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Terminal Evaluation Report

Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – EMBLAS Phase 1

PROJECT ID: 71597

OUTCOME ID: 84971

Mrs. Stephanie Hodge – International Evaluation Specialist
March 21-May 31 2015

OPENING PAGE

Project Title: Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – EMBLAS Phase 1
ID#: UNDP Project ID 71597 Outcome ID 84971

Evaluation Time Frame and Date of Report: March 2015-May 2015

Region and Countries in the project: Eastern Europe: Georgia, Ukraine, Russian Federation

UNDP Regional Expected Outcomes:

OUTCOME 2: By 2013, regional, national and sub-national levels have improved capacity for sustainable conservation and management of ecosystems and natural resources

Outputs: Adaptive water governance interventions supported at the regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national levels.

The project has been designed in the frame of the UNDP RBEC Regional Programme Document 2011-2013. In this context the project is related to the UNDP Outcome 2: By 2013, regional, national and sub-national levels have improved capacity for sustainable conservation and management of ecosystems and natural resources (linked to the Focus Area 1: Environment and Energy). In 2014, a new RPD (2014-2017) has been approved and thus the project was linked to Outcome 1: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded / Output 1.3: Solutions developed at national and sub-national levels for sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste.

Management and Implementation Arrangements: UNDP and EU are the funding agencies; UNDP is the executing agency for EU funds, on behalf of and in collaboration with beneficiary governments, and for funds which are availed through UNDP and under UNDP's supervision; 10 implementing partners are as follows in accordance with the EU Description of Action (DoA) and UNDP Project Document.

Executing Agency: United Nations Development Programme

Government Coordinating Agency: Ministries in Charge of Water Management Marine and Protection of the Marine Environment: Georgia, Ukraine and Russia, represented by the Black Sea Commissioners (members of the Black Sea Commission).

Other Partners: Marine Hydrophysical Institute (MHI) – Sevastopol, Ukraine; Odessa National University I.I.Mechnikov (ONU) – Odessa, Ukraine; Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (UkrSCES) – Odessa, Ukraine; A.O.Kovalevskiy Institute of Biology of Southern Seas (IBSS) – Sevastopol, Ukraine; Odessa Branch, Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (OB-IBSS) – Odessa, Ukraine; Iv.Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) – Tbilisi, Georgia; National Environmental Agency Black Sea Monitoring Center (NEA) – Tbilisi, Georgia; State Oceanographic Institute (SOI) – Moscow, Russia; P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology Russian Academy of Sciences (SIO-RAS) – Moscow, Russia; Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (BSC PS) – international, Istanbul, Turkey.

Management Arrangement: UNDP

Project Period: 2011-2015 January 2013- March 2015

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction	13
2. Project description and development context.....	15
3. Findings	19
3.1. Project Design / Formulation	19
3.2. Project Implementation.....	28
3.3. Project Results	34
4. Conclusions, Recommendations & Lessons	39
ANNEX 1 –Terms of Reference	3
ANNEX 2 – Itinerary and Evaluation Program.....	9
ANNEX 3 – Evaluation Matrix and Questionnaires Used	10
ANNEX 4 – List of Persons Interviewed	25
ANNEX 5 – List of Documents Reviewed	26
ANNEX 6 – Existing Framework for International Regional Cooperation (MISIS Project Brochure)	27
ANNEX 7 – Who is Who in Project –March 2015	29
ANNEX 8 – EMBLAS-I Meetings and Trainings.....	31
ANNEX 9 – Experts.....	35
ANNEX 10 – Status of Project Outputs - LOGFRAME.....	36

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARENA	EC FP6 Project: A Regional Capacity Building and Networking Programme to Upgrade Monitoring and Forecasting Activity in the Black Sea
B2B	Baltic to Black (EC DG Env. Project, implemented by the BSC in cooperation with HELCOM)
BS	Black Sea
BSC	Black Sea Commission (Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution)
BSERP	UNDP-GEF Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Project
BSGOOS	Black Sea Global Operational Observation Systems
BSIS	The Black Sea Information System
BSIMAP	Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Programme
CBD	Conservation of Biodiversity
COCONET	Towards Coast to Coast Networks of marine protected areas – from the shore to the high and deep sea, coupled with sea-based wind energy potential (EU FP project)
COST	European Cooperation in Science and technology
DEVOTES	EC FP7 Project: Development of innovative tools for understanding marine biodiversity and assessing good environmental status
DG	Directorate General
DoA	Description of action
DQC	Data Quality Control (Flagging)
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Environment Agency
EMODNET	European Marine Observation and Data Network project
ENPI	European Neighborhood Policy Instrument
EPIRB	Environmental Protection of International River Basins project
ESAS	Environment Safety Aspects of Shipping
EU	European Union
FOMLR	Fishery and Other Marine Living Resources
GE	Georgia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GES	Good Environmental Status
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission (Baltic Sea Convention)
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LBS	Land-based Sources (of pollution)
LoA	Letter of Agreement
LogFrame	Logical Framework
MISIS	MSFD Guiding Improvements in the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring System project
MONINFO	Monitoring and Information Systems for Reducing Oil Pollution (EU DG Env. Project, implemented by the BSC)
UNDP IRH	UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub = UNDP Operations, HR unit, Procurement unit, Finance Unit
MSFD	EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MyOCEAN	EC FP7 Project: Ocean Monitoring and Forecasting
NAS	National Academy of Science
NFP	National Focal Point

QA/QC	Quality Assurance / Quality Control
PA	Project Activity
PIU	Project Implementation Unit = Project Manager, Project Assistant, Water Program Analyst, key experts
PCO	Project Coordination Office
PERSEUS	Policy-oriented marine environment research in the southern European Seas
PMA	Pollution Monitoring Assessment
PO	Partner Organizations
SC	Steering Committee
SeaDataNet	Pan-European Infrastructure for ocean and marine data management
SeasEra	EU FP7 Era-Net Project: Toward Integrated Marine Research Strategy and Programmes
SEIS	Towards a Shared Environmental Information System (EEA regional Programme)
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
RU	Russian Federation
RTA	Regional Technical Advisor
TA	Technical Advisor
TE	Terminal Evaluator
ToR	Terms of Reference
UA	Ukraine
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WISE	EEA Water Information System for Europe (Marine – for the Seas)
WFD	EU Water Framework Directive
WQ	Water Quality

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation is to distill learning from the first phase of the EMBLAS project implementation. It will feed into design, management arrangements and strategy for Phase 2, from which more than 70 % of the funding will come. The evaluation took stock of the design and strategy, the implementation approach and the progress toward results to date. This project is the first phase of a much larger initiative, including EMBLAS-II, which has already begun (April 2014). This project should feed into a master plan as a follow-up regional project linking all six countries to build capacity of the system that it designs. (An exit strategy that speaks to this will be included post TE report). Much has been completed, and the project is on track, but a course correction and risk mitigation strategy is needed at Mid-Term. The main evaluation question was, “Is *EMBLAS-I* a good basis for *EMBLAS-II*?” The activities of Phase 1 are largely technical, diagnostic and methodological groundwork towards the project’s full scale implementation.

Project Description (brief)

This project constitutes a significant regional partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the governments of the Georgia, Ukraine and Russia. The Black Sea is one of the most vulnerable regional seas globally given its limited exchange of water with the open oceans and the large area of continental Europe from which it receives the drainage. The four strongly interlinked priority trans-boundary problems of the Black Sea are eutrophication - nutrient enrichment, changes in marine living resources, chemical pollution (including oil), and biodiversity/habitat changes, including alien species introduction - as well as the underlying root causes like industrial activities, agriculture, domestic wastewater, sea transport (oil spills, ballast water), and coastal zone degradation (urbanization, tourism).

The Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention) addresses these problems through enhanced cooperation among its signatories. The development/improvement of a monitoring network and data collection to provide for ecosystem-based and knowledge-based decision-making is considered to be a management target of high priority. Further coordination in policies and legislation between the Black Sea countries is of common interest in the region and specifically to the EU’s partners countries – being also members of the Black Sea Commission (BSC) - in so far it influences their own ability to comply with EU legislation and policies, notably the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The project will strengthen capacities of the respective national authorities of the project beneficiary countries for biological and chemical monitoring of the Black Sea, taking into consideration the requirements of EU water related legislation (EU WFD and MSFD). Significant effort will be put into training and other capacity building activities. In order to promote ownership, engagement of local experts and organizations is foreseen.

Summary of conclusions, recommendations and lessons

Relevance – Satisfactory

This project is highly relevant to a regional sustainable development trajectory. Across the Black Sea region environmental monitoring is fragmented and this project is enacting the important enabling environment and methodological framework for the future coordination, instilling a new mindset, and implementing an ‘integrated’ approach to environmental monitoring nationally and regionally. EMBLAS-I is Phase 1 of a two-part partnership initiative aimed at strengthening regional monitoring capacities toward a vision of Integrated Waters and Resources Management (IWRM) in the Black Sea region. The activity aims to help realize a harmonized Black Sea monitoring and assessment system linked to regionally agreed indicators of good environmental status. It is, however, the first and most important part of the work establishing the enabling environment of a carefully envisioned overall

master plan to establish a politically and scientifically sound environmental monitoring system across six countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine). The project is based on several key assumptions concerning the political and capacity realities and regional and national coordination linked to its overall goal.

Effectiveness – Marginally Satisfactory

This project aims at the establishment of diagnostic report, tools, methods for data collection and scoping of the institutional and budgetary architecture for the Black Sea monitoring system. The project approach is to strengthen national capacities for future monitoring programmes. Phase 1 had seven key expected Project Activity (PA) results areas. The results and related activities of EMBLAS-I were designed to enable further capacity strengthening and piloting actions in Phase 2 (Joint Surveys and National Monitoring Programmes).

The review finds that the PA1, the Diagnostic Report II (DRII) was a substantive EMBLAS-I exercise containing baseline analysis to support the project's full implementation. It scoped institutional and technical capacities, needs and gaps. The recommendations contained provide excellent guidance and information concerning the critical needs and gaps to be addressed for establishing a regional coastal marine monitoring system. The Diagnostic Report II (DRII) and it linked PA 4 - institutional needs assessment has also outlined the longer term need for learning and change. This report should continue to be considered for EMBLAS-II planning and implementation.

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) have focused on achieving *quality* scientific results to secure a final evidence based consensus on the EMBLAS monitoring framework. The focus was clearly on enabling activities for future implementation including: methods, ***baseline implementation indicators, key knowledge gaps and the institutional and capacity development framework***. The status of the deliverables are provided in the report in narrative and a matrix in the report annex. In general, all the planned all deliverables have progressed and have set the stage for future implementation. There are some small exceptions (some activities need more attention before considering it of quality i.e. work on Phytoplankton and Mnemiopsis are highlighted-see annex). The project team should ensure that the technical oversight of the drafted EMBLAS-I deliverables that need further development is continued (particular attention is needed in relation to finalization of GES and compliance indicators).

The TAs role for overall technical and policy oversight was and remains instrumental for judging quality results. It is also foreseen that once all the methods and product are completed, the TAs role will shift to greater oversight of the institutional capacity strengthening aspect of the strategy. This does not necessarily have to be the same person depending on the workload. Continuing technical input for finalizing the draft *methods and indicators* is very important. Technical oversight is significant for the methods and guidance documents to ensure they are integrated with MISIS and EPIRB work.

With that in mind, the optimal pathway towards results may need reflection on leadership on three areas: 1. Ensuing technical competencies to manage all key result areas, 2 Project leadership, vision and strategy i.e. to ensure the team is working towards common results and 3. A transparent planning and overall monitoring framework (including technical monitoring for cross sector synergies) and plan linked to staff performance.

For number one, overall technical oversight is needed to ensure that future activities and products are harmonized and integrated and synergistic with MISIS and EPIRB project workⁱ. For future implementation the institutional development work in PA3 (Monitoring Programs) is critical, and can be guided with support of an overall institutional capacity development plan and possible additional related expertise to take this project to *quality results* across all areas.

For two and three, the project implementation framework needs a harmonized plan for building longer term capacity at three levels, local national and regional, including dealing affirmatively with key knowledge gaps identified in the diagnostic report.

NGOS and public involvement was found to be somewhat limited in Phase 1, due to the type of work conducted in the Phase 1 (development of guidelines, methodologies, etc.). However, the TE flags an important understanding of the concept *user groups and NGOs engagement*. The 2nd Phase of the project foresee stronger involvement of stakeholders and public.

Efficiency – Marginally Satisfactory

The project's efficiency is judged on the work and the results planned and achieved based on a value for money approach, with the design architecture integrity factoring into that review. The project goal is setting up a system that involves scientific and political consensus across borders, a complex and ambitious endeavor.

The project is under direct implementation by UNDP. UNDP rules on procurement, recruitment and financial management, which are followed. The relevant financial information and expenditure overview were available any time to monitor the expenditures of the project. Adaptive management was in place to a certain level. The project experts were hired according to the emerging needs.

The work-plan has been implemented after a delay of about three months and there was a reported delay in some of the deliverables up to 6 months (according to the timing based in the inception report). However this was due to the fact that key project personnel (project manager and technical advisor) were not hired officially until April (but the project had started in January 2013). The project team has been delivering a work plan. The disbursements to the partner organizations and individual experts were made in line with the contracts and planning.

Additionally, the responsibilities for finalization of deliverables of subcontracted partners may have been more clearly outlined. More attention can be paid to the coordination and benchmarks of the work to achieve desirable results per payments. Lesson learned include holding back a certain percentage of payment until all is delivered.

The project steering committee is functioning. It reviews the EMBLAS work plan and annual expenditures, but it could function better for influencing national policies and budget changes, *Short cost benefit analyses might be provided during the meetings in the form of case studies to influence the meeting*. The meetings should continue to be prepared by RTU and implemented twice a year.

The project management did revised the strategy: results vs deliverables. According to interviews conducted, this was addressed because it was clear that the projects results are learning and process-contingent. Management realize that indicators and benchmarks for "processes" including capacity development objectives across the three levels (local, national and regional) are key to judging the efficiency of the actions and will be developed for Phase 2. During the process of developing an capacity development and sustainability plan for the entire project's work and using capacity building indicators as a guide (annex), will be addressed (a key TE recommendation).

The rate of delivery through December 2014 was found satisfactory. It takes time to work out initial implementation issues and to set up process for management. An important factor was an unstable political situation in Ukraine. Although project was complicated by the unforeseen political conflict, the delivery was consistent with the agreed work plan. Contingencies and risk assessment were set up and enacted to ensure smooth implementation and results.

