

EU's Maritime Spatial Plan for the Aegean Angers Turkey



The central Aegean as seen without boundaries (NASA)

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Following a recent update of maritime spatial planning (MSP) maps in the European MSP Platform, Turkey has expressed displeasure with the bloc's delimitation of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. In a statement over the weekend, Turkey's Foreign Affairs Ministry said that the Aegean and Mediterranean maps used by EU in its maritime spatial planning are null and void and lack no legal effect.

"We reiterate that we will not allow the violation of Turkey's rights with this planning. We would like to remind that the EU has no authority to comment on maritime disputes between sovereign states," said the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

In 2014, the EU adopted a MSP framework mandating all its coastal member states to prepare maritime spatial plans by 2021. This saw establishment of the European MSP Platform to act as an information exchange gateway and capacity building site for member countries. Greece had not yet submitted its official maritime plans in the MSP platform, like several member states.

The European MSP website recently uploaded a set of Greek plans, including updates on its Eastern Mediterranean Sea basin map. According to Turkey, this map overlaps with its territorial claims in Eastern Mediterranean. In addition, the map depicts Aegean Sea as under the maritime jurisdiction of Greece, and it assigns some disputed islands and inlets to Athens. Turkey asserts that the European MSP indicates a unilateral decision on the Aegean Sea dispute.

Early this month, the Turkish foreign affairs Minister Hakan Fidan met with his Greek counterpart George Gerapetritis in Athens. The meeting's top agenda was to mend ties after decades of the

volatile maritime dispute between Athens and Ankara. After the meeting, Gerapetritis said that the nations still disagreed on how to demarcate their maritime boundaries in the Aegean, but the subject would be broached again in upcoming meetings. A high-level cooperation council meeting between Greece and Turkey is scheduled for early 2025.