…etc.).

4.1.3. In case the candidate is not from the country where the fieldwork is taking place, a partnership or a collaboration with a local entity should be established and presented clearly in the proposal.

4.1.4. Giving the nature of the species movement and dispersal, proposals from different areas to cover the same species would also be favourable and will be encouraged to collaborate in a joint project.

## *4.2. Geographical Scope:*

The call for proposals targets three geographical areas: The Alboran Sea, The strait of Sicily/the Tunisian plateau, and the Central Aegean/Cyprus Basin (figure 1 in the Annex). Only applications that include these marine geographies will be considered in the evaluation process, although research actions are likely to extend beyond these areas since the distribution of some species may well extend beyond them. It should also be noted that attention will be payed to the geographical balance of the proposals in each region. For more information on these areas and on the MAVA's Output Action 4, please refer to the following link.

## 5. The Project timeline and duration

The call for proposals will be launched on **11th March 2019** and the application form is available on the SPA/RAC website at the following links (English version / French Version)**.** All applicants should submit their full proposals with the supporting materials by **26th April 2019**.

By **13th May 2019**, all applicants will receive the results of the selection procedure and MoU signatures will proceed immediately afterwards between SPA/RAC and the selected entities.

All applicants should take in consideration that the deadline set to receive the final report and a copy of the data is set to **26th November 2020**. Table (1) shows the timeline of the Project.

| Project Action | | 2019 | | | | | 2020 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Proposal Selection Stage | Launching of the call | 08th Mar | | | | | | |
| | Deadline for receiving the proposals and supporting materials | | 26th Apr | | | | | |
| | Informing the applicants of the results of the selection | | | 13th May | | | | |
| | Signature of MoUs with SPA/RAC and first instalment | | | | 20th May | | | |
| Project progress Stage | First Progress Report + second instalment | | | | | 29th Nov | | |
| | Second Progress Report | | | | | | 26th Jun | |
| | Submitting the Final report and related data and materials + the final instalment | | | | | | | 26th Nov |

**Table (1): the timeline of the project and the designated deadlines for the main events of the project**

## 6. Application requirements:

6.1. The proposals must have a number of realistic and clear goals and outcomes that will be in accordance with the Project's main aims and based specifically on the strategic priorities that were identified during the gap analysis (cf. paragraph 3 above), the MAVA 2016-2018 Strategy and in relation to the Bycatch Project's goals.

6.2. The goals and targets of the proposal should be achievable **by November 2020** at the latest.

6.3. Successful candidates should provide data and analysis on the presence, distribution or density of the targeted species that can be used to effectively identify important conservation areas such as KBAs, IMMAs, IBAS, EBSAs, CCHs…etc.

6.4. Applications can include well justified training or capacity building components (if it is essential and directed to the fieldwork of the project) in the budget scheme. The training budget should not exceed 20% of the total budget of the application.

## 7. Accepted Proposals Funding terms

7.1. The MAVA Species Project will support projects with a budget between **20,000€ and 50,000€ (Twenty thousand to Fifty thousand Euros).** Considering the total budget available, between 4 and 10 projects will be selected fur funding.

7.2. The amount requested should be consistent with the activities, methods, species and the geographical scope proposed. Consideration will be taken by the Steering committee when reviewing the budget of the project, especially in relation to salaries and purchase of equipment.

7.3. Projects that can provide evidence for cofounding (even in-kind) will be favoured.

7.4. Payment of the grant will be done in three instalments; each will be made after progress evaluation by the Steering Committee. The instalments' breakdown is as following:

7.2.1. **15% of the total designated budget + any required equipment for the project** will be sent once a candidate's proposal is accepted and approved by the Steering Committee and upon signature of the Memorandum of Understanding (between SPA/RAC and the accepted candidate).

7.2.2. **30% will be released once the FIRST Progress Report** (showing the progress of the fieldwork and preliminary results) is received and approved by the Steering Committee of the project.

7.2.3. **30% will be released once the SECOND Progress Report** is received and approved by the Steering Committee of the project.

7.2.3. The last instalment of **the remaining budget** will be payed after the submission of the final report and a copy of data set and its acceptance by the Steering Committee.

**After the acceptance of the proposal, successful candidates should provide three price offers on their required equipment and SPA/RAC will choose between them and transfer the required amount to the candidate's bank account. The candidate will be required to provide a proof of purchase from the agreed upon offer.**

## 8. Application Submission

**Please download the application form here *French* and *English*.**

8.1. Only application forms that are completely filled and accompanied by the required supporting documents will be considered in the evaluation process.