The final result will be judged by whether a coherent and synergistic framework in place, with agreed upon national priorities for national capacity strengthening, including whether a scientifically sound and harmonized baseline for the Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Program is coordinated. As the project objectives are centered on national capacity building, and the regional environmental results are contingent on whether national capacities have been strengthened, its sustainability is key. This means that this project success is also dependent on the ability of the Black Sea Commission and its secretariat's capability to take the results of EMBLAS forward. The project should therefore be influencing the capacity of the Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat to undertake coordination and learning activities and so there may be need for more explicit work actions for this. Along this vein, the project team has already enacted a plan to support information management and communication at the BCS.

Sustainability – Medium Likely

Noting that EMBLAS is a full scale project, the sustainability cannot be fairly assessed as the midpoint. The Phase 1 activities have been very concrete: developing methods, frameworks and tools. These questions will be firmly answered after second phase of the project implementation. An exit strategy might however be developed that considers a mechanism to bridge and build upon activities of BSC, MISIS, EPIRB and EMBLAS-I and II. It should integrate the learning from MISIS, EPIRB and EMBLAS-I and II.

Project partners are the Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat, governments of Ukraine, Russia and Georgia and national institutions responsible for Black Sea monitoring and data collection. Project partners and key project stakeholders will have to take forward the results of the project and maintain them. The EMBLAS-I project is thus an enabling activity that support a Black Sea monitoring system in line with national interests, including compliance with the EU directives and sustainable development goals. Project partners and the beneficiary countries are incentivized for sustainability as they must comply with reporting requirements concerning BS monitoring at national level, as well as regional level (considering the MSFD, WFD and the Bucharest Convention). This motivation was evident during the review.

National Sustainability

Nationally the project aim is for change in governmental budgets and institutional arrangements to support the national monitoring programs. Institutional sustainability lies with a view on the process of national change. The project team are influencing policies ,approached through implementing and working through stakeholders, training, establishment of contacts, and cooperation with the BSC experts and authorities dealing with relevant legislation and policy. Good political will of the counterparts is a prerequisite for policy sustainability. The project should have stronger linkages with the executing ministries in the beneficiary countries and be expanded, assessing the financial, technical and institutional implications of MSFD implementation. EMBLAS-I remit was purposely narrow focusing on the methods and monitoring programmes and had not yet strongly linked to the policy and decision frameworks. The focus was also clearly to be off-shore where the capacity and interest of the countries is limited however some national stakeholder says the priority is the coastal waters and transitional waters. There must be more consideration on the balance between off shore and in shore.

Key Recommendations (*Full list in last section of report*)

EMBLAS-I Evaluation:

- Endorsed the time extension to March 2015 for EMBLAS-I.
- Endorsed management shifts such that EMBLAS-II has a different structure of the project team, with stronger technical expertise and due to changed context: risk assessment and risk of conflict.
- Endorsed future actions to provide some support to help strengthen Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat, regionally with a priority focus on communication, capacity building and knowledge management.
- Endorsed initiation of a training programme for the national institutions as a part of the overall capacity building plan in the countries
- Endorsed development of a written capacity strengthening plan such that the overarching capacity strengthening goals across the region are met.
- Endorsed the PIU arrangement to augment project with experts and key technical assistance.

Key Recommendations for Phase 2

- *PIU ensure* further development and quality assurance of the draft documents prepared by the Phase 1, particular attention is needed for the work on Water Quality / Good Environmental Status Methodology, as well as on compliance indicators work that need to be agreed / vetted at regional level. Technical oversight and vetting of the quality of work need to be ensured.
- *PIU further develop the three level* capacity building approach (regional, national and local). Author it and write it down. Bring in assistance as necessary to do this exercise.
- *PIU develop* an explicit project communication and linkages function i.e. knowledge management and communications.
- *PIU include* a plan for close monitoring of risk scenarios and plans to mitigate be updated and included in EMBLAS-II implementation strategy. This means to enact a project design that is technically and political well throughout and result based and legally agreed. Institutions need to be tasked and tasks clearly designated as to avoid all levels of risk and to deal with risk sceneries.

Evaluation Ratings

(see also Annex 12 –Full LogFrame analysis and comments)

Project Ratingsⁱⁱ

Project Strategy	N/A	Comment
Progress Toward Results	Overall Objective Achievement Rating: (Satisfactory)	
	Expected Outcome 1: Review of the national monitoring systems and tools for assessing data obtained from monitoring activities Satisfactory	The EMBLAS-I diagnostic report (Diagnostic Report II) is an excellent baseline study that informs the further strategy and implementation of EMBLAS-II. It should become a key / core document for all staff. An orientation linked to work planning should be provided in first three months of implementation. This could be a presentation during inception meeting for example.
	Expected Outcome 2: Support to implementation of countries' obligations under the Bucharest and other related Conventions and Agreements Marginally Satisfactory	This area need work and harmonization within both phases of the project. It highlights the importance of the Black Sea Commission and its capacity strengthening to take forward the results. This work must be closely technically aligned with the development of national monitoring programmes. Suggest a Technical Advisor to oversee the development of these two BSC flagship products (WQ/GES Methodology and Compliance Indicators report, _ for coherence of strategy. The EMBLAS-II project team needs to make sure that key product developed under this project activity are coherent with the BS Commission work plan and strategies.
	Expected Outcome 3: Development of cost-effective and harmonized biological and chemical monitoring programme in accordance with reporting obligations under multilateral environmental agreements, the WFD and the MSFD Marginally Satisfactory	Project succeeded to support Georgia developing a revised monitoring program, and supported Ukraine and Russia to develop solid drafts of revised monitoring program, to be taken over by the EMBLAS- II This area of work needs attention in Phase 2 – the project should reconsider the need for support in each country to support finalization of the monitoring programs/strategies and develop follow up programmes. This result area extends beyond the project because it takes time to strengthen capacity. A full-scale exit strategy and programme document needs to be developed.
	Expected Outcome 4: Assessment of needs regarding laboratory infrastructure, equipment and training, and promotion of the recommendations Marginally Satisfactory	Completed and merged in outcome one. This area can link to the underlying project objective to extend marine and coastal zone protected areas network work, which is currently a weak spot within this project's implementation strategy. Either some training and or technical work on marine protected areas needs to be taken forward in the overall scheme.
	Expected Outcome 5: Elaboration and implementation of the comprehensive training programme on monitoring methods and quality assurance aiming at adhering to ISO 17025 standard and promotion Marginally Satisfactory	This training has been delivered, but there is a need to link to an overall project capacity development plan that takes into consideration capacity strengthening at levels: 1 national, 2 regional and 3 specific knowledge gaps highlighted I.E KM, Public Policy and Institutional Development. In the 2 nd Phase of the project the CB training programme needs a plan and performance benchmarks. The capacity development strategy should extend across all PAs and not just include this aspect on training.
	Expected Outcome 6: Prepare methodology for Joint Black Sea surveys Marginally Satisfactory	This work is progressing. TE observed a need for technical expertise be in place to support this work. The EMBLAS-II project team needs to make sure that this work completed is a good framework document for further implementation of the Joint Surveys.
	Expected Outcome 7: Development of the web-based Black Sea Water Quality Database prototype Marginally Satisfactory .	The project provided a concept for the web-based WQ Database prototype related to facilitating the learning objectives, i.e. including data collection r. This work can be a result entitled learning and knowledge management. The idea is that that this is also linked to the role of the BSC and its Secretariat for Knowledge Management and regional capacity development for BS monitoring.
Project Implementation & Adaptive Management	Satisfactory	The project management has put in place controls for adaptive management and has taken necessary action, concurring with realized risks, including political and technical issues.
Sustainability	Medium Likely	The sustainability is linked to having good management, work planning processes, scheduling and monitoring implementation in Phase 2. An exit strategy will also support the development of a longer-term capacity development strategy that supports the project sustainability across the six countries.

Project Summary Table

Project Title:	Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea		
UNDP Project ID:	00084971		at endorsement (Million US\$)
EU Grant number	ENPI/2012/293-589	EU Grant	600,000 EUR / 777,200 USD
UNDP Project ID:	00084971	UNDP financing: Broken down as: UNDP RBEC US\$350,000 UNDP Ukraine: US\$150,000 UNDP Georgia: US\$100,000	600,000 USD
Country:	Georgia, Ukraine, Russia	IA/EA own:	
Region:	RBEC	Government: Ukraine, Georgia Russia	
Focal Area:	International Waters	Other Budget received from project by partner organization in total: 478500 USD	The project has been implemented as "direct execution' by UNDP...
EU Division		Total Co-financing:	600,000 EUR
FA Objectives, (OP/SP):	Strategic objectives: OUTCOME 2: By 2013, regional, national and sub- national levels have improved capacity for sustainable conservation and management of ecosystems and natural resources Outputs: Adaptive water governance interventions supported at the regional, sub-regional, national and sub-national levels	Total Co-financing:	
Executing Agency:	UNDP	Total Project Cost:	US\$ 1,377,200
Other Partners involved:	Ukraine: Marine Hydro physical Institute (MHI) / Odessa National University I.I.Mechnikov (ONU) /Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (UkrSCES) / A.O.Kovalevskiy Institute of Biology of Southern Seas (IBSS) -/ Odessa Branch, Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (OB-IBSS) Georgia: Iv.Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) / National Environmental Agency "Black Sea Monitoring Center" (NEA) Russia: State Oceanographic Institute (SOI) / P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology - Russian Academy of Sciences (SIO-RAS) International: Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (BSC PS)	ProDoc Signature (date project began):	19 December 2012
		EU Grant signature date	18 Nov 2012
		(Operational) Closing Date:	Proposed: Dec 2014 Actual UNDP (including GEO, RU, UKR) : 31 March 2015
		Actual EU: 31 March 2015	

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the evaluation

In line with UNDP Policy, UNDP funded projects are monitored and evaluated regularly. Terminal Evaluations (TE) are a requirement of the UNDP. The Terminal Evaluation is to determine progress toward the achievement of outcomes and to document lesson learned. In this particular case, based on the unique context in which this project has been designed and implemented, the terminal evaluation is in fact a mid-term review of a larger initiative implemented in two parts. This Terminal Evaluation was initiated by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and CIS, the coordinator of the EU-UNDP project: Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea – Phase 1 (EMBLAS-I). The objective of the evaluation is to review and assess the project results, its efficiency, stakeholder involvement, sustainability and to provide recommendations on the follow-up of the project EMBLAS-II, Phase 2 of the project (2014-2017).

Scope & Methodology

In line with the ToR, this evaluation pays special attention to the *lessons learned* and provides recommendations for the follow-up project EMBLAS-II. A separate section on Lesson Learned and recommendations is provided in the last section along with recommendations for replication and transfer of the experience related mainly to the following (see recommendation and lesson learned section):

- Project results on the national level;
- Support to trans-boundary cooperation;
- Potential impact on the regional level (considering the follow-up phase of the project);
- Recommendations from the project stakeholders for planning of future interventions.

The evaluation was conducted by an international consultant with the support of the UNDP RTU in three stages.

(1) Documentation review (desk study) March 21-April 4, 2015: includes the list of documentation reviewed (Annex). These documents were availed by EMBLAS Project Officer UNDP, including the Country Office and the Regional Coordination Unit;

(2) Interviews, stakeholder workshops (including Black Sea Commission Advisory Groups meeting) March 21-April 4 (Annex, see list of participants). The evaluator consulted and gathered information locally through meetings and four workshops (March 22, 23 Ukraine and April 1, 2, 3, 4 BSC Istanbul) and individual meetings with all stakeholders (see also section 2.5), including PCU, UNDP, donor agencies (EU interview on April 14 by phone), NGOs and private sector representatives.

(3) Writing the evaluation report: The evaluation entailed a complex process involving research with institutional and non-institutional actors working at different levels across the project and administration. The process was managed and guided through an array of distinct, simultaneous and compounding activities outlined by the ToR and UNDP guidelines for conducting a Terminal and Mid-Term Evaluation. It addressed the criteria of project relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, as well as sustainability and impact.

The projected evaluation inputs were presented in a comprehensive evaluation matrix (inception report attached as electronic separate file). This included the tools and methods for comprehensive analysis to distill trends, changes, uses and demands for environmental monitoring. The evaluation matrix clarified the assessment, reporting framework and research questions to inform the country and regional visits (March 21-April 6, 2015). It included developing hypothesis (theory of change) based on ProDoc 2012, desk study and consultation with the evaluation team (UNDP/GEF RTA and

UNDP Program Manager, PCU and Project Technical Advisor). It has ensured a clear and common understanding by evaluation stakeholders of the approach and methods used. Project performance was assessed based on expectations set out in the Project Logical Framework/Results Framework (see Annex and Sections below).

The evaluation methods employed participation and asked basic questions directed to the implementing partners and all other stakeholders about project design and assumptions, the implementation and the expected results, i.e. what has changed, whether the project is still relevant (doing the right thing) and how stakeholders might change direction at Mid-Term. Documenting lessons learned and notes on practice to date were key evaluation outputs.

Evaluator met individually with implementing partners during BSC Advisory Groups meetings and held several group events to distill information. Evaluator participated in the BSC Advisory Groups meetings (April 1-5). Evaluator also gained insight by interacting with international consultants (TA and expert working on EMBLAS-II), who were working at the same time.

All stakeholders received and submitted the completed evaluation questionnaires, outlined the status of their activities and provided general perspective on design, implementation and results to date (also see Annex status of activities).

Limitations

The evaluation had a very large scope. Data overload and subjectivity was overcome by being evidence-based and employing quantitative methods to undertake matrix comparisons when possible. Surveys were also helpful for managing data. The evaluator vs. project team (as key informants) interaction was conducted in a very transparent manner, and all the project's key stakeholders were included along the way for feedback (including donors and executing officers UNDP RTA, UNDP Project Manager, EU officer). The RTA office and PCU staff supported data collection.

Structure of the evaluation report

The report has four sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Project Description and Development Context; 3. Findings, including Formulation/Strategy, Implementation, Results, Sustainability, and Mainstreaming; 4. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned and related annexes.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Project start and duration

Based on the EU Description of Action (DoA), the duration of the project action was for 24 months and the start was planned originally as October-November 2012. The actual implementation period of the EMBLAS-I project was 1 January 2013 – 31 March 2015, including a three month no cost extension granted to complete several key deliverables as planned. The project is agreed by partners as the preparatory phase for a follow-up national capacity strengthening monitoring programme in the Black Sea Region – EMBLAS-II, in three beneficiary countries (Georgia, Russia and Ukraine). It is also linked closely to two EU funded initiatives covering monitoring three other Black Sea countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey) MISIS project (see MISIS Project description in Annex) and EPIRB (covering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The project is thus the first phase of a larger initiative aimed at improving and coordination of efforts at improving the Black Sea monitoring system.

