



**safenet**   
**2017**  
*in brief*

**Area-based fisheries management rules and Marine Protected Areas are increasingly recognised as the most effective solution to achieve marine conservation while granting the recovery of fish stocks and hence sustainable fisheries. However these results can realistically be achieved in the Mediterranean only if coherent and ecologically connected networks of protected areas and area-based management measures are implemented and enforced.**

2017 was a busy year for the Safenet project, which engaged modellers, field ecologists, fisheries scientists (including industrial, small scale and recreational fisheries experts) and NGOs in an effort to fill knowledge gaps on the ecology and fisheries of the North Western Mediterranean. The result of this data-rich effort will be used to develop realistic spatial fisheries management scenarios (based on networks of MPAs or area-based fisheries closures) to improve marine conservation and the socio-economic status of NW Mediterranean fisheries. 2018 will see the project team focused on the development and test of the spatial fisheries management scenarios, which will be shared with stakeholders in order to identify the most suitable management options. By the end of 2018 the project will deliver final science-based and stakeholder-inclusive recommendations to the EU to achieve Good Environmental Status, as well as the environmental, economic and social sustainability of fisheries in the NW Mediterranean, as dictated by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy respectively.

The fisheries management scenarios were defined in 2017 based upon policy targets and commitments, as well as stakeholders and fishers' suggestions collected so far. They include the testing of international conservation and socio-economic targets such as 2% of fully protected areas and MSY, effort regulations in spawning and nursery areas, effort reduction for specific fisheries (recreational, trawling), establishment of protected areas (Fisheries Restricted Areas, MPAs, Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas, etc.), and increase of protection levels for Natura 2000 sites or MPAs.

Safenet scientists were on the field across the North Western Mediterranean throughout 2016 and 2017, collecting data underwater, at landing ports and through interviews, providing the data baseline to be used for modelling and scenario testing. Recreational fishing data was collected from 20 coastal areas and the impact of this activity on vulnerable species was evaluated, stakeholders' and professional fishers' views were collected through 154 questionnaires, fish biomass and species composition were assessed with underwater surveys at 163 sites inside and outside 11 MPAs, and 117 small scale fisheries landings were monitored inside and outside 4 MPAs.

This information provided a preliminary description of the food web structure for 30 sites inside and outside NW Mediterranean MPAs. Several quantitative, temporal and spatial food web models are currently under construction at regional, sub-regional and local scales and will be used to test the management scenarios.

In parallel, models were also built to describe the distribution and larval connectivity across nursery and spawning grounds of three key species for small-scale fisheries and one key species for industrial fisheries. The population dynamics of additional three focal species are currently being modelled too.

During 2017 the project was introduced to several events in order to reach key stakeholders, achieving significant impact as showed by the formal inclusion of a specific point on spatial-temporal closures in the final MEDAC advice for the EU multi-annual plan on demersal resources of the NW Mediterranean.

2018 will see the project team focused on the development and test of the fisheries management scenarios, which will be shared with stakeholders in order to identify the most suitable management options. By the end of 2018 the project will deliver final science-based and stakeholder-inclusive recommendations to the EU to achieve Good Environmental Status, as well as the environmental, economic and social sustainability of fisheries in the NW Mediterranean, as dictated by the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy respectively.