8.2. The form should be submitted in Microsoft Word format and in clear **English** or **French** languages and **should be associated with the Budget table and the CV of the lead researcher of the proposal.**

8.3. if you have any further enquiries regarding the proposal submission or the Terms of Reference document, please contact Ibrahem BEN AMER (**ibrahem.benamer@spa-rac.org**) or Lobna BEN NAKHLA (**lobna.bennakhla@spa.rac.org**).

8.4. The completed application and documents should be sent to the following emails; **car-asp@spa.rac.org CC to ibrahem.benamer@spa-rac.org & lobna.bennakhla@spa.rac.org** and should be submitted within the designated deadline. Please put the title of the email as: **MAVA Species Knowledge Project, Call for Proposals**

8.4. An email will be sent to the applicant to confirm the receipt of the application and all supporting documents.

# 9. Annex

Table 1: list of species that are covered by the call

| Marine mammals | Sea Turtles |
|---|---|
| Monk seal, *Monachus monachus* | Logger-head turtle, *Caretta caretta* |
| SB Common dolphin, *Delphinus delphis* | Green turtle, *Chelonia mydas* |
| Bottlenose dolphin, *Tursiops truncatus* | Leather back turtle, *Dermochelys coriacea* |
| Striped dolphin, *Stenella coeruleoalba* | Kemp's Ridley Turtle, *Lepidochelys kempii* |
| Risso's dolphin, *Grampus griseus* | |
| Long-finned Pilot whale, *Globicephala melas* | |
| Rough toothed dolphin, *Steno bredanensis* | |
| Killer whale, *Orcinus orca* | |
| False killer whale, *Pseudorca crassidens* | |
| Finwhale, *Balaenoptera physalus* | |
| Sperm whale, Physeter *macrocephalus* | |
| Cuvier beaked whale, *Ziphius cavirostris* | |

| Cartilaginous fish species | Marine Birds |
|---|---|
| Sand tiger shark, *Carcharias taurus* | Scopoli's shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea* |
| Great white shark, *Carcharodon carcharias* | Balearic shearwater, *Puffinus mauretanicus* |
| Basking Shark, *Cetorhinus maximus* | Yelkouan shearwater, *Puffinus yelkouan* |
| Common skate, Dipturus *batis* | European storm petrel, *Hydrobates pelagicus* |
| Tope Shark, *Galeorhinus galeus* | Audouin's gull, *Larus audouinii* |
| Spiny butterfly ray, *Gymnura altavela* | Slender-billed gull, *Larus genei* |
| Shortfin mako shark, Isurus *oxyrinchus* | Mediterranean gull, *Larus melanocephalus* |
| Porbeagle, *Lamna nasus* | Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo* |
| Sandy Skate, *Leucoraja circularis* | Great white pelican, *Pelecanus onocrotalus* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Maltese Skate, *Leucoraja melitensis* | European Shag, *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* |
| Smalltooth tiger shark, *Odontaspis ferox* | Little Tern, *Sternola albifrons* |
| Angular roughshark , *Oxynotus centrina* | Lesser crested tern, *Thalasseus bengalensis* |
| Smalltooth sawfish, *Pristis pristis* | Caspian Tern, *Hydroprogne caspia* |
| Blackchin Guitarfish, *Rhinobatos cemiculus* | The gull-billed tern, *Gelochelidon nilotica*, |
| Common Guitarfish, *Rhinobatos rhinobatos* | Sandwich tern, *Thalasseus sandvicensis* |
| Bottlenose skate, *Rostroraja alba* | Ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca* |
| Scalloped Hammerhead shark, *Sphyrna lewini* | Pigmy Cormorant, *Microcarbo pygmaeus* |
| Great hammerhead, *Sphyrna mokarran* | Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus* |
| Smooth hammerhead, *Sphyrna zygaena* | Little Gull, *Hydrocoloeus minutus* |
| Sawback angelshark, *Squatina aculeata* | |
| Smoothback angelshark, *Squatina oculata* | |
| Angel Shark, *Squatina squatina* | |
| Giant devil rays, *Mobula mobular* | |
| Sunfish, *Mola mola* | |

Figure (1): Geographical Scope and the eligible areas for the Project.