Problems that the project sought to address

The four strongly interlinked priority trans-boundary problems of the Black Sea are *eutrophication - nutrient enrichment, changes in marine living resources, chemical pollution (including oil), and biodiversity/habitat changes, including alien species introduction* - as well as the underlying root causes like *industrial activities, agriculture, domestic wastewater, sea transport (oil spills, ballast water), and coastal zone degradation (urbanization, tourism)*. The **Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution (Bucharest Convention)** addresses these problems through enhanced cooperation among its signatories. The development/improvement of a monitoring network and data collection to provide for ecosystem-based and knowledge-based decision-making is considered to be a management target of high priority.

Further coordination in policies and legislation between the Black Sea countries is of common interest in the region and specifically to the EU's partners countries – being also members of the Black Sea Commission (BSC) - in so far it influences their own ability to comply with EU legislation and policies, notably the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The project will strengthen capacities of the respective national authorities of three project beneficiary countries for biological and chemical monitoring of the Black Sea, taking into consideration the requirements of EU water related legislation (EU WFD and MSFD). Significant effort will be put into training and other capacity building activities. In order to promote ownership, engagement of local experts and organizations was thus foreseen.

Immediate and development objectives of the project

The overall objective of EMBALS 1 project is to help coordinate and set up guidance and framework for the overall monitoring system to help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. The project is addressing the overall need for support in protection and restoring the environmental quality and sustainability of the Black Sea.

The project has two specific project objectives as follows:

1. *Improve availability and quality of data on the chemical and biological status of the Black Sea, in line with expected MSFD and Black Sea Strategic Action Plan needs;*
2. *Improve partner countries' ability to perform marine environmental monitoring along MSFD principles, taking into account Black Sea Diagnostic Report.*

Baseline Indicators established

There is no regionally and nationally agreed definition of Integrated Environmental Monitoring of the Black Sea. Baseline indicators for this project implementation were established based on earlier engagement of the project stakeholders, donors and partner's in Black Sea management diagnostics including the UNDP / GEF 2008 TDA and SAP2009 (Also see Annex - History of International Cooperation in the Region). By design, the project would update the earlier BSC diagnostics and reporting with diagnostics – Diagnostic Report II (DRII) concerning important legal, policy and institutional frameworks gaps in the field of BS monitoring and assessments, having in mind that integrated management of the Black Sea is the aim to develop regarding the dynamic situation of the Black Sea environment.

It would scope the national knowledge-based decision making capabilities and pave the way for work on Project Activity (PA) 3 (revision of monitoring systems). The first activity was the diagnostics -PA 1 which was to establish the baseline and a basis for further action including: Black Sea monitoring database, methodologies and frameworks for harmonized data collection and work on regionally relevant Good Environmental Status (GES) and Black Sea (BS) compliance indicators in support of the implementation of the Bucharest Convention (Convention on the Protection of The Black Sea against Pollution) in partnership with the Black Sea Commission (BSC) Secretariatⁱⁱⁱ and a number of leading scientific organizations from the Black Sea region.

Main stakeholders and beneficiaries

At the regional/international level a key aspect of the EMBLAS-I has been to encourage collaboration with international organisations to help ensure the effective coverage of problems and coherence of actions pertaining to Black Sea Monitoring. A detailed list of stakeholders is attached as Annex to this TE report.

The main target stakeholders and beneficiaries include organizations responsible for water management and protection of the marine environment in the beneficiary countries, as follows:

- Georgia: Ministry of Environment Protection;
- Russian Federation: Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology;
- Ukraine: Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.

At national level, the Project was expected to facilitate cooperation with key institutions involved in Black Sea (BS) and Maritime monitoring in all beneficiary countries. Particular attention has been to coordinate and manage relations with the EEA, UNEP, DG Environment, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, DG Research and Innovation, DABLAS Secretariat, BSEC, ACCOBAMS, Espoo Convention, etc.

Target groups for stakeholder engagement (based on DoA and UNDP ProDoc) include:

- Environmental (biological and chemical) data providers which are in possession of existing biological and chemical data and want to make them available and accessible. They comprise: public and private environmental research institutes, landscape associations, nature organizations and environmental NGO's, not only from the target countries but also from the Black Sea region;
- Actors involved in biological and chemical monitoring, not only from the target countries but also from the Black Sea region. They comprise monitoring departments/sections of private and public research institutes;
- National, regional and local public authorities involved in environmental policy development, decision making and management;
- National and international bodies and committees involved in environmental issues of the Black Sea, such as Black Sea Commission, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, governmental and

intergovernmental committees, UNDP, UNEP, NATO Science for Peace (SfP), DG Environment, EEA, ICES, etc.;

- Marine industry causing pollution in the Black Sea, such as oil and gas industries, shipping companies and fisheries companies/organizations;
- Public interest groups targeting sustainable Black Sea ecosystem;
- Educational organizations like universities and schools;
- General public.

Expected Results

The overall objective is to set up initiatives that will help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment.

The specific objectives are:

1. To improve availability and quality of data on the chemical and biological status of the Black Sea, in line with expected MSFD and Black Sea Strategic Action Plan needs;
2. To improve partner countries' ability to perform marine environmental monitoring along MSFD principles, taking into account above mentioned Black Sea Diagnostic Report.

The main expected results to attain the mentioned objectives are:

1. Increased capacities of the relevant national authorities for biological and chemical monitoring of water quality in the Black Sea;
2. Quality assurance procedures in laboratories identified and implementation set.

Outcome Target - PA1 - Availability and quality of chemical and biological data to provide for integrated assessments of the Black Sea state of environment, including pressures and impacts

Baseline: National monitoring systems exist; additional technical assistance support (Template and process) is needed for amendment to the relevant water legislation and administrative reforms.

Indicators: Level of involvement of national organizations responsible for monitoring and data collection.

Outcome Target - 2 - Bucharest convention and other agreements, i.e. EU Marine Strategy implementation supported

Baseline: Bucharest convention and other agreements exist, i.e. EU Marine Strategy

Support needed to develop knowledge-based adaptive management and harmonization of approaches to environment protection.

Indicators: Availability of further developed compliance indicators and indicator based reporting aimed at strengthening the Bucharest Convention implementation.

Outcome Target - 3- Black Sea Monitoring Programmes developed / updated in accordance with reporting obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements, the WFD and the MSFD

Baseline: National Monitoring programs exist, but revision is needed. Results from Project Activity 1 are available.

Indicators: Harmonized Black Sea Monitoring programmes in accordance with reporting obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements, the WFD and the MSFD.

Outcome Target - 4 - Assessment of the Regional networks technical capacities for monitoring Black Sea

Baseline: Network of Black Sea reference laboratories exists; assessment of their technical capacities is needed.

Indicators: Needs for laboratory infrastructure/equipment and training assessed.

Outcome Target - 5 - Capacities of existing network of Black Sea reference laboratories strengthened

Baseline: Capacity strengthened to existing Network of Black Sea reference laboratories that exist.

Indicators: Capacities strengthening of national reference laboratories, in terms of staff and methodologies; specifically, the monitoring-related training programme elaborated and initial implementation started. Elaboration and implementation of a first training programme round on monitoring methods and quality assurance adhering to ISO 17025 standard.

Outcome Target – 6 - Methodologies and plans based on Joint surveys based on ones that already exist and activities planned under other EU funded projects

Baseline: Joint surveys already exist and activities are planned under other EU funded projects.

Indicators: Available methodology for Survey, including the list of parameters and sites.

Outcome Target – 7 - Web based system for Black Sea Water Quality database

Baseline: Web based system for Black Sea Water Quality database exists but not as a web-based platform. It needs additional functionality and improvement.

Indicators: Improvement of the Black Sea Water Quality database (web-based), adding the Phytoplankton and Mnemiopsis components of BSIS.

3. FINDINGS^{iv}

3.1. Project Design / Formulation

Analysis of LFA/Results Framework (Project logic/strategy/indicators)

The review of the project documentation discloses a solid problem analysis, an understanding off the problem and a coherent strategy towards the overall expected results (ProDoc). The Logframe is results-based and includes seven project outputs/expected results along a casual results chain. Only one result area (#4) was redundant, and it was merged by project management, technical experts as part of the diagnostic analysis/study PA 1 (see adaptive management). The log frame logic corresponds to two overarching project objectives building a regional monitoring system. This includes decisions and methods concerning data collection and points to be instituted for undertaking joint surveys for the future Black Sea Marine Environmental Monitoring Practices.

In general, the best pathway towards results was to be refined based on the diagnostic assessment PA 1. Diagnostic Report II (DRII), includes assessing biodiversity and chemical knowledge / data gaps, among others, and development of a regionally tailored database that correspond to the methodologies and institutional frameworks being set up. The expected overarching result (Phase 1 and 2) would be established protocols and the establishment of a scientific baseline for joint sea monitoring and assessment. The activities would inform the development of a jointly agreed methodology for data collection and joint surveys that enable a baseline value for the future monitoring across the three countries. The accepted methodologies include eventual integration with those conducted in MISIS project for joint scientific surveys across six countries for a regional monitoring system. All this would be done in a coordinated and unified way.

The above takes into account not only previous monitoring, but also diagnoses it for achievements and gaps and for recommendations, starting from legislation and ending with scenarios of the proposed monitoring revision. Some key insights:

As an enabling activity, Phase 1 involved preparatory and design work for implementation of joint surveys. The approach focus is also on strengthening capacity, taking forward work on national monitoring systems towards appropriate institutionalized framework for multi-stakeholder engagement and changed practices in each country context. Ultimately such agreements will support harmonized data collection methods and undertake preparatory work on institutional, legal and budgetary needs, updating scientific diagnostics and convening expert processes to develop harmonized and agreed upon methodology to institute a new national integrated approach to marine and river basin protection management.

As the project is the first phase of a much larger initiative on Black Sea ecological monitoring and regional **harmonization, scheduling, coordination around seven the expected result areas is critical**. The expected results project areas PAs (listed above), involved technically diverse but linked component areas i.e. diagnostics and methods that are linked and build upon each other: undertaking institutional analysis and updating scientific diagnosis of Black Sea monitoring system PA 1, producing a diagnostic report with baseline value and identifying gaps in methodologies as part of the Black Sea monitoring system architecture. Each PA inherently reinforces the next.

The strategy is therefore dependent on excellence in coordination, scheduling and context-based approaches in and across three countries.

Assumptions and Risks

According to the Project Document, there were six main risks identified (see original project document). The risks have been adequately identified in the development stage of the project and

further reviewed during (inception meeting). These were continuously monitored during the project implementation. Due to the political situation changes in early 2014 (according to the project managers, since the end of 2013, changes occurred in the economic and political situation of Ukraine, with the economy degrading quickly and civil war looming), a risk assessment (planned and at the request of key EMBLAS-I EU partner) was promptly undertaken. These risks have been further monitored, and relevant measures taken (see description below). There is need to continue to monitor the situation and undertake necessary measures in line with the adaptive management – i.e. TE learned from RCU that various scenarios for project activities implementation are being prepared.

Since November 2013, the economic crisis in UA has resulted in a 46% depreciation of the national currency. The official exchange rate of UAH has dropped. As a result, EMBLAS experienced difficulties – albeit these are not viewed by the project management team (interviews) as critical for project implementation but need to be mentioned. In fact the future situation and its influence on EMBLAS were determined to be working into consideration of three possible scenarios in UA (according to risk assessment): 1. business as usual, 2. medium risk of war with some disruptions and 3. Final escalation into civil and international conflict. Key impacts follow.

During EMBLAS implementation, the risks that manifest into problems (planned and unplanned) are as follows:

Ukraine /Russia:

1. Two capacity building/training events (for chemical monitoring and biological guidelines) planned in Odessa and under preparation were postponed until after a tragedy in Odessa (nationalists killed about 50 persons from the opposition). Later activities were transferred to Batumi (GE) and Istanbul (Turkey), making them more expensive, thus directly impacted cost. Project funds were nearly lost for EMBLAS because of the separation of Crimea since they were already used to pay two scientific institutes for deliverables. This money was later retrieved through the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. The Crimea separation has brought additional difficulties in the revision of national monitoring programs of RU and UA. Because of restructuring of Crimean scientific institutions (noted as key partners for implementation –including chemical and fisheries experts) after separation from UA, work with them has become complicated, especially key experts.

TE took note that there is still debate as to whether the risk of conflicts could be mitigated sufficiently operating the PMU in Ukraine. TE observed the political will still be acceptable since two countries involved (Ukraine and Georgia) have expressed incentive to comply with the EU MFSD processes. TE observed/interviews relevant subjects from each country (during BSC Advisory Groups meetings) and learned that the ecological government partner's and agents have a mandate and interest to cooperate across borders on ecological issues. The need for ecological results is outside of political discussions so and project could be continued from this perspective.

Other issues to mitigate /monitor:

Death in family

For important deliverables (see results section), the unexpected illness of key experts and/or death of their relatives was not predicted, but has slowed the delay of EMBLAS deliverables (*Mnemiopsis* and phytoplankton databases). It is important that the EMBLAS-II ensures recovery of the delay with these studies and includes them into work plan as needed.

Scheduling / Management / Monitoring / Planning

A key assumption was that the schedule would run smoothly. However, there were issues with management and timing of expected outputs, and methodologies are not deliverables. They are processes requiring scientific consensus. (See monitoring section for details). A monitoring officer delegated with this role is needed for Phase 2, and this need is already reflected in the task of Communication and Coordination Expert – member of the EMBLAS-II core team.

Communications, visibility

Another key assumption was that national focal points could run national stakeholder mobilization and communication processes without support. This was important work to gain communication and ownership of the longer term monitoring change processes to national stakeholders and to provide a platform for national work on environmental monitoring linked to the Black Sea. The project did not have planned resources for this.

Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g., same focal area) incorporated into project design

Ongoing projects with linkages to EMBLAS project include: SeasEra, Arena, BSERP, My Ocean, PEGASSO, MONINFO, MISIS, B2B, and EPIRB. Particular attention was to be paid to relations (and it was) with the Black Sea Commission, the European Environment Agency, and UNDP / GEF and ongoing projects in terms of complementary activities (also see synergies section below). The project strategy was designed based upon previous learning and activities including the UNDP GEF project TDA-SAP for BSIS (Black Sea Information System) and BSIMAP (Black Sea Integrated Monitoring and Assessment Program) which was commissioned in the past to provide reliable and consolidated data for "state of the environment" reporting, "impact assessments" of major pollutant sources, "transboundary diagnostic analysis" and SAP implementation reports (BSSAP process) in view of decision-making needs in the Black Sea region (Interview with implementing partners, TA, other stakeholders).

In terms of incorporating lessons learnt from previous and ongoing projects, the TA, the implementing partners and the project management team (interviews and surveys) collected and read /studied and incorporated relevant information and incorporated learning from previous reports into project design and implementation strategy (TE interviews and surveys).

