

“Putting governance on the map: a data-driven governance” Webinar

Technical Expert Group (TEG) – on Data for MSP

17/04/2026

The webinar was opened by **José Luis Santiago**, who welcomed participants to the *Navigating MSP Tools* webinar series and introduced its objective of addressing **key challenges in Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)**, particularly in relation to **data availability, standardisation, and usability** across different user groups, including policymakers, planners, and scientists. He emphasised that the initiative is not only focused on technical discussions but also aims to create **a shared space for exchanging experiences and identifying practical solutions** to support planning and decision-making processes. He highlighted the strong connection with the **REMAP project**, which focuses on improving how marine data is **organised, harmonised, and made accessible**, while underlining that the key challenge lies in ensuring that data **effectively informs governance and decision-making**. In this context, he introduced **Marta Ballesteros** from the Spanish Institute of Oceanography, who presented a governance model developed under REMAP, aimed at **bridging the gap between data and policy**.

Marta Ballesteros began by noting that **governance is an increasingly prominent topic in MSP**, attracting both governance specialists and spatial planners, although it remains difficult to operationalise due to its **complexity and limited spatial dimension**. She explained that while governance is widely recognised as **a cornerstone of effective MSP**, it is not easily translated into **data-driven or spatial formats**, as it relies heavily on **qualitative information** and involves multiple layers of actors, sectors, and decision-making processes. To address this, the REMAP project developed a tool capable of making governance **measurable and operational** within MSP. Given this complexity, the model focuses specifically on **coordination as a key dimension of governance effectiveness**, assessing how well governance systems **support the implementation of MSP plans**, rather than evaluating the plans themselves.

The methodological approach involved **narrowing governance to coordination**, clarifying concepts, and translating them into measurable indicators. A major challenge was distinguishing **coordination from related concepts** such as cooperation, collaboration, and coherence, while recognising that governance systems may require both **specialisation and redundancy**. The result is a **Coordination Index**, a composite indicator based on **56 indicators**, structured across key dimensions: **horizontal coordination (across sectors)**, **vertical coordination (across governance levels)**, **spatial coordination (land-sea interactions)**, **resources (capacity and training)**, and **communication mechanisms**. The model combines **qualitative and quantitative data**, using a **self-assessment survey** complemented by **expert validation**, ensuring robustness and reliability.

The model integrates data from multiple sources, including the **European MSP Platform**, **EMODnet**, the **European Environment Agency**, and REMAP datasets. The Coordination Index produces both **an overall score and detailed breakdowns**, allowing users to identify **strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in governance systems**. Although the initial aim was to develop a fully automated web tool, the need for expert input limited full automation; however, a **WebViewer demo** has been developed, enabling users to **visualise coordination performance, compare countries, identify spatial gaps, and track progress over time**.

The presentation also highlighted **practical applications**, particularly in supporting **adaptive planning and cross-border coordination**. An example from the **Baltic Sea region** illustrated how the tool can identify areas where **joint planning efforts**, for instance in offshore wind development, could improve efficiency and coherence. During the discussion, participants raised several points, including the **scalability of the model to other governance dimensions** (such as participation), **data availability and confidentiality constraints**, and the **selection of indicators**, which include both **formal and informal coordination mechanisms** (e.g. joint working groups, training programmes, and data-sharing protocols). It was noted that coordination was chosen as a **pragmatic entry point**, but the framework could be expanded to include additional governance dimensions and potentially support **coordination at sea-basin level**.

The session concluded with reflections on the importance of **integrating governance into data-driven MSP processes**, with the tool representing **a first concrete step in this direction**. Participants were encouraged to explore the available resources and contribute to further development, particularly within the **TEG socio-economic subgroup**.

The webinar closed with thanks to the presenter and participants, and a reminder of the next session scheduled for **15 May**, entitled “*Exploration of EMODnet Harmonised MSP Plans through the MSP-out ReMAP Tool*”, which will focus on a technical tool for analysing European maritime spatial plans.

meeting closed
