

Terms of Reference for consultancy: study on “Implementing conservation measures and sharing best practices related to cartilaginous species listed in annex II and III to SPA/BD Protocol”

A focus on socio-economic analysis

1. Context and Objectives

The Mediterranean region is facing a growing challenge in the conservation of species listed in Annex II and Annex III of the SPA/BD Protocol of the Barcelona Convention.

These species especially, Elasmobranchs, are vulnerable to overexploitation and any anthropogenic disturbance because of their biological characteristics (very slow growth, late sexual maturity, low fecundity). Several species are currently threatened.

The main threats are: fishing pressure, fin trade “fining”, Global warming , pollution and degradation of the environment

In response to the decision IG.26/4 (COP 23, Portoroz, December 2023) concerning the inclusion of nine species of cartilaginous fish into Annex II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol some countries (Libya, Morocco and Tunisia) have requested assistance in the identification of species, stock assessments, and socio-economic evaluations to better understand the long term impacts of conservation measures and legislative changes.

SPA/RAC (Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre) and Plan Bleu/RAC are two key organizations working on environmental issues in the Mediterranean region, with a particular focus on sustainable development and the protection of marine biodiversity.

- SPA/RAC is one of the Regional Activity Centres of UNEP/MAP, which operates under the framework of the Barcelona Convention. SPA/RAC’s primary mission is to assist Mediterranean countries in the protection and sustainable use of marine and coastal areas, specifically focusing on the conservation of biodiversity, including endangered species and marine protected areas (MPAs). In relation to the conservation of cartilaginous fish species, SPA/RAC plays a critical role in providing scientific support for monitoring these species identifying conservation priorities, and coordinating regional efforts to safeguard marine biodiversity.
- Plan Bleu/RAC is also one of the Regional Activity Centres of UNEP/MAP, dedicated to promoting sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It works on integrated environmental, social, and economic assessments to inform policy-making and guide sustainable practices. Plan Bleu/RAC’s expertise spans various areas, including environmental economics, climate resilience, and biodiversity conservation. In this case, Plan Bleu/RAC’s role is to supervise socio-economic analyses, to help identify mitigation measures for local communities, and to offer policy recommendations to balance conservation with economic interests and cultural practices.

This consultancy, funded by Plan Bleu/RAC, aims to carry out a socio-economic impact study in the Gulf of Sirte (Libya) regarding the implementation of the Decision IG.26/4¹.

The study will evaluate the potential effects on local fisheries and economies and propose mitigation measures for minimizing negative impacts on fishermen and the entire fishing industry.

2. Task Description

Focusing on the Gulf of Sirte, the study will address two primary objectives:

- Assessing the socio-economic impacts of including nine species (or a subset of them) in Annexes II and III of the SPA/BD Protocol, focusing on their commercial importance, role in local economies (and eventual implications for international trade, if any).
- Evaluating the socio-economic impacts of mitigation measures, such as changes in fishing practices and identifying alternative target species, to provide practical steps for addressing the “Next Steps” after the implementation of conservation measures.

The mission deliverables are the following:

Task 1: Intermediate deliverable (first draft of the study). The first draft of the study will provide an initial analysis addressing the key objectives. It will include:

1. **Preliminary socio-economic analysis of species inclusion**
 - a. an initial assessment of the socio-economic impacts of listing new nine species of cartilaginous fish in Annex II and III to SPA/DB Protocol, with attention to their economic value and role in local and international markets.
 - b. an evaluation of how conservation measures could affect the fishing industry, focusing on impacts on income, employment, and livelihoods in fishing-dependent communities.
 - c. a cost-benefit analysis that examines potential long-lasting economic losses, to be endured from conservation measures alongside expected long-term ecological and economic benefits. This analysis will clarify trade-offs for decision-makers.
2. Preliminary assessment of **fishing practices and stock sustainability challenges**
 - a. a review of existing fishing practices, including methods, gear types, and targeted species, as well as the distribution and sustainability of fishing stocks in the Gulf of Sirte.
 - b. collaboration with SPA/RAC to incorporate stock data and assess risks such as overfishing, bycatch, non-selective techniques, and the adaptability of fisheries to new regulations.
3. Suggestion of **mitigation measures**

- a. initial proposals to reduce the impact on fisheries , such as compensation mechanisms to fishermen, training programs, awareness and advocacy campaigns and support for sustainable practices.

4. Scenario development

- a. presentation of 2 or 3 scenarios (the methodology presented by the consultant should explain the choice) that outline potential socio-economic outcomes of conservation measures. These scenarios will explore factors such as shifts in species availability, modifications to fishing practices, and changing market dynamics, both locally and internationally.

Task 2: Main deliverable (final study) : the second and final draft of the study will refine and expand upon the preliminary findings, incorporating feedback and additional data to provide a comprehensive analysis. It will include:

1. Refined socio-economic impact assessment

- a. a more detailed analysis of the socio-economic consequences of listing the species, supported by additional insights and revisions based on initial feedback.
2. Enhanced **mitigation strategies** : these would be practical, evidence-based solutions for mitigating economic impacts on fishermen, including:
 - a. proposals for adopting sustainable fishing methods, such as improved gear, zoning policies, and temporal restrictions.
 - b. financial instruments, including subsidies, compensation programs, or training initiatives, to support fishermen during the transition.
 - c. identification of alternative target species to balance ecological conservation with economic needs.
3. **Policy and management recommendations**, including:
 - a. actionable policy recommendations for balancing conservation goals with sustainable economic practices, such as:
 - i. implementing fishing quotas, catch limits, and species-specific regulations.
 - ii. establishing long-term monitoring and enforcement measures to ensure compliance.
 - b. proposals for multi-stakeholder collaboration involving fisheries, governments, local communities, and conservation organizations.
4. **Key takeaways** section
 - a. a concise summary of the study's findings, scenarios, and recommendations, specifically designed to inform policymakers and facilitate decision-making.