The coordination work is not only important for results links to visibility and transparency. Even though much of the institutional history and coordination strategy are in technical managers and partner's heads (Tacit knowledge) it is not written down and formalized for transparency and or for monitoring results. The coordination strategy for EMBLAS-I was not explicit, and does not appear to be strategically led or planned TE observed that the plan was well known in the heads of all key technical experts but not written. There can be a mechanism for coordination and learning integration across the key technical areas (scientific, institutional and politically).

Planned stakeholder participation

A key aspect of the project implementation strategy was fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration and synergies with partner institutions at all levels. There was to be joint facilitating, sharing and bringing countries together with multi-sector groups of stakeholders, external and internal to governments, and with international organizations to help ensure the effective coverage of problems and coherence of action.

Relevant civil society organizations were consulted and involved in the activities (see stakeholder workshop minutes) but only rudimentary at this stage. Key target groups in the partner countries consulted or interviewed during the TE included the relevant ministries and agencies responsible for fisheries and agriculture, industry and transport, selected regional and local administrations,

universities, research centers and training institutions, NGOs and the private sector (see recommendation on stakeholder national monitoring programs). TE noted that ministries or representative of government departments of waste management, health and tourism and transport in the countries might be more actively engaged as they are clearly stakeholders.

Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been actively promoting collaboration with the 10 implementing partner organizations and three national focal points. The PIU has been interacting very well to implement the project with an active network of existing scientific institutions. The collaboration promoted through EMBLAS-I was formalized and incentivized by signed letter of agreements and sub-contracts (reviewed during TE).

TE reviewed relevant meeting notes and project documents, including the outcomes of the two project steering committee meetings (June 2013, Nov 2014), coordination meetings and two training workshops (see annexes contracts, training and meetings attached). All indicates that *national agencies* dealing with monitoring and water resource management and protection of the marine environment were actively involved in the activities and during TE expressed benefit from the project activities (in the evaluation surveys).

The *national stakeholder coordination mechanism* is however, not firmly established at the national levels. This will be a key aspect of future implementation according to interviews (There was no strategy or budget provided in the annual work plan for the strengthening of capacity for national institutional processes.). (TE observed a stakeholder meeting in Ukraine). According to the TA of EMBLAS-I, people/partners from agencies, scientific institutions, NGOs, etc. responded rather well to the needs of the project in both designing and implementing its activities but national stakeholders involved were not paid for their work this was conducted on a voluntary basis. There was active involvement of the parliamentarian consultant in Ukraine, observed during TE in March/April 2015. During the stakeholders meeting in March 2015 in Ukraine, a consultant for the Parliament Committee on environment policy participated in the national workshop.

In addition as highlighted above, the PIU has been actively cooperating with several key international projects, including MISIS, EPIRB and SEIS, and participating in information exchange with FP7 projects in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions (reviewed report of trainings and meeting, progress reports, BSC report on project activities meeting April 4).

Regional Ownership/Country Ownership

National and regional stakeholders were consulted and actively involved in the development of the project's ToR. Project design was based on the countries' needs in the field of Black Sea protection. Stakeholders have been involved in project design to focus project on build national institution capacities dealing with water quality monitoring and to support policy development in relation to the countries' needs to apply the MSFD (Ukraine and Georgia).

Regional ownership is expressed by UN and EU (interviewed) to work on a blue (environment-oriented) project, which provides a good basis and platform for regional cooperation in complex and dynamic national contexts. The project's objective is to improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. It supports sustainable development, technical expertise and training programs (still be developed). National support for changes in policies is expressed in the countries surveyed during TE.

National ownership is expressed to the extent that the countries are committed to the Bucharest convention and there is utility. Two pathways are described including national and regional. To introduce environmental funds are contingent on whether governments take aboard a new integrated environment approach. For Good Environmental Status objectives, the need is to increase the capacity of scientific organizations and generate government will for a new management model for an

integrated monitoring process. Such changes thus have great implications for involvement of governments at the ministerial level.

TE observed stakeholder meeting in Ukraine and interviewed stakeholders at both ministerial and scientific level. In a focus group with the Georgian team, TE learned that the project is considered to be providing good technical support to national processes. The feedback suggest that coordination and work planning especially around the national needs for sustainable change needs attention at mid-term.

TE found that in the case of Ukraine, in particular, the EMBLAS was based on adequate understanding of the BS countries' reality and supports environment objectives of BS countries. EMBLAS implementation is oriented on MSFD (sea area), but national interests seem to be on monitoring, conservation and using resources that are mainly related to the *coastal zone*. This does not have to be a contradiction as the original DoA was also to focus on integrated coastal zone management. For Phase 2 of EMBLAS, when dealing with practical activities, the knowledge and mind shift changes that are required for regional results are also important for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Replication approach

Although this project did not involve a pilot or an explicit replication approach, its aim is at achieving of harmonization and the promotion of a coordinated, regionally agreed upon methodology, data collection and environmental monitoring system building upon an existing network of scientific, political and civil society institutions. This project is supporting it scaling objectives through the capacity strengthening 'learning by doing 'approach and focus on key enabling activities for enhancing regional cooperation for Black Sea monitoring. Project activities reviewed are geared towards instituting changed practices involving *integrated* marine resources management across initially three and then six countries.⁹ The EMBLAS objectives and results thus depends on excellent cooperation and activities and management action for the merging of learning from other initiatives: MISIS and EPIRB (discussed in the synergies section). A bridge activity to ensure that this learning across these activities and approaches forming the basis of a much larger capacity building initiative would support the replication approach. Planning for the large initiative should commence in EMBLAS-II. (Also see synergies section).

UNDP comparative advantage

UNDP is an excellent partner to the Governments of Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, the EU and the social, economic and environmental stakeholders interested in environmental security and green growth in the region. The organization has good experience for implementation of international projects in the Black Sea region and has good profile/image, good financial system control and national and regional offices. UNDP has comparative advantages for promoting south-south and triangular cooperation and can mobilize technical expertise to develop a suitable regional knowledge platform for ecological results in the event of political instability. Under current political circumstances UNDP as neutral partner has good position to implement the project. Through work on environment UNDP continues to facilitate regional cooperation for sustainable development and stability results in this region.

Furthermore, UNDP has excellent institutional experience and history implementing international water projects in the region and globally through its formative work on the UNDP/GEF Black Sea Ecosystems Recovery Project, where the first BS Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Plan (TDA-SAP) were prepared. UNDP manages a broad global and regional portfolio of social development, environment, knowledge management, energy, and conservation projects, ranging from climate change to energy, to international waters and can bring comparative and technical experience to the project activity and needs of governments on request. UNDP also has access to a global

network of international water projects and experts and can mobilize comparative experiences and technical support from other regions when necessary. In a discussion with the RBEC Senior Programme Manager, TE confirmed that the project fits into its strategic multi-country portfolio and is a part of a vision to further promote regional cooperation and sustainable development.

This UNDP Regional programme focus is on strengthening national capacities for sustainable development, which is added advantage. UNDP has three country offices which are being mobilized to support the national change processes inherent to the overarching goal of this project.

UNDP is in a position to mobilize funds and implement further projects in synergistic and linked areas i.e. fisheries and institutional capacity development and environmental mainstreaming. It can mobilize funding on an international, regional and national scale and, for this reason, coordination for the follow up program design activity which may be the next step in this process of harmonization and coherence – synergies, UNDP is suited for follow up on whole region scale (including Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and) scale to support.

UNDP fiduciary and programme monitoring controls are transparent and robust and adequate for sound financial implementation and cost effectiveness (desk review, interviews and SC minutes).

Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

A key aspect of this project's design architecture has been to create a modality for identifying and maintaining synergies and encouraging collaboration with international organizations to ensure the effective coverage of problems and coherence of actions. Particular attention was to have been paid to relations with the *BSC, EEA, UNEP, DG Environment, DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, DG Research and Innovation, DABLAS Secretariat, BSEC, ACCOBAMS, Espoo Convention, etc.* A joint approach towards reduction of pollution in the Black Sea region and coordination with other EU-funded regional projects was intended, especially close coordination with two key initiatives including *MISIS and EPIRB* project. (*MISIS project (See Annex - History of cooperation and links to MISIS project) and "Environmental Protection of International River Basins" EPIRB^{vi} project.*

The EMBLAS-I project management team has been actively cooperating with several key international projects including MISIS, EPIRB, SEIS and participates in information exchange with FP7 projects in Mediterranean and Black Sea region (reviewed report of trainings and meeting, progress reports, BSC report on project activities meeting April 2-5).

During TE, the evaluator interviewed the *MISIS and EPIRB* project managers. Both are critical for further scaling and coherence and as EU funded initiatives, coordination with them and their EU focal points is inherent to project results and sustainability. The process of harmonization with MISIS project was primarily achieved through the EMBLAS-I Technical Advisor (TA). The TA is familiar with methodologies and well known to the MISIS project manager. TE was assured that there was harmonization – in that the DRIIs were drafted in a similar way (Checked and agree), the MISIS work on checklists, guidelines and indicators continued in EMBLAS, the PA3 work in GE, RU and UA closely followed the process in Bulgaria and Romania (this was triangular in interviews with project manager and through observing presentation of projects at BSC meeting April 2). The SoPs recommended in BG and RO are proposed in the EMBLAS beneficiary countries as well. MISIS worked also on protected areas, which is not part of EMBLAS.

TE identified a risk at the end of MISIS to ensure that there is harmonization with EMBLAS. The system will not be coherent in the event the results of these two projects are not merged. A bridge activity and a plan for future coherence are needed. MISIS staff has however been participating through the EMBLAS Inception workshop and interacting closely with the project manager and the TA since inception. MISIS project closed in June 2014 (see recommendations on future MISIS harmonization

linked to BSC and follow up project –exit strategy below). The EMBLAS management team and Partner organizations have also been found to have supported activities of MISIS. In October 2013, at the request of MISIS all EMBLAS Partner Organizations participated in updating the lists of the Black Sea experts in microbiology, phytoplankton, microalgae, zooplankton, zoo benthos, fish, etc. Also based on the agreement between MISIS and EMBLAS Partner organizations, ONU, during the MISIS Black Sea Cruise (23-25 July 2013) a synchronic observation in the Zmiinyi Island area was conducted. Exchange of data and technical reports was agreed in advance and accomplished for the mutual benefit of MISIS and EMBLAS.

In term of coordination with EPIRB, although there have been no explicit joint SCs meetings, but there has been coordination and sharing. EMBLAS-I invited one person from EPIRB to meet on a regular basis. In May 2013 the inception meeting of EMBLAS-I was attended by the EPIRB team leader (this person later changed). In October 2014 one representative from EPIRB join the EMBLAS-I SC meeting, EPIRB team leader attended the Kiev stakeholder meeting of EMBLAS-I. In GE, the stakeholder meeting was attended by an EPIRB representative. The EMBLAS project manager participated in the EPIRB second Regional Steering Committee Meeting, September 18-19, 2013, Tbilisi, Georgia, and presented at both meetings.

The EU should can also play an active role with UNDP in enhancing coordination efforts for implementation as these projects are funded by EU and they have desk officers for each project. This should be closely monitored by the EU partners to ensure collaboration synergies.

Others

The EMBLAS project manager attended the Coordination meeting of FP7 Projects in the Med and the Black Sea region, June 13-14 2013, Athens, Greece. A common brochure with information on the projects was printed (on website).

In the framework of cooperation with the Perseus project, the EMBLAS partner organization Odessa National University (ONU) representative participated in the 17-20 December PERSEUS Pollution Monitoring meeting (Toulon, France). Contacts with the EEA SIES project - Towards a Shared Environmental Information System in the European Neighborhood – were established. EMBLAS and SEIS have (exchanged reports).

A, joint project proposal, led by the Project Manager of DEVOTES, was developed under the EC Programme COST (IEBAM: Integrated Ecosystem-based Assessment Methods to support sustainable use and governance of marine systems; unfortunately it was not supported by the donor). Additionally, as a follow-up of the Athens meeting, a common blog for the ongoing projects in the Med and Black Seas was established at: <http://medseacclimatechange.wordpress.com/about/>, "Mediterranean Sea climate and environmental change", and as a common Drop Box for exchange of files was created.

With regards to policy and programme and international support, the EMBLAS project management Team are in regular contact with the members of the Project Steering Committee, and the Commissioners in the Black Sea Commission.

Finally, the project management team report that the representatives of the project beneficiaries countries relevant ministries have helped significantly with the preparation of the EMBLAS-II. According to the project manager and the TA of EMBLAS-I, the Black Sea Commissioners of GE, RU and UA in the BSC have already provided comments on EMBLAS-II and supports its approval at the national level in GE, RU and UA respectively. This will be formally approached during the Inception Meeting of EMBLAS-II.

Management arrangements

The project is unique in that it has a project management modality that is in fact a network of experts and partners. UNDP is the executing agent and is responsible to coordinate the work and monitoring.

Governance and oversight

The main project oversight mechanism is a Steering Committee (SC) composed of representatives of the Beneficiary Countries (Black Sea Commissioners representing also relevant Ministries), UNDP (Regional and National), and the European Commission (Programme Manager and/or EU Delegation). This has been established and is functioning. The steering committee members have been present including all major partners, Governments, EU and UNDP. The meetings are chaired by representatives of the Beneficiary Countries in turn and co-chaired by UNDP and the European Commission. Members of other relevant national and international organizations were invited to attend as observers (SC minutes).

According to the project management and the project document, the Steering Committee was established to provide general guidance on the project management and coordination, and to facilitate the implementation of the project (interviews and reading of the EMBLAS-I UNDP project document). In its activities, the SC Committee follows the Description of Action (DoA) & UNDP Project Document and other EC requirements and UNDP procedures. The SC met at project start, to review inception findings in July 2013; and In Nov 2014 for briefings on project progress and to provide guidelines on how to address substantial project implementation issues; the next Steering Committee meeting will review conclusions of this TE report. To date this is functioning but might be employed more to influence the policy aspect of implementation and so a standing item might be a technical and economic arguments- cost - benefits type presentation each time.

Project Implementation Unit (PIU)

The EMBLAS-I implementation period begun in January 2013. The project was originally implemented by UNDP through its Bratislava Regional Centre. In 2013, the UNDP went through a corporate restructuring and the regional office was moved to Turkey in September 2014. A Project Coordination Office (PCO) was established and located in Odessa in June 2013. The Project Manager (PM) was hired as planned and based at the PCO. PM role was to be the liaison for managing relations with the national representatives appointed by the ministries / Black Sea Commissioners during the project implementation.

The project coordination unit PIU and EMBLAS-I Project Manager were based in Odessa and responsible for the organization of the meetings, including meetings' documentation. The day by day overall project management was overseen by two supervisors: a senior officer from UNDP regional office Regional Technical Advisor for International Waters (responsible also for overall strategic oversight of the project) and a Senior Program Manager from UNDP Ukraine Country Office. Such oversight was viewed by the project management unit team (see staff below) to be adequate to aid project implementation.

