

## Data for MSP Working Group – Kick-Off Meeting

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

Place: Webex Meeting

### Presence or represented:

*Please refer to attached list of participants.*

### Meeting Summary

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In developing their Marine Spatial Plans, Member States are requested to use ‘the best available data and information’ and to make use of ‘existing instruments and tools for data collection’. Some Member States have expressed difficulty in using data and information from other Member States when establishing their Plans because often marine data and information is limited, outdated or inaccessible, or because data is not homogeneous or of a consistent format.

As Member States progress with the development of their Plans, it is becoming apparent that the challenges linked to marine data and information availability and interoperability will become even more important during the implementation of the Plans (post 21 March 2021). This is further emphasised by the growing demand for sea space in order to meet the demand for clean and renewable energy production and the target of 40% emission reduction by 2030 as set by the Energy Roadmap 2050 and European Green Deal, as well as to ensure the future sustainability of human activities.

In October 2019, DG MARE/EASME convened a workshop on ‘Data for MSP’ to exchange knowledge and experience between MSP data practitioners. The outcomes of this workshop were that:

- There is in general a large consensus among practitioners that there is a need for freely available, easily accessible, and harmonized data as well as open source tools (e.g. cumulative impacts) which would benefit to anyone (researchers, decision-makers, planners, etc.). Cross-border European MSP projects and regional initiatives have highlighted a clear lack of available, and even more of homogenous dataset;
- There is a strong need for a harmonized MSP data framework, which appears particularly crucial at cross-border level. This framework would answer the regularly expressed need for a common MSP language – a ‘glossary of the seas’ - to support interoperability and would allow data to be divided into agreed categories to facilitate its use. This framework should include all marine uses, but also land-sea interactions, coastal data, MSFD data and environmental data. It appears as a necessary way to ensure that MSP Plans can be compared, and common outputs produced; and
- We are not building from scratch, as there are several methods for harmonization, different tools and data models which have been developed as part of projects represented in this workshop which provide great possibilities. If knowledge and experience could lead to common understanding of existing challenges and needs, and potential solutions and tools developed in a given area or sea-basin could be inspiring solutions to data harmonization on other sea basins, it could be a start in addressing the need for common regional models and data harmonisation across the EU.

This 1<sup>st</sup> workshop underlined the willingness and openness of the MSP data community to share experience and further develop knowledge. To take advantage of this momentum, EASME and DG MARE organized a follow up workshop in April 2020, drawing together MSP project leaders, member state data experts, and representatives from EMODnet Human Activities Portal as well as other relevant parties.

The main purpose of this 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was to formalize the establishment of the **Technical Expert Group (TEG) on MSP data**, proposed during the 1<sup>st</sup> workshop to improve knowledge sharing between experts involved in different European projects and regions and further develop harmonized standards. The number of people attending this 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop reinforced the fact that data issues are becoming a crucial issue to solve in the MSP context, and again showed a great willingness among practitioners to get together and share their experiences.

A summary of the discussions and agreements on the formation of a Technical Expert Group is presented below, as well as agreed future actions.

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## **Establishment of the Technical Expert Group on MSP data**

### **1.1. Background Motives**

The need for the establishment of such an Expert Group was identified during the 1<sup>st</sup> MSP-Data workshop, considering the following facts:

- In the past years, a community of MSP practitioners has emerged, and we are at a point where this community can contribute to the policy making;
- More and more knowledge has been gained on how to feed into MSP processes, and now is the time to further develop and share this knowledge, by bringing together the MSP-Data community and taking stock of the experience gathered in the last years;
- As we are getting closer to the 2021 deadline for Member-States to deliver their marine spatial plans, the need to bring together these plans in data portals such as EMODnet is becoming crucial and will require increased efforts on harmonization and trans-operability. This calls for the definition of common standards in terms of format and nomenclature, which this Expert Group can support.

### **1.2 Terms of Reference**

A draft ToRs for the establishment of the TEG was provided prior to the workshop. These pre-defined the objectives, status, tasks, and composition of the TEG. No major comments on these TORs were made during the workshop. The document is available attached and available to download on the Maritime Forum [**link to relevant section on Maritime Forum will be distributed shortly**].

#### **Objectives:**

The main objective is to create a long-lasting dynamic and autonomous community, setting its own objectives and milestones to:

- facilitate availability of data and information sharing between Member States on maritime spatial plans across the EU; and
- facilitate availability of data and information on the state of the marine environment in connection with the established maritime spatial plans and ensure coherency across the EU.