Supporting roles

- SPA/RAC: Will facilitate engagement with SPA/DB national Focal Point, the scientific team and the main stakeholders, ensuring that the study incorporates the perspectives and priorities of affected communities.

- Plan Bleu/RAC: Will oversee the adoption of robust methodologies, ensure the integration of cost-benefit analyses, and provide quality control throughout the study process. Plan Bleu will also hold a workshop in September/October 2025, in cooperation with relevant actors including SPA/RAC and relevant stakeholders from Libya that will serve as a platform for presenting and discussing the study.

3. Expected Schedule

The assignment is planned to take place between February-June 2025.

- **10 January 2025:** deadline to apply to the Call for Consultants
- **17 January 2025:** consultant selection process
- **early-February 2025:** contract finalization and initiation of work
- **14 April 2025:** submission of intermediate draft of the study
- **30 June 2025:** submission of final draft of the study
- **September/October 2025,** workshop for presenting and discussing the study.

4. Selection of Consultants

The assignment of producing the study is open to consulting firms, associations/consortiums of consultants, and individual consultants. Consultants should have expertise in both marine species conservation and socio-economic impact assessments. **A team consisting of at least two experts (Biologist and SocioEconomist), with complementary areas of expertise, would be ideal for the consultancy.**

All documents will be produced in a single language (English). Plan Bleu/RAC will be responsible for the layout and formatting of the final publication. Proposals should include a detailed methodology, work plan, and a budget breakdown. The consultants must demonstrate previous experience in similar studies, especially in the Mediterranean region, and should ideally have a strong understanding of the specific socio-economic dynamics of the fisheries sector.

Qualified candidates must meet the following criteria:

Education:

- A minimum of a master's degree in a relevant field (marine biology, fisheries, environmental economics, or related disciplines); a PhD is preferred.

Experience and Skills:

- Minimum of 5 years of relevant experience in environmental economics, marine ecology, and socio-economic impact assessments.

- Strong knowledge of threatened and endangered species conservation, particularly cartilaginous fish (sharks and rays), and their role in Mediterranean ecosystems.
- Previous work experience in the Mediterranean region is highly desirable, including an understanding of regional environmental and socio-economic dynamics.
- Proficiency in cost-benefit analysis methodologies, including the ability to quantify both environmental and socio-economic impacts of conservation measures on local communities, fisheries, and trade.
- Familiarity with socio-economic assessment methods and tools for fisheries and conservation-related impacts.
- Strong analytical, writing, and synthesis skills to clearly communicate complex socio-economic and environmental findings.
- Understanding of stakeholder dynamics, including fishing communities, government bodies, and international organizations, and the ability to develop strategies for sustainable development in the region.
- Fluency in English is required; proficiency in Arabic and/or French is a significant asset to facilitate communication with local stakeholders in the Mediterranean.
- Ability to adapt recommendations to regional needs, ensuring that mitigation strategies and policy interventions are both economically and culturally appropriate.

5. Contractual and Financial Terms

The selection of the expert will be based on the evaluation of their technical proposal (their skills in relation to the required qualifications described above and the proposed methodology) and an assessment of the most economically advantageous offer. The **maximum budget for this consultancy amounts to 20,000 Euros (VAT included)**. The financial proposal should detail all costs, incidental expenses, and taxes (including any applicable VAT). Candidates are required to provide references to their previous work on similar topics and relevant documents via email to the address indicated below if these are not provided through an active web link.

A first payment (30%) will be provided after successful selection of the draft. A second payment (30%) will be provided on receipt of the intermediate draft of the study. A third (final) payment (40%) will be provided after the final draft is submitted, provided the study meets the established quality standards. The acceptance of the offer of the successful tender will implicate the acceptance of the conditions and schedules detailed in this ToR.

A duly-issued invoice will be required for payment at the presentation of the final document. The payment term for the invoice will be by bank transfer 15 days after the invoice date (bank account details should be detailed). The tax legislation in force at the date of acceptance of the offer will be applied. Flights and accommodation to the Plan Bleu and SPA/RAC workshop will be covered as part of a separate budget.

The final selection of the candidate may require an interview. In such a case, candidates will have the option to participate in an in-person interview in Marseille (France) or through a video conference.

6. How to Apply

- Applications must be submitted by **10th of January 2025**
- Applications must be submitted through Plan Bleu website: www.planbleu.org and by e-mail at: ctsakas@planbleu.org with the subject line "Consultancy Proposal for Study on Cartilaginous Species Conservation".
- Applications must contain a technical and financial offer, as well as a letter of interest and a resume making reference to these Terms of Reference.
- Candidates must demonstrate their legal capacity to sign contracts and issue invoices according to the legislation of their country. For this purpose, they must also include the following documents in their proposal:

For consulting firms:

- Recent KBIS extract (less than 3 months old) for France
- Document confirming company registration in their country, including the indicated tax number (for foreign countries)
- Full bank account details (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) provided by the bank.

For individual consultants:

- Certificate of registration in the Directory of Companies and Establishments.
- Document certifying the right to practice this profession (such as a registration certificate) according to the legislation of their country, including the tax number (for foreign countries).
- Full bank account details (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) provided by the bank.