The project office was established in Odessa, as it was specified in the DoA because most of the partner organizations are from Ukraine. The project manager and project assistant were recruited locally by UNDP Ukraine. The project manager was supported by the Water Program Analyst based currently at UNDP Istanbul, on issues related to procurement, recruitment, budgeting and reporting towards EC. From the substantive point of view, the Project Manager was guided, and supported by the Technical Advisor.

The actually PIU thus is spread out in several locations. It is a good modality and staff to communicate with each other and project partners and national experts via is e-mail / Skype communication. A similar arrangement will be in place also for Phase 2 of the project according to project management.

A key feature of this management modality is the project as a regional network which is linked to the idea that the monitoring system is also a network. The project team has been composed of the Project Manager (responsible for management & coordination), Technical Advisor - TA (responsible for substantive oversight), Project Assistant and Water Programme Analyst (responsible mainly for key reporting towards EC, advisory support on UNDP rules). For substantive implementation a number of national experts were hired to work on specific national tasks.

The staffing of EMBLAS-I project was as follows:

Vladimir Mamaev – RTA for Intl. Waters – overall strategic oversight on the project, worked before Jan 2013

Marcela Fabianova – Water Program Analyst – working as full time staff before January 2013

Vasiliy Kostiushev – Project Manager, hired in April 2013 (after a selection process led by UNDP Ukraine) until 31st March 2015

Violeta Velikova – Project Technical Advisor, hired in April 2013 – until March 2014

Lilia Spasova – Project Assistant, hired in October 2013 (selection led by UNDP Ukraine) – until 31st March, contract ongoing and continues for the 2nd Phase.

The staffing of EMBLAS-II – implementation period started in April 2014 (and status of contracts)

Vladimir Mamaev – RTA for Intl. Waters – overall strategic oversight on the project,

Marcela Fabianova – Water Program Analyst

Jaroslav Slobodnik – Team leader and Data Management & Assessment Expert (contract Nov 2014 – Nov 2016)

Jarmila Makovinska – Monitoring Expert (contract Nov 2014 – Oct 2016)

Kiril Iliev – Communication and coordination Expert (contract Feb 2015- Feb 2017)

TBD – Technical Advisor

The experience from the Phase 1 shows the need for more technical staff related to the substantive leadership of the key technical project activities. In the 2nd Phase the project team is being reconstituted to include 1. Team Leader & Data Management expert, 2. Monitoring Expert, 3. Communication and Coordination Expert, 4. Technical Advisor, 5. UNDP Water Programme Analyst and 6. Project Assistant. It is also planned to hire national experts, and their tasks will be outlined in the period between EMBLAS-I TE and inception meeting of EMBLAS-II.

National Focal Points

The national focal points (NFPs) role is instrumental for supporting the national decision makers, scientific institutions and also soliciting the non-conventional *resource users groups* inclusion enabling activities at the national level, liaise with the relevant environmental agencies, scientific institutions NGO/CSO agencies and private sector and the Black Sea Commission and to, closely cooperate with the project manager, all other relevant national experts, partner organizations, other key national stakeholders. Finally, their role is to support dissemination of information about the project results and support visibility of the project at national level. TE note no substantive project budget planned and allocated for this.

In the 2nd Phase the specific role of the NFP will be to provide a country based support to the project team through ensuring advocacy, liaising with the Ministry at appropriate level and communicating with relevant authorities, cooperating with other relevant national experts, partner organizations, and other key national stakeholders. The NFP should be supportive in building the project ownership, visibility, results dissemination and ensuring the real cooperation with the project stakeholders. Particularly important will be the support provided for organization of the Black Sea monitoring surveys in the coastal and open sea waters, where communication with relevant authorities is foreseen.

Work planning

The project inception period January - June 2013 involved fundamental exercises for agreeing on a detailed work plan with clear project activities and scheduling. A fine-tuned draft work plan (based on the EU Description of Action – DoA and UNDP project document) was produced and partner and staff roles outlined (inception and first annual progress report) and responsibilities of the partners and individual experts were made clear. The inception phase of the project concluded with the Inception Workshop and first meeting of the Steering Committee on (June 2013).

The first phase work plan and the budget for 2013 were approved by the Steering Committee during that first meeting including the representative decision makers of the beneficiary countries, EC and UNDP participated. Based on the EU DoA, the approved UNDP project document (2012). The outcomes of the Inception Workshop, the cooperation with the partner organizations and their roles and tasks in the project was agreed and formalized later through *Letters of Agreement*. Besides the partner organizations, a number of national individual experts were involved in the project activities (see contracts annex). Detailed Terms of Reference were prepared and contracts signed with 16 national experts including National Focal Points. This works well with the overall project strategy.

3.2. Project Implementation

Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)

This project implementation is essentially about adaptive management per se (in implementation modality with a focus on ME) and the knowledge needed on which to base it (capacity for instituting a new national and regional monitoring approach across results area). The adaptive management is reflected clearly in the current revision of the DoA for the second phase, where UNDP and EC accepted a number of modifications in the project activities as proposed by the representatives of the beneficiary countries.

Active day-to-day monitoring by UNDP RCU has led to several key changes in EMBLAS-I management arrangements, including the adding two key expected results linked to project management and communication/knowledge management during the inception design workshop and secondly, undertaking a risk assessment after the Crimean crisis broke (a good management development). For the latter, project management was based on standard procedures of EU and UNDP related to such project implementation, but overcoming different problems that arose from the political situation, it was possible only by using flexible/adaptive management. The management arrangements have also been flattened based on learning from Phase 1.

National Institutional Capacity Development – Institutional Development Technical Support

TE finds that the stakeholder groups were mobilized nationally late in project implementation. This group and its constitution is absolutely essential for results in the longer run, especially to designing national monitoring and instituting new legal frameworks and decision making process for IWRM. For this reason, these groups need to be technically supported and planned better for EMBLAS-II. The work needs to be designed and formalized within the project and can be the focus of a national project for capacity building in the future. Certain stakeholder user groups were found to be absent from the stakeholder meeting, included the ministry of health and tourism.

Partnership arrangements (with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region) (list of contracts - annex)

The project coordination office was located at Business Centre Morskoy- a commercial facility, not a project partner in the Ukraine. Ideally UNDP project secretariats can play some capacity strengthening function. This can be considered in the second phase capacity development exercise.

The EMBLAS-I has been implemented in cooperation with the nine national Partner Organizations (table below) and one international. Their roles within the project activities are outlined in the Project Document and Description of Action DoA, and specified in details in the inception report of the project (reviewed by TE). The partnership between UNDP and these Partner Organization was formalize through "Letters of Agreement", which is a contractual modality to be used by UNDP when working with semi-governmental, governmental or international organizations.

All the partners listed in the original description of action are public scientific organizations, well known recognized in the region and have participated in the relevant EU funded projects related to Black Sea protection and environmental monitoring (TE focus group interviewees).

Table 1 Implementing Partners

	Project Implementing Partners	Characteristics
1	Marine Hydro physical Institute (MHI) – Ukraine	Public Scientific institution
2	Odessa National University I.I.Mechnikov (ONU) - Ukraine	Public Scientific institution
3	Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (UkrSCES) - Odessa, Ukraine	Public Scientific institution
4	A.O.Kovalevskiy Institute of Biology of Southern Seas (IBSS) - Sevastopol, Ukraine	Public Scientific institution
5	Odessa Branch, Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (OB-IBSS) – Ukraine	Public Scientific institution
6	Iv.Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) – Georgia	Public Scientific institution
7	National Environmental Agency "Black Sea Monitoring Center" (NEA) - Tbilisi, Georgia	Public Scientific institution
8	State Oceanographic Institute (SOI) – Russia	Public Scientific institution
9	P.PShirshov institute of oceanology Russian Academy of Sciences (SIO-RAS) - Russia	Public Scientific institution
10	Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (BSC PS) – international	International organization

TE Evaluator surveyed / interviewed partners and observed partner interactions at two meetings March-April 2015. TE Evaluator participated at the Ukraine National Stakeholders meeting (23-24 March) and the meeting of the Black Sea Commission Advisory Groups (30 March – 3 April 2015).

Key partners (listed above) were identified in the preparatory phase of the project. Criteria for participation included relevance as national institutions involved in the monitoring of the Black Sea. Partner's responsibilities were outlined in the Inception Report and in the follow up ToRs (designed by the management and vetted by the EMBLAS-I management) and the contracts were prepared. The ToRs were prepared after the Inception Meeting, on the basis of the approved Inception Report. No additional partner organizations have been added during implementation. In the 2nd Phase the list of partners is being revised, due to political situation in Ukraine – see also risk assessment. According to the TA, who was directly involved in designing the project, the project activities were designed so there were always several organizations cooperating and contributing to one activity/deliverable.

The TE reviewed the contracts of the implementing partner institutions and find them be carefully designed. The partners are responsible for preparing the deliverables. The project strategy was to strengthen capacity during the process of fulfilling inputs around the seven expected outcomes during

the process. TE endorses the modality to employ the partner for implementation as approach. It incentivizes their involvement and enacts a change of mindset and perspective on integrated ecosystem management from the scientific core of the broader work to be completed. TE does however note that CBOs/NGOs might also be employed as implementing agents in practice as the idea of ecosystem services is multi-stakeholder endeavor and with a focus on engaging marine stewards among the communities and user groups. This aspect (involvement of key NGOS and user groups i.e. transport as partners can be rethought for Phase 2.

Unforeseen political circumstances with Ukraine and Russia

Due to the political situation in Ukraine the participation of two partner organizations situated in Crimea has been re-considered. Since the status of these two organizations was unclear (they were officially still under Ukrainian Academy of Science), as well as the project was shortly before the end of implementation period, it was decided not to undertake any steps in relation to the Contracts with these two organizations. According to the RTU, it is expected that the other eight partnerships with organizations will be sustained.

Black Sea Commission

TE made note of the important partnership role of the *Black Sea Commission* and its Secretariat for implementing and sustaining EMBLAS-I and II results. The BSC is the regional coordination mechanism that is set up to help implement the Bucharest Convention. The role of the BSC includes enabling exchange of information (good environmental status indicators for monitoring, compliance to the Bucharest Convention, sharing comparative experiences, providing learning and working platforms (for 6 scientific advisory groups) and promoting inter-regional harmonization on methodologies and approaches) for all six Black Sea countries will promote the results of this project. Firstly, the BSC role is taking stock on compliance but this must be linked to a harmonized Environmental monitoring system. The work through BSC will encourage compliance reduce fragmented work regionally. This commission and its capacity are therefore, instrumental in promoting learning across national efforts at change and harmonization. Second the sustainability of the results and reinforcing the national capacity strengthening of this project and harmonization with completed projects like MISIS is essentially left to the BSC. Efforts for design for future work and follow up are needed now.

EMBLAS-II might provide technical assistance to the Black Sea Commission and its structures to support knowledge and information management linked to monitoring and compliance and integrating this with the ongoing work on the databases (see recommendation on KM provided in final section). TE recommends a knowledge management strategy linked to PA5 –Data base and capacity development strategy.

National focal points and parliamentarians

In each country, legislation or regulations have been drafted or advanced. TE checked / consulted with the team on the inclusion of the relevant Parliamentary Committees participation. TE observed active involvement of parliamentarian's agents at the Ukraine National workshop observed March / April 2015. One of the NFP Ukraine is also consultant of Parliament Committee on Environment policy. The Evaluator was not able to identify this activity in the other two countries but was told that the relevant government agency have been full engaged in project processes to date (Focus group meetings with the National Focal from Georgia and Russia).

For EMBLAS-II phase, the list of partners has been listed in the revised DoA and agreed with the Steering Committee Members. However, the role of these partners will be reconsidered and further outlined in the inception report and the partner organizations will be contracted.

Contracts with Partner Organizations (Letter of Agreements) – Phase 1

No	Organization	Start of Contract
1	MHI	26/08/2013
2	ONU	5/8/2013
3	UkrSCES	30/08/2013
4	IBSS	31/07/2013
5	OB_IBSS	7/8/2013
6	TSU	29/07/2013
7	NEA	27/08/2013
8	SOI	25/10/2013
9	SIO-RAS	6/8/2013
10	BSC PS	5/12/2013

National Stakeholders

EMBLAS-II was designed in consultation with many stakeholders. In implementation, stakeholders were involved in all activities. The national focal points in Russia and Ukraine were found to not be so active in establishing stakeholder's coordination mechanisms (a key responsibility). Instead, interaction with national stakeholders has been established in other ways. According to the Project Manager, relevant technical and political monitoring stakeholders of GE, RU and UA were involved in the project through a questionnaire survey disseminated in the frame of preparation of the Diagnostic Report and they have participated in national monitoring workshops and discussions on revision of the national monitoring program (workshops held late in EMBLAS-I, see list of meetings in annex).

As already mentioned above, the stakeholder workshop to discuss the national monitoring strategies, were employed only at the end of the process (of developing many project deliverable products, including the database and the methodologies). National stakeholders, however, might be better involved in decision making through the learning-by-doing approach. As a capacity development strategy, the national stakeholder's network might have been convened to support national strategies, in retrospect, this could have been done after the diagnostics report was completed (February 2015)! This once again points to the need for developing a coherent regional and national capacity development strategy, a firm recommendation from this project evaluation.

Knowledge management can be helpful for promoting replication and linkages and included as a modality for dynamic management, strategy and development of monitoring related knowledge services and products. This is linked to the regional coordination and learning function of the Black Sea Commission. The Black Sea Commission Advisory Groups meet only one or twice a year but here should be a platform that links these groups and integrates learning between them between meetings. These technical working groups are very important for vetting a reviewing products emerging from EMBLAS projects, and their more frequent input would be extremely useful.

*Project Finance:**Oversight*

The project is under direct implementation by UNDP. Therefore, the UNDP rules on procurement, recruitment and financial management were followed. Any time the relevant financial information and expenditure overview were available to monitor the expenditures of the project. Adaptive management was in place, to certain level. The project experts were hired according to the emerging needs.

The project Steering committee has been informed about the annual work plan, as well as on annual expenditures. The disbursements to the partner organizations and individual experts were made in line with the contracts, after delivering the required results. The work-plan has been implemented with a delay about 3 months, for some of the deliverables up to 6 months (according to the Inception report). This was also due to the fact that the key project personnel (project manager and technical advisor) were hired only in April (but the project has started in January 2013) and also that the responsibilities for finalization of some deliverables was not clearly outlined, in other words, coordination of work should have been better.