As well as to:

- avoid duplication of efforts due to overlapping between projects in different areas;
- improve information sharing between project participants by demonstrating the work engaged; and
- produce standards for the sharing of plans/finalize MSP data frame.

#### **Status:**

The TEG has no institutional status and is not a “policy” group but a technical one. It will develop non-binding recommendations and proposals. It is established initially for a period of one year, with the possibility to extend this if required by the Commission, after consultation with the MSEG on MSP.

#### **Composition:**

- The TEG will be chaired by Andrej Abramic (ULPGC) and Joni Kaitaranta (HELCOM), with both having accepted the positions following invitation by the Commission;
- The function of secretariat will be provided by the MSP-Assistance Mechanism. The primary roles will be fulfilled by Chris McDougall (Project Leader) and Clément Dupont (Junior Expert-PhD);
- Members of the TEG will include all relevant and interested Data / GIS (Geographical Information Systems) / SDI (Spatial Data Infrastructure) experts and/or MSP planners. This includes all participants of the previous workshop, mainly involved in European cross-border MSP projects. In addition, the Commission has invited Member States (MSP Competent Authorities) to suggest experts – which will participate in their technical capacity to support the work within the TEG.
- The Commission will appoint a final list of experts who will actively contribute to the work of the TEG and will inform the MSEG on MSP.

### **Working Approach:**

- The TEG is expected to meet (physically or virtually, depending on the context) up to four times per year;
  - The chair and co-chair, supported by the MSP-AM, will take responsibility for organising these meetings, if possible, back-to-back with other relevant events.
  - To facilitate information and documents sharing in between these meetings, collaborative ‘spaces’ are being set-up both on the maritime forum ([link here](#)) and through a Microsoft Teams Site. Specific attention will be paid to providing a document repository that will exist in the long-term. The Maritime Forum appears to be a suitable tool in this respect and provides a secured workspace (closed group). Existing documents concerning the previous workshop have already been uploaded to the respective page.
  - To communicate outputs to a broader audience, the European MSP-Platform was identified as an effective outreach tool.
  - It was suggested to divide the TEG into specific subgroups to allow for more efficient collaboration on precise tasks. Propositions for 2 sub-groups were made during the workshop:
    - **Sub-Group 1** – will primarily focus on delivery of Task 1 of the ToRs, namely ‘Mapping the MSP Data Ecosystem’;
      - To define MSP data framework for input data, including exhaustive mapping of available/absent data sets required for MSP process across seabasins
      - To identify the most relevant contributors to the TEG, as well as to avoid overlaps as much as possible, it seems necessary to provide an exhaustive mapping of all experts/projects/working groups dealing with data in the MSP context.
      - It is proposed, for each of existing groups/projects/entities to collaboratively collect information on their respective objectives, tasks, inputs and outputs products.
      - This will also allow to identify overall gaps and thus specific areas of action for the TEG.
    - **Sub-Group 2** – will primarily focus on delivery of Tasks 2 & 3 of the ToRs, namely ‘Harmonisation of nomenclature and standardisation of Output Data’;
      - The need for the standardized MSP spatial plans has been identified as necessary, as recalled by the EMODnet team. Delivering standard before the deadline March 2021 would allow for member states to implement harmonized approaches for their MSP outputs;
      - The standardized MSP spatial plans should be based on a data model with common vocabulary, that will allow cross-border comparisons. A proposition was made to make use of existing related vocabularies e.g. the language that already exists in navigational charts -which are already official and harmonized;
      - The MSP data standard should take advantage of the INSPIRE Directive, although it will need to be adapted to the needs of a maritime context, and build on the regional work initiated in the MarSP project and the HELCOM-VASAB Guideline on MSP output data, and possible other initiatives.
      - SHOM is currently disseminating a survey to MS to identify in what format they will provide their plans;
      - This sub-group should meet in the coming months to provide support to the EMODNet team which is responsible for the development of a new harmonized MSP section in EMODnet human activities portal.
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### **Future Actions**

- Invite participants to express their interest to participate in either Sub-Group 1 or Sub-Group 2 or both;
- Organize a virtual meeting for the 2nd subgroup, along with EMODnet, in the second half of May;
- Initiate the work of subgroup 1 by setting the objectives and date for first meeting with interested participants;
- Communicate on the MSP-INSPIRE workshop as soon as the agenda is settled (presumably between 2nd and 12th of June);
- If possible, participate in the MSFD-TG Data virtual meeting (postponed till October).