The delivery rates for the project were as follows:

Planned budget 2013: 688,000 USD / 2014: 688,000 USD (initial planning as per ProDoc)

Revised budget 2013: 459,000 USD / 2014: 917,000 USD

Expenditures in 2013: 319,000 USD = > delivery rate 70%

Revised budget 2014: 696,000 USD/ 2015: 358,000 USD

Expenditures in 2014: 696,000 USD => delivery rate 100%

Expenditures in 2015: 353393 USD => 99% delivery rate (but not yet final)

In the course of the project implementation, the structure of the project budget was revised once, with the approval of the project Steering committee. This budget revision was also reflected in the Contribution Agreement with EC, as an Addendum to the CA. No additional co-funding was foreseen for this project – EC contribution was 600,000 EUR and UNDP contribution was 600,000 USD.

Operational issues

The changes in the exchange rates have impacted payments made in the UAH (Ukrainian hryvna) in relation to the salaries for the project manager and assistant. However relevant measures were undertaken by UNDP Ukraine to compensate the weak Ukrainian currency (the project manager should be able to provide more details). The EC contributions were received in EUR and converted to USD, since UNDP operates in USD. The exchange rates has been slightly different than the rate used at the time of the signing the contribution agreement. This did not have a big impact on the project budget, since the reporting to the donor is made back in EUR and the rate for converting the USD to EUR is the same as when receiving the contribution (this is fully in line with the General Conditions of the contribution agreement).

The following observations are made:

- Funding of activities was agreed and remained fixed.
- Payments were specified in contracts of partner organizations and experts.
- No relation to governmental funds.
- The partner's funds were transferred as per their contracts arrangements.
- The reporting from partner organization was set-up in the contracts (LoA), including the Financial reports that were expected on cumulative quarterly basis. In some cases the reporting from partners was delayed. On UNDP side, it was always easy to get information on available and spent funds, however, the information on funds allocation per Project Activity was not easy to obtain.

Monitoring and evaluation: design at entry and implementation

According to the ProDoc, continuous monitoring of EMBLAS-I was to have been ensured by UNDP as the principle execution agent for oversight of the Log Frame and the adopted indicators, such as quality of deliverables, expenditures versus performance, observance of timing (schedule), etc. The implementation / work plan, report on output quality/deliverables, identification of controversial points or deviation from the initial planning and analysis of options for correcting deviations (if any) were all to be handled by the Project Manager and the project team and presented to the Steering Committee.

A Mid-Term evaluation was deemed unrealistic given the short and preparatory nature of the EMBLAS-I, the timeline and activities and the fact that there were mechanisms in place for monitoring, i.e. a steering committee, project monitoring manager, progress reports, quarterly reports, short reports, oral reports, and coordination meetings (see list of meetings). The Project Manager monitored the performance of the individual experts on the basis of their contracts, in which the ToRs defined the deliverables. The partner organizations were requested to provide regular progress reports and time sheets for the staff involved in the project implementation. UNDP has reported to EC annually, as per the reporting requirements laid down in FAFA.

According to the project management and the PIU, the partner organization has been reporting to UNDP on a quarterly / semi-annual basis according to the contracts signed with UNDP as well as through narrative, financial reporting and time sheets. For Phase 2, it is agreed (and also included in the DoA) that UNDP should inform the EC project manager on the status of implementation on a 3-6 months basis in simplified form (not full report as required).

The EMBLAS-I DoA contained a work plan with a schedule of activities. The timing of the activities was adjusted in the inception report and later, the timing of activities in the contracts of experts/organizations were adjusted, considering the progress of work observed. The project had some problems related to the coordination of work where several partners were supposed to contribute and there was also a scientific debate on specific deliverables where more technical / substantive guidance and strong coordination would be needed (in relation of the PA3 - development of revised national monitoring programs). The political situation in Ukraine was another cause of delay, as there was an uncertainty among the partners, whether the project will continue or not. There was also an initial start-up delay of implementation, -3-4 months, when UNDP first began to sign contracts. Later delays appeared which were mainly related to the PM's poor organization of work and lack of progress supervision.

Way forward

Monitoring of EMBLAS-II can be improved based on key lessons learned from EMBALS 1. As enabling activity, the project's central work in EMBLAS-I was the negotiation of the scientific and political aspects to enable the longer term implementation in EMBLAS-II. The key deliverable produced included the diagnostic report, PA3 -monitoring plans and the methodologies for joint surveys. For Phase 2, the staff should be fully aware on the content and recommendations contained in the Diagnostic Report II, as this is a central document for further implementation especially for the national monitoring /capacity building programmes. A short introduction or reading might be recommended to all new staff on the project team and other relevant experts to ensure full awareness of the results of the diagnostic work...

UNDP and Implementing Partner implementation / execution, coordination, and operational issues

During implementation key personnel from the UNDP IRH management were actively involved and provided advice on critical management and implementation execution issues that emerged during the project implementation (reports, surveys and interviews). The Senior Program Coordinator of the UNDP IRH is the chair of the project SC. The UNDP Operations Manager and Head of the Finance Unit regularly provided advice on the issues related to contracting with partner organizations, financial reporting and others. The oversight on the project from programmatic and strategic point of view was also averagely covered by the UNDP Regional Advisor for International Waters and management processes adhered including performance reporting of project staff (interviews). This arrangement and overall oversight on the project implementation is adequate and will be continuing also in the 2nd Phase of the project.

The project management unit PIU comprises a loose but managed network. Its function is to coordinate and manage the different elements including government relations, sub-contracts and partnerships and technical staff across institutions and locals for strategic and logistical reason (explained and vetted / endorsed by TE).

The project is essentially the implementation of a partnership agreement and so the modality has already been discussed in section on *Partnerships* above. As the partnership however, is under direct execution by UNDP, it should be made clear to all partners that adaptive management is a defining feature for this project implementation. The mechanism for adaptive management and for streamlined decision making with excellence in technical oversight is thus critical to monitor the performance. These include ensuring a good monitoring evaluation and reporting framework (results based, regular reporting, minutes and fully costed work plan with clearly defined reports for different audiences, i.e. donor, expert, staff, etc.) and regular, prepared and fully attended Steering Committee meetings. The PIU (in consultation with RTA) should take responsibility for preparing Steering Committee Meetings and also the projects work planning. The experts should be provided with clear results areas and then this should be overseen and cooperated by the RTA.

3.3. Project Results

Overall Objectives (see full Log-Frame output evaluation vetted with next steps and evaluator's comments – Annex)

The overall objective of EMBLAS-I project is to help coordinate and set up guidance and framework for the overall monitoring system to help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. The project is addressing the overall need for support in protection and restoring the environmental quality and sustainability of the Black Sea. The project has two specific project objectives as follows:

1. *Improve availability and quality of data on the chemical and biological status of the Black Sea, in line with expected MSFD and Black Sea Strategic Action Plan needs;*
2. *Improve partner countries' ability to perform marine environmental monitoring along MSFD principles, taking into account Black Sea Diagnostic Report.*

The project is adequately supporting the enabling conditions for a second phase EMBLAS-II project that will support these objectives. Availability of data is actually not yet improved, but the tool for this is being developed (BS databases). The two main project objectives were met only partly, since the current project is only a preparatory phase for Phase 2. It is expected that these objectives will be reinforced at the end of Phase 2. In particular, regarding objective 1, data will be available only after the monitoring cruises, and Phase 2 of the project needs to ensure good quality for the data collected. Regarding objective 2, training will be provided to the relevant organizations in the partner countries and these organizations will be actively participating in the project activities. A full list of all activities and updates is provided in Annex. Highlights of evaluator's insights are provided below.

Outcome Target – PA1 – Availability and quality of chemical and biological data to provide for integrated assessments of the Black Sea state of environment, including pressures and impacts

Baseline: National monitoring systems exist. Additional technical assistance support (template and process) is needed for amendment to the relevant water legislation and administrative reforms.

Indicators: Level of involvement of national organizations responsible for monitoring and data collection.

Outputs Areas

1. Up-to-date knowledge of the gaps in monitoring systems design and problems in implementation of Programmes;
2. Up-to-date knowledge on the availability of data management / assessment tools at national and regional level and their relevance to the needs of various stakeholders, especially in the field of decision-making;
3. Recommendations for the revision of national and regional monitoring Programmes and improvement/development of tools for data management / assessment at the national and regional level produced and communicated;
4. Awareness of relevant authorities of the gaps in design and problems existing in implementation of monitoring Programmes and on the recommendations formulated for their revision developed;
5. Ownership of the need to revise the national and regional monitoring Programmes.

Analysis of achievements

Has there been improvement / change in improvement of availability and quality of chemical and biological data to provide for integrated assessments of the Black Sea state of environment, including pressures and impact?

Much has been done in accordance with the work planning and original project design strategy and so, yes, it there has been marked improvements. In terms of result and capacities, the partner organizations were involved in the preparation of diagnostics linked to the revised national monitoring programs. Important steps have also been taken towards improvement of availability of data and quality of them, for example:

- Updated diagnostic of existing data collection systems.
- Development of prototype of web-portal of Black Sea Information system;
- Development of prototype of web-based WQ DB;
- Training in chemical monitoring, incl. quality control and quality assurance;
- Collating and disseminated different SOPs and other standards for QC/QA.

PA 1	Questionnaire (Part I and II)	completed (in 2013, early 2014)
PA 1	List of Stakeholders (GE, RU, UA)	Completed (in 2013. A revision is needed. as per results of the stakeholder workshops + political situation)
PA 1	Diagnostic Report/Part I and II	Completed (in Feb 2015)

Outcome Target – 2 – Bucharest convention and other agreements, i.e. EU Marine Strategy implementation supported

Baseline: Bucharest convention and other agreements exist, i.e. EU Marine Strategy. Support needed to develop knowledge-based adaptive management and harmonization of approaches to environment protection.

Indicators: Availability of further developed *compliance indicators* and *indicator based reporting* aimed at strengthening the Bucharest Convention implementation.

Output Areas

1. Indicator-based reporting on compliance further developed;
2. Harmonization of policies advanced;
3. Awareness developed for harmonization needs;
4. Inception Report: Improving Environmental Monitoring in Black Sea.

Analysis of achievements

A set of compliance indicators has been developed in collaboration with Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission (PS BSC). All relevant staff interviewed (NFP, Expert for BSC working on this task-paid by project, others) suggest that more work is needed to finalize these. There should be harmonization between these BSC products and the national monitoring programmes under development. The compliance indicators report has been prepared, in a draft version. This should perhaps best fall under the responsibility of the Technical Advisor in EMBLAS-II as should be the work on GES, which also needs work.

PA 2	Report on compliance indicators	Draft report prepared, but is commented and additional work will be needed in EMBLAS-II
PA 22	Minutes of the harmonization workshop (working on the WQ/GES classification)	Completed (Nov 2014)
PA 2	Water Quality/GES Classification Methodology	Draft report prepared, but is commented and additional work will be needed in EMBLAS-II

Outcome Target – 3 – Black Sea Monitoring Programmes developed/updated in accordance with reporting obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements, the WFD and the MSFD

Baseline: National Monitoring programs exist but revision is needed. Results from Project Activity 1 are available.

Indicators: Harmonized Black Sea Monitoring programmes in accordance with reporting obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements, the WFD and the MSFD.

Output Areas

1. The list of characteristics (physical, chemical, biological, other), pressures, impacts and parameters to be measured is updated or drafted;
2. Proposals for extending the current biological monitoring system (both parameters and frequency) and relevant capacity building by means of trainings are formulated;
3. The current monitoring network is reviewed and proposals for new monitoring locations and/or possible relocation of existing stations based on water body delineation are put forward;
4. Operational monitoring programmes, including cost-effectiveness assessment and proposals on economic instruments and funding mechanisms are formulated;
5. Regional Guidelines on Biological Monitoring developed.

Analysis of achievements

The revised monitoring programs are prepared in draft version, as well as relevant biological guidelines. These need to be still endorsed by the BSC Advisory Groups according to staff. Regarding the Methodology for Good Environmental Status GES, a draft report has been prepared. However it needs further elaboration (see TE recommendation above linking GES to work of TA). This work is the national capacity building strategy and requires speciality technical support for envisioning longer term institutional change vision (***Institutional Capacity Development and Policy Specialist***). This important work in EMBLAS-II is in fact setting up / designing a longer term institutional and behavioral change process and needs to be designed with appropriate technical assistance (institutional capacity development expert to give guidance on each national process or to develop an exit strategy that will included this element in each country) as part of a larger exit strategy initiative.

Outcome Target – 4 – Assessment of the Regional networks technical capacities for monitoring Black Sea.

Baseline: Network of Black Sea reference laboratories exists; assessment of their technical capacities is needed.

Indicators: Needs for laboratory infrastructure/equipment and training assessed.

Output Areas

1. Up-to-date knowledge on the laboratories infrastructure and available equipment (capacity);
2. Up-to-date knowledge on laboratories' needs in terms of equipment and trainings for capacity building;
3. Proposal for more efficient use of equipment drafted and trainings for capacity building organized;
4. Meta-database on the available equipment in the region developed, terms of use/sharing specified.

Analysis of achievements

The project supported the preparation of the Diagnostic Report II, with assessment of the national capacities for monitoring and needs for capacity building.

PA 4	Chapters in the Diagnostic Report on Infrastructure/equipment/vessels (availability and needs) and needs in training	Completed (in 2014)
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Outcome Target – 5 – Capacities of existing network of Black Sea reference laboratories strengthened

Baseline: Capacity strengthened to existing Network of Black Sea reference laboratories that exists.

Indicators: Capacities strengthening of national reference laboratories, in terms of staff and methodologies; specifically, the monitoring-related training programme elaborated and initial implementation started. Elaboration and implementation of a first training Programme round on monitoring methods and quality assurance adhering to ISO 17025 standard.

Output Areas

1. Training Programme and training materials prepared;
2. A sufficient number of organizations takes part in the training Programme;
3. Expected number of trainings organized;
4. Capacity of Black Sea Laboratories enhanced through trainings;
5. Expertise of scientists increased;
6. QC/QA manuals improved and published;
7. SOPs and QC/QA procedures developed;
8. Methods (sampling and processing) for selected priority parameters harmonized;
9. Overall performance of Black Sea laboratories improved.

Analysis of achievements

In the frame of project activities, training program and training materials for chemical monitoring were prepared, and training was conducted for personnel of appropriate laboratories. A training programme is developed, and training was implemented. TE learned that the reference laboratories are involved, but at this point the capacities of individual reference laboratories were not increased significantly. Additional follow-up activities will need to be prepared and implemented. At this point the capacities of individual reference laboratories were not increased significantly. Information on current status of BS monitoring in GE, RU and UA was collected (incl. equipment and infrastructure), analyzed, and general proposals on monitoring improvement were developed and included in DR II. Separate report, with detail proposals on development national monitoring systems (incl. monitoring sub-programs) is drafted under PA3 and will be further developed under EMBLAS-II.

PA 5	Set of SOPs, QA/QC and DQC Guidelines	List of SOPs available, QA/QC & DQC Guidelines from other project are made available, no new ones are developed (in 2014)
PA 5	Trainings evaluations	Completed
PA 5	Minutes of the harmonization workshops	completed

Outcome Target – 6 – Methodologies and plans based on Joint surveys based on ones that already exist and activities planned under other EU funded projects

Baseline: Joint surveys already exist and activities are planned under other EU funded projects

Indicators: Available methodology for Survey, including the list of parameters and sites.

Output Areas

1. Inter-project and cross-country cooperation in joint monitoring activities further developed;
2. Methodology for future joint surveys prepared and promoted at the level of key stakeholders;
3. Assessment of the risks of incompatibility of data (if any) outlined recommendations for solving potential problems produced;
4. Inception Report: Improving Environmental Monitoring in Black Sea.

Analysis of achievements

The Joint Survey Methodology PA 6 has been prepared as a draft document. Parameters still need to be clarified on the basis of the revised national monitoring programs. TE firmly believes that an additional experts must be involved in vetting the survey methods and preparing survey manuals before the surveys are enacted.

PA 6	Final version of the JC Methodology	Completed (Feb 2015)
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Outcome Target – 7 – Web based system for Black Sea Water Quality database

Baseline: Web based system for Black Sea Water Quality database exists but not as a web-based platform. It needs additional functionality and improvement.

Indicators: Improvement of the Black Sea Water Quality database (web-based), adding the Phytoplankton and Mnemiopsis components of BSIS.

Output Areas

1. BS Water Quality and Mnemiopsis Database further developed;
2. Development of the regional Phytoplankton Database;
3. User guide and Documentation for technical staff and data managers prepared and circulated;
4. Concept for interaction between the central Black Sea Water Quality Database and other Black Sea regional data management infrastructures (e.g. created under Emodnet, SeaDataNet, MONINFO), as well as the interoperability with the WISE-Marine (EEA) and SEIS;
5. Successful cooperation with other projects (MISIS, PERSEUS, COCONET, Emodnet) in improving the BS databases;
6. Proposals for the long-term maintenance and availability to the public of the databases formulated;
7. Provisions for handing over the database management to the beneficiaries elaborated.

Analysis of achievements

The BS Water Quality database has been prepared in the concept form, additional work will need to be done for the Phytoplankton and Mnemiopsis components of BSIS, where few activities were undertaken. WQ database as a very initial prototype and is available. A Manual (Guidance document)

on the WQ database use and data upload has been prepared as well as Concept for interaction between the central Black Sea Water Quality Database and other Black Sea regional data management infrastructures. Further work on the BS WQ database will also depend on the GES methodology development, which was not well advanced. EMBLAS-I produced also a prototype web-portal for BSIS as interface for the whole BSIS. The work on the Phytoplankton database, *Mnemiopsis* database need to be taken over by the EMBLAS-II experts.

PA 7	Designing and developing the web portal of BSIS (on the BSC webpage)	Completed (Feb 2015)
PA 7	Concept on the proposed developments of the WQ, mnemiopsis and phytoplankton components of BSIS, functional and technical specifications	The concept for WQ is prepared (in 2014), but it needs further work in EMBLAS-II. Because the EMBLAS-II will produce data, it needs to be adjusted, reflecting the type of the data, metadata to be collected, etc... Mnemiopsis Phytoplankton components need additional work in EMBLAS-II
PA 7	Web-based WQ system prototype, further developed mnemiopsis and phytoplankton databases	The same as above
PA 7	Manual (Guidance document) on the WQ database use and data upload	Completed (Jan 2015)
PA 7	Concept for the long-term maintenance of BSIS and interaction between the central BS Water Quality Database and other BS regional data management infrastructures	There are two documents prepared: BSIS concept paper and Technical Assessment of BSIS.

Mainstreaming

The PA3- national monitoring programmes and the work to outline schemes for them (in relation to marine protection) are discussed substantively throughout this report. The work that this project does to promote mainstreaming and integrated planning is promoted by the cross sectoral nature of the design. As a strategy and as learning process the project is substantively influencing the process of influencing and supporting national environmental capacities and mainstreaming for each country.

As this project aims to meet its overall objectives linked to the six countries, a regional capacity development plan constitutes a longer term and exit strategy (full scale capacity development programme for six countries as pilots). The planning for follow up capacity strengthening across all six countries (exit strategy), however, must begin now. Strengthening national environmental monitoring programmes are the excellent target for national environmental programmes and are absolutely essential for regional results expected to be borne by this initiative. This is also concerned with the position of the MOE in countries on the political agenda. This is critical baseline and enabling work for UNDP Environment and Development programmes nationally and should have full support of national UNDP programmes. These national programmes can become excellent programmes for UNDP programmes nationally toward sustainable development and resilience goals.

4. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

In general, the project (EMBLAS-I) achieved most of the planned results, as this is a preparatory project for a larger technical support. In terms of the question is 'EMBLAS-I good basis for EMBLAS-II? The question has been answered by this evaluation. Phase 1 project achieved what it had set out to. It has successfully providing a good basis for Phase 2 implementation. The management has been found to have taken all the necessary actions to realign the project activities in line with the results expected and the technical support needs and project strategy. In this sense, the course correction based on

Phase 1 learning is well underway based on adaptive management. Adaptive management is firmly established as implementation modality - a key positive finding. The recommendations below are therefore in essence to support the second phase management and implementation as guiding suggestions based on the learning from Phase 1.

The TE:

- *Endorsed the time extension to March 2015 for EMBLA-I.*
- *Endorsed management shifts such that EMBLAS-II has a different structure of the project team, with stronger technical expertise and due to changed context: risk assessment and risk of conflict.*
- *Endorsed future actions to provide some support to help strengthen Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat, regionally with a priority focus on communication, capacity building and knowledge management.*
- *Endorsed initiation of a training programme for the national institutions as a part of the overall capacity building plan in the countries*
- *Endorsed development of a written capacity strengthening plan such that the overarching capacity strengthening goals across the region are met.*
- *Endorsed the PIU arrangement to augment project with experts and key technical assistance*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendation are to be considered for the 2nd Phase.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of EMBLAS-I was to set up initiatives that will help improve the protection of the Black Sea environment. The 2nd Phase is building-up on these initial activities and keeps the overall objective of the project as "to help improve protection of the Black Sea environment".

The specific objectives of EMBLAS-I and EMBLAS-II remain the same, since both phases of the project are complementary to each other and they should be seen as one initiative.

DESIGN / STRATEGY / CAPACITY BUILDING APPROACH

EMBLAS-I has been designed as a preparatory action and a baseline development for a larger technical support to the beneficiary countries. In the 2nd Phase there is a need to focus also on communication, knowledge management and capacity building:

- In the project team, focal points should be designated to manage each result to help move the project implementation mindset from a focus on deliverables to results.
- A project capacity building approach/strategy needs to be developed for three levels of capacity building including regional, national and local. It can build-up on the Training Programme developed in the Phase 1.
- PM ensure a whole of project communications, coordination and knowledge management function.
- Further development of the draft documents prepared by the Phase 1 should be ensured, particular attention is needed for the work on Water Quality / Good Environmental Status Methodology, as well as on compliance indicators work that need to be agreed / vetted at regional level. Technical oversight and vetting of the quality of work need to be ensured.

- The three level capacity building approach (regional, national and local) should be developed. Bring in assistance as necessary to do this exercise.
- An explicit/concrete communication and knowledge management strategy should be developed and applied in the Phase 2.
- A plan for close monitoring of risk scenarios and plans to mitigate the risks should be updated and included in EMBLAS-II implementation strategy. This means to enact a project design that is technically and political well throughout and result based and legally agreed. The tasks of project partner institutions need to be clearly designated as to avoid all levels of risk and to deal with risk scenarios.
- PIU –Communications/ KM function- Develop user friendly versions of guidelines which can be easily understood by political actors and used in practice (high theoretical compilations are absolutely useless for the field work or preparation of assessments). Role of knowledge management is to turn scientific products into user friendly communications for many audiences.

COORDINATION AND LINKAGES

In the EMBLAS-I the basic coordination and linkages were developed with MISIS project and ERBRIL project.

The 2nd Phase of the project includes more extensive technical activities, where the synergies with other ongoing projects / initiatives should be utilized:

- A coordination and synergies strategy should be developed using knowledge management approaches (synergistic actions for a coordinated and efficient approach to environmental monitoring across the Black Sea region). UNDP is a global leader on knowledge management for promoting south cooperation and coordination. It can bring this expertise to the project and work with the BSC to create a sustainability plan that links to a much more strategic approach.
- An updated synergies inventory should be developed to take stock of what is needed to enhance future coherence goals with other ongoing and finished projects with similar objectives. This exercise should entail a good description of the linkages, their implementation schedules and a partnership strategy to ensure that the learning from those projects are incorporated.
- An initiative or bridging project activity could be proposed to avoid losing the momentum of learning and products from MISIS; to further incentivize regional cooperation and encourage overarching monitoring results linked to result not only for the EMBLAS beneficiary countries, but including all six Black Sea countries.
- EMBLAS EU project manager could meet with and be briefed by MISIS EU project manager to discuss the potential for the new initiative.
- Harmonization of results with the MISIS project needs to be ensured. This activity can be linked to development of exit strategy and the developing a concept or plan for a new six-country capacity development strategy for entire BS region.
- Close cooperation and synergies/linkages with River Basins project EPIRB (can do joint planning) should be developed on joint technical tasks.
- A coherent knowledge sharing /partnership coordination strategy could be developed, which may be linked to strengthening the role of the BSC and its structures (Members, Secretariat and Advisory Groups) for Knowledge Management and coordination as part of the regional capacity beguiling approach.

WORK PLANNING

In the Phase 1 the general work plan has been laid – down in the Inception report and later on adjusted at the Steering committee meetings. The duration of the Phase 2 is planned for 42 months (with potential extension), and a large number of activities are planned. Therefore specific attention needs to be paid to the work planning:

- In general the project results need to be planned and coordinated towards results and overall objectives. Coordination is critical for the harmonization of goals inherent in this project's strategy. In the project team a focal point should be appointed for technical monitoring and coordination of results. Ensure strategy for results and guided processed vs. deliverables: designation of focal points to manage each result area will help to move the project implementation mindset from documents and deliverables to results.
- A results-based work plan for EMBLAS-II needs to be developed (to be presented at inception meeting) with timing and schedule as precise as possible (do scoping and planning), delegation of authority and responsibility, and estimation of inputs and costs.
- The deliverables need to be carefully planned with linkages in mind and indication of clear timing and quantifiable and or qualified benchmarks. Develop a detailed project planning and scheduling the sequence of activities; certain activities can be done in parallel.

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT

In the Phase 1 the project partners have been considered as the key project stakeholders that were in touch with other relevant institutions (during the initial stage of Diagnostic Report II preparation). The extended stakeholder workshops were organized shortly before the end of the project Phase 1. In EMBLAS-II the stakeholder involvement needs to be expanded:

- Relevant civil society organizations and NGOs, private sector should be included in project activities and potentially in additional planning. Scope and consult them (target women where possible) in the activities (see stakeholder workshop minutes).
- Specific target groups in the partner countries should be included such as the relevant ministries and agencies responsible for fisheries and agriculture, industry and transport, selected regional and local administrations, universities, research centers and training institutions, NGOs and the private sector (see recommendation on stakeholder national monitoring programs). TE noted that ministries or representative of government departments of waste management, health, tourism and transport in the countries might be better engaged in Phase 2 as they are clearly stakeholders. Maybe a stakeholder analysis should be carried out to review the List of stakeholders prepared in the EMBLAS-I.

HUMAN RESOURCES

In EMBLAS-I the core team was composed of the Project Manager, Technical Advisor, Project Assistant and Programme Analyst. The team has been supported by the national experts. In the 2nd Phase much stronger core team is needed, due to the number and variety of the project activities, where specific expertise is required:

- A focal point for Knowledge Management should be appointed from the project team, with results linked to BSC and its Secretariat capacity strengthening goals.
- The need for an institutional capacity development expert to support national monitoring strategies should be considered; Deal with the need for an Institutional capacity and public policy expert to support project national strategies.

- If needed additional experts should be hired with expertise in technical areas, including for monitoring and surveys, institutional and capacity development, knowledge management and communication and international waters management. Recommended staffing in the Phase 2:
- Results Leader for PA1 (Support the countries in Bucharest Convention implementation) - policy expert – to be hired
 - Results Leaders for PA 2 (Joint BS Pilot Surveys) – Team Leader, supported by Monitoring Expert
 - Reader Leader PA3 (Capacity building and trainings)– Monitoring Expert
 - Reader Leader PA4 (Joint BS Cruise – open sea) - Team Leader with support of Monitoring Expert
 - Results Leaders for PA5 (Databases) - Team Leader supported by Communication and Coordination Expert
 - Results Leaders for PA6 (Communication and Visibility) - Communication and Coordination Expert
 - Technical Advisor. TA's role is still needed for specific areas, synergies and *quality assurance across* all key results

MONITORING

In EMBLAS-I, the monitoring of the project progress and achieved results was based on the project logical framework, supported with the work plan developed in the inception phase. The monitoring of work of project partners and experts was ensured by the project management, on the basis of the individual terms of references as a part of contractual arrangements. The project Steering Committee has been involved in the project results monitoring and advised on various issues emerged during the project implementation.

Before the Steering Committee Meeting a Technical meeting should be organized with scientific presentations of the key results areas. The Steering Committee meeting would then deal with the work plan overview and key decisions to be taken on specific issues.

PIU / PM develop a results based monitoring framework that includes five key results managers vs. management by deliverables. A system for monitoring that included the experts and partners oversight of key result areas should be established, including timesheets, check-lists for partners, templates for reporting; Delegate clear management responsibilities, including monitoring functions, i.e. reports, PIU and ME – Develop a draft project work plan *for results (as opposed to deliverables)*, prepared such that it helps PM consider the entire projects capacity building and deliverable needs. The work plan should articulate the linkages between all result area as to clarify tasks and expected results of each expert from the project core team very clearly. This should be closely monitored by the UNDP RTA. The results based management, work plan with required input specifications, identification of capacity building needs are the key elements to be reflected in the project deliverables and results.

- PM ensure all sub-contractors and implementing partners provide short implementation /progress reports on the status of deliverables on a regular basis for UNDP and EC management

RESULTS

The following results have been achieved in the EMBLAS-I:

PA1 – AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DATA TO PROVIDE FOR INTEGRATED ASSESSMENTS OF THE BLACK SEA STATE OF ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING PRESSURES AND IMPACTS

- The Diagnostic Report II has been prepared as a basis for integrated assessment of the Black Sea environment, and this document should be further used for all project work planning in the Phase 2.

PA 2 – BUCHAREST CONVENTION AND OTHER AGREEMENTS, I.E. EU MARINE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORTED

- Work area harmonized and completed in line with methods and tools developed in other PA areas. Can fall under the responsibility of the Technical Advisor in EMBLAS-II as should the work on GES which still need work to complete.
- Further development of the draft documents prepared by the Phase 1 should be undertaken, particular attention is needed for the work on Water Quality / Good Environmental Status Methodology, as well as on compliance indicators work that need to be agreed / vetted at regional level. Technical oversight and vetting of the quality of work need to be ensured.
- Actions taken for harmonization of methods for GES and compliance indicators. EMBLAS-II needs to make sure that there are links between the work done on the preparation of monitoring programs (PA 3 of EMBLAS-I) and preparation of surveys.

PA 3 – BLACK SEA MONITORING PROGRAMMES DEVELOPED / UPDATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH REPORTING OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS, THE WFD AND THE MSFD

- Strategy developed for setting up / designing a longer term change process , designed with appropriate technical assistance (institutional capacity development expert to give guidance on each national process and develop an exit strategy that will included this element in each country) as part of a larger CB initiative.
- Author a plan for future technical and cooperation partnership at regional and national level, including a mapping of stakeholder synergies with important projects and needs for follow-up activities, related to e.g. integrate coastal zone management, fisheries, etc...
- To ensure the national demand for capacity strengthening and exercises on ICZM is addressed, build this element into the capacity development and knowledge management strategy (linked to above section) a focus on ICZM, which will deal with practical activities).
- UNDP national country office could be involved in the project work with the stakeholders, as well as in work related to national monitoring programs and support the project in resource mobilization.
- Location of project management liaison in Odessa is good for political reasons and for support of Ukraine processes.
- As building the capacity of the Black Sea Commission Secretariat is also part of this projects strategy and so close linkages are essential for sustainability and capacity strengthening. The webpage and the knowledge management function might be best provided at the Black Sea Commission Secretariat as to begin the process of capacity building to take over results of EMBLAS-II.

PA 4 – ASSESSMENT OF THE REGIONAL NETWORKS TECHNICAL CAPACITIES FOR MONITORING BLACK SEA

- Merged with pa 1- The project supported the preparation of the Diagnostic Report II, with assessment of the national capacities for monitoring. However, at this point the capacities of individual reference laboratories were not increased significantly; only needs for capacity building were identified in the Diagnostic Report. The training program has been prepared, and training has been carried out. Additional follow-up activities will need to be prepared and implemented.

PA 5 – CAPACITIES OF EXISTING NETWORK OF BLACK SEA REFERENCE LABORATORIES STRENGTHENED

- Additional trainings are to be implemented, and the training programme fine-tuned according to the actual needs.

PA 6: METHODOLOGIES AND PLANS BASED ON JOINT SURVEYS BASED ON ONES THAT ALREADY EXIST AND ACTIVITIES PLANNED UNDER OTHER EU FUNDED PROJECTS

- The Joint Survey Methodology has been prepared as a draft document. The list of monitoring was cited, and parameters still need to be clarified, on the basis of the revised national monitoring programs. The methods to be used for the surveys need to be technically vetted and additional expertise may need to be brought in to work on relevant details.

PA 7 – WEB BASED SYSTEM FOR BLACK SEA WATER QUALITY DATABASE

- The BS Water Quality database has been prepared in the concept form. The new communication staff expert might oversee the area of work around the longer term results.
- Additional work to be done for the Phytoplankton and Mnemiopsis components of BSIS, where few activities were undertaken. WQ database as a very initial prototype and is available. This work depended on the GES methodology development, which was not well advanced.

SUSTAINABILITY

- NGOs/CBOs, and integral national stakeholders should be invited to participate in the project, this is particularly important for the Phase 2 of the project.
- The Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat should be provided with technical assistance for knowledge management (databases, BSIS, BSIMAP support), including planning and implementation through a learning-by-doing approach and with a link to PA5-database (Phase 2); Knowledge management strategy should be linked to PA5 as a database and capacity development strategy and PA6 on visibility.
- Other donor options for co-financing future regional capacity building initiatives should be explored, e.g. linked to GEF regional fisheries.
- Coordination with the Black Sea Commission and its Secretariat should be ensured to follow-up exit strategy for regional capacity building on project learning and actions. The work on an exit strategy might be considered by the Black Sea Commission and its Advisory Groups.

Financial sustainability

For the moment, the financial sustainability of EMBLAS-I is secured, since there is a follow-up 2nd Phase, where resources are available to continue with the activities. Financial sustainability of project results will become an issue by the end of EMBLAS-II. In this context it is necessary:

- The costs the national monitoring programmes need to be evaluated. This project should become a part of a master capacity strengthening plan that integrates the learning from ongoing projects and builds capacity of the national sub-programme and the Black Sea Commission for monitoring. The national sub-programs will need further expert and capacity building support as a part of the overall regional master plan for strengthening regional capacity.
- An exit strategy should be developed that gives concrete suggestions on how to take forward the national monitoring programs and continuation of the national capacity development post EMBLAS-I and II and secure funding.

Institutional sustainability

In general, EMBLAS is not focusing on building of new networks, but on strengthening of the existing structures.

- The need for expertise to support development of national capacity building plans should be considered, the project partners could be involved
- The Exit strategy should consider a bridge between the ends of MISIS, EPIRB and EMBLAS. It can include short outline of a concept for a future project design that enables a follow-up capacity strengthening initiative integrating the learning and the understanding that a baseline for monitoring from MISIS, EPIRB and EMBLAS-I and II.
- From the long-term sustainability perspective priority should be given to transparency and strategic communications and knowledge management, the Black Sea region is a very unstable environment, where environment protection is not the priority nowadays.

Policy level sustainability

The first steps towards the policy level sustainability have been made, through preparation of documents to be used at the regional level (i.e. Biological guidelines, draft monitoring programs), that are expected to be endorsed by the Black Sea Commission and its Advisory Groups.

- In the 2nd Phase the project should plan for and undertake advocacy work at national level and potentially with involvement/ consultation with UNDP national programme on environment in each country. There will be a need to work with stakeholders, training, establishment of contacts, cooperation with the BSC and authorities dealing with relevant legislation and policy.

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CENTRAL LESSONS LEARNED

Design

- Log Frame and Objectives - Consultation on Expected results -At the inception phase, the key partners & beneficiaries need to be fully consulted on their understanding of the project focus and their input requested (to avoid significant changes in the project activities during the implementation). The project results need to be clearly communicated to the project beneficiaries.
- Harmonization - It is not possible to achieve perfect harmonization between two or three projects in this case MISIS and EPIRB, even with similar activities, to have a strong cooperation, if there are such differences in time and budget. The monitoring system is very different between countries as well. Follow up for harmonization - As MISIS already finished, starting with June 2014, from a project management point of view there is no further cooperation. However, from the substantive point of view, EMBLAS-II can take the results of MISIS into consideration. In addition, the results of MISIS are sustained at the BS Commission Secretariat

level, therefore at the harmonization of results can be achieved up to certain extent. It can establish close cooperation with EPIRB immediately during inception work planning.

- Political will – There are differences in interest of Black Sea countries related to the implementation of European directive that must be respected and worked with. Only two countries (Romania and Bulgaria) are obliged to implement European legislation, Ukraine and Georgia have signed the EU Association Agreement. Their interest to comply with EU legislation is high...this has been also reflected in the current revision of the DoA for EMBLAS-II, where Ukraine has requested many things that would help them with the WFD implementation.
- Political will – PW to comply with EU legislation. From the regional perspective, there are differences in the interests/obligation of the Black Sea countries related to implementation of EU Directives. Two of the countries (Bulgaria and Romania) are the EU member states, one country (Turkey) is EU candidate country. The project beneficiary countries Ukraine and Georgia signed the Association Agreements in 2014, therefore their interest to follow the EU legislation is high. Russian Federation is not obliged to follow the EU requirements, however in the context of cooperation and harmonization of activities under umbrella of the Black Sea Convention, the country is cooperating on voluntary basis.
- Policy vs Science nexus both are necessary and so understanding that political actors need a certain type of communication is key... The science of this project must be communicated more effectively to make the case for 'change'. In some cases this will mean undertaking an economic analysis to complement the scientific evidence for change. This project should consider use of cost benefit analysis when designing national programmes.
- Coordination and synergies –This project is about coordination and synergies between 6 countries. It is promoting coordination and cooperation. The sustainability of this project works lies with the capacities and capabilities of the Black Sea Commission's Support and Coordination Role – This lies with the capacity of the secretariat, its technical committees and its members. BSC has no funds in order to better coordinate and undertake strategic communications (undertake excellent KM and information management) even design the annual work plan, so this must be considered.
- Science and networking for results - The Black Sea scientific community is small and works closely, the communication between exist depend the subject of interest without project. BS Commission and its Secretariat should be the main promoter of such regional cooperation. The work and inter-relation between Advisory Groups/experts is done during the meetings, between meetings/"at home".
- Flexibility and Adaptive management - project design should have certain flexibility since nobody can predict/evaluate all risks – political or at the personal level of key experts.
- Expected results should be very realistic. It is not the right approach "allure" donors by planning huge and very attractive results.

Implementation

- Technical oversight is critical to this projects objectives.
- Institutional capacity development projects focused on environment requires technical experts in *public environmental policy and institutional capacity development* to design and implement good programmes.
- Time Management and Contingency planning – The experience from the EMBLAS-I shows that many process oriented activities for deliverables took much more time than planned. Therefore it is needed to have a time reserve and certain flexibility (about 30%); Planning is

critical - The key element is proper planning of activities, with specific time-schedule and milestones to be strictly followed, with timely adjustment of planning as needed; when planning the project activities.

- Delegation of clear tasks and responsibilities is necessary to avoid any overlapping in tasks of management team members and build up clear hierarchy within it (who makes final decision). It is very important to assign a leader for individual activities that will be responsible for coordination of work on this particular activity.
- Good Balance Technical Regional and Global Expertise – it is necessary to have appropriate balance between number of international and national experts. It is important to have the best combination of international and national knowledge/experience.
- Tasks of experts/partner organizations should be clearly and meticulously, designed and vetted. The experts/partner organizations roles must be designed very well. It is better to spend one month more for detail in designing good ToRs and schedule of payments for them, than to have problems during project implementation.
- Political Advocacy - The involvement of the project stakeholders and awareness raising in early stage of the project implementation would be beneficial.
- Communication, Knowledge management and Visibility - Overall visibility of the project is key for political will and continued cooperation, it needs to be strengthened. Communications on the project results will be important mainly for the second phase of the project, to present the overall result of EMBLAS (Phases 1 & 2).

Sustainability

- Sustainability - Based on the current results of the Phase 1 and foreseen activities in the Phase 2, it would be beneficial to start with initiation of follow-up activities and fundraising.
- From the regional perspective, the focus should be on all six Black Sea countries, in order to have harmonized approach to the environmental monitoring and protection of the Black Sea.
- Next Steps. A funder or group of funder who will start to "*like*" *all the Black Sea countries*, not only the ones from EC, or the ones sustained by GEF.

KEY SUGGESTIONS BASED ON KEY LESSONS LEARNED:

- Focus this project more on strengthening capacities nationally and in the region.
- Use DR II recommendations in planning.
- Employ the PA3 work of EMBLAS-I in designing future national capacity building pilots.
- Continue to manage /monitor risk but keeping in mind that EMBLAS work goes beyond political borders as it deal with the Black Sea, a shared resource that goes beyond political boundaries by nature of the shared environmental problems.
- Develop user friendly versions of guidelines which can be easily understood by political actors and used in practice (high theoretical compilations are absolutely useless for the field work or preparation of assessments). Role of knowledge management is to turn scientific products into user friendly communications for many audiences.
- Observe cost-efficiency in work and bring in *appropriate technical assistance* i.e. knowledge management, institutional capacity and public policy development and other key technical areas noted in report.

- Ensure consultations with the BSC Advisory Groups, to make sure that work done for Georgia, Russia and Ukraine is in line with similar work ongoing for Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey. In addition to make sure that the results of project work can be used in the regional context – for the BS Commission & Secretariat work.
- Move to a strategic results (change) focus, policy influence (advocacy and cost benefits analysis) and less on deliverables. The results of the project from this perspective also need to be closely monitored, in line with the LogFrame and planned results (many of which are related to national change in Phase 2) as specified in the DoA. One team member should be appointed to follow-up on this task (Communication and Coordination Expert of EMBLAS-II).
- At the same time, the project should have a monitoring and evaluation procedure in place to check, review and approve documents prepared by experts/partners. One team member should be appointed to follow-up on this task (Communication and Coordination Expert of EMBLAS-II).
- Ensure good practice in meetings & events planning and organization, with deadlines for agenda preparation, background documents submission, comments to be provided by participants, preparation of minutes form meeting and their approval.
- Work plan of the activities needs to be firmly established and followed as the project is containing a number of practical activities that require time for preparation, implementation and evaluation. If delays occur, a contingency plan needs to be in place in a short term period.
- Provide for good organization of activities, which are agreed to first with the EMBLAS-II management body (all members) and then with partners / experts.
- Continue to establish priorities; for instance, at the time of the preparation of this report, in EMBLAS-II the priority is to agree on the DoA, to prepare a solid results based work plan (taking into consideration this TE) with the estimation of required inputs and costs, inception report and ensure the funding of the project comes to conclude contracts with partners and organizations.

ii

<i>Evaluation Ratings:</i>			
<i>1. Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	<i>rating</i>	<i>2. IA& EA Execution</i>	<i>Rating</i>
<i>M&E design at entry</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Quality of UNDP Implementation</i>	<i>MS</i>
<i>M&E Plan Implementation</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Quality of Execution–Executing Agency</i>	<i>MS</i>
<i>Overall quality of M&E</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Overall Quality of Implementation/Execution</i>	<i>MS</i>
<i>3. Assessment of Outcomes</i>		<i>4. Sustainability</i>	<i>Rating</i>
<i>Relevance</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Financial resources:</i>	<i>MS</i>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>Socio-political:</i>	<i>S</i>
<i>Efficiency</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>Institutional framework and governance:</i>	<i>MS</i>
<i>Overall Project Outcome Rating</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>Environmental:</i>	<i>MS</i>
		<i>Overall likelihood of sustainability:</i>	<i>ML</i>

iv

Using a six-point rating scale: 6: Highly Satisfactory, 5: Satisfactory, 4: Marginally Satisfactory, 3: Marginally Unsatisfactory, 2: Unsatisfactory and 1: Highly Unsatisfactory, see section 3.5, page 37 for ratings explanations.