



Maritime Spatial Planning Country Profile

Bulgaria

Contact

National MSP

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
Directorate General “Strategic Planning and Regional Development Programs”
Web: www.mrrb.government.bg

Mr. Ivaylo Stoyanov
Head of Department "Strategic Planning and Programming"
Sofia 1618, 215 Tsar Boris III Blvd.
tel. +3592 9405 627
E-mail: istoyanov@mrrb.government.bg

Ms. Stanislava Atanasova
Chief Expert in DG “Strategic Planning and Regional Development Programs”
tel. +3592 9405 655
E-mail: satanasova@mrrb.government.bg

Other relevant contacts

Executive Agency “Maritime Administration” (EAMA)
Executive Director
Ventsislav Ivanov
9 Dyakon Ignatii Str.
Sofia, Bulgaria
Phone +359 700 10 145
E-mail: BMA@marad.bg or pkirov@marad.bg
Web: www.marad.bg

Center for Coastal and Marine Studies (CCMS)
Dr. Margarita Stancheva
33A Podvis Str., floor 5
Varna 9000, Bulgaria
Phone +359 52 331324
E-mail: stancheva@ccms.bg; office@ccms.bg
Web: www.ccms.bg

Institute of Oceanology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (IO-BAS)
Assoc. Prof. Nikolay Valchev
40 Parvi May Blvd.
Varna 9000, Bulgaria
Phone +359 52 370484
E-mail: office@io-bas.bg
Web: www.io-bas.bg

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document does not represent the official view of the European Commission. It has been prepared for information purposes only and should not be considered legally binding in any nature. The illustrative map shown on the cover and on page 1 should not be interpreted as a legal representation of jurisdictional boundaries.

Last revision date

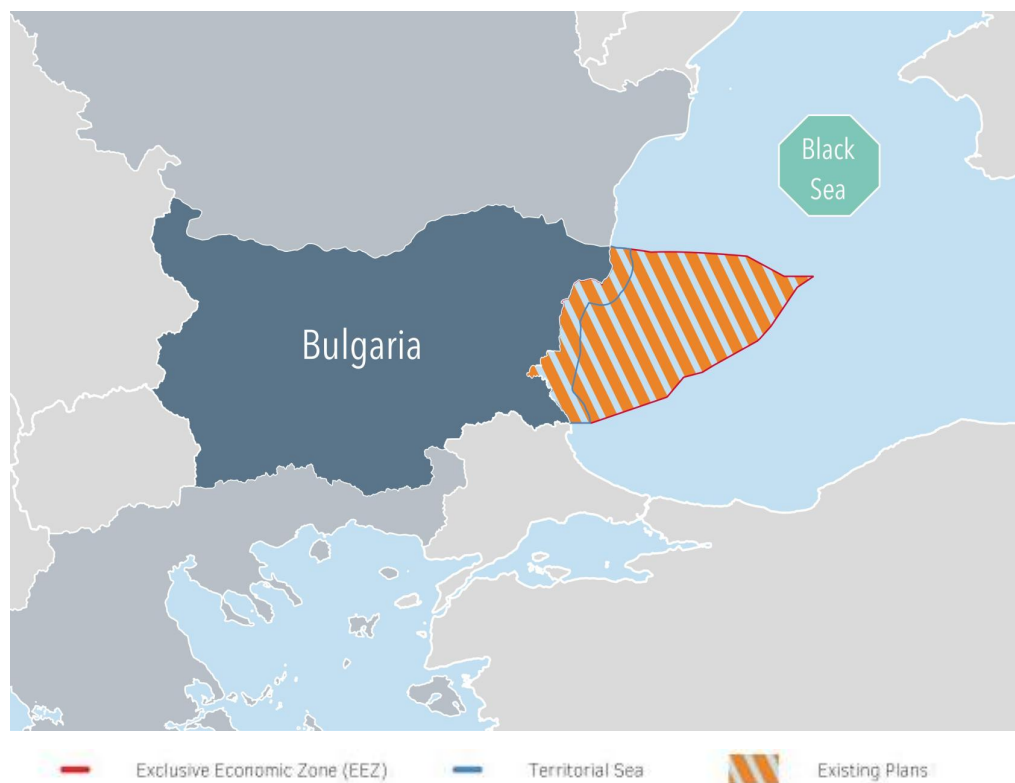
This version was last reviewed and updated (where necessary) by the European MSP Platform team in September 2025.

Funding attribution

The EU MSP Platform is financed by the EU Commission under the EMFAF. The European MSP Platform is maintained by the MSP Assistance Mechanism implemented by CINEA on behalf of DG MARE.

Background Information

Basic facts on Marine Waters



The Bulgarian territorial sea (12-nm zone from the baseline, including internal waters, covers approximately 6,358 km²¹. The contiguous zone (12-nm zone from the territorial sea) is approximately 5,200 km², and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), agreed with Turkey in 1997, is about 29,052 km². Delimitation of boundaries with Romania is pending (Territorial Sea, Continental Shelf and EEZ)¹.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities and legislation

General

Bulgaria developed one single Maritime Spatial Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria for the period 2021-2035, which is strategic and has indirect impact through guiding effects. The MSP Plan aims to promote sustainable growth in the maritime economy and foster development in the Bulgarian Black Sea region by efficiently utilizing natural resources, while ensuring the integrated protection of the marine environment.

Planning on national level

Bulgaria transposed the MSP Directive² at the beginning of 2018 by an amendment of the Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act³. The MSP Plan was elaborated in 2019-2021 and was approved on 11 of May 2023 by the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria. Cross-border dimension of the Plan has been ensured in particular with Romania (as Bulgaria and Romania are the EU Member States in the Black Sea) under the two EMFAF projects

¹<https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/BGR.htm> - the link is not updated with the latest amendment of the Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act

²Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the maritime spatial planning.

³Law on amendment of the Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act, promulgated State Gazette No. 28 of 29.03.2018; the act is available in Bulgarian at: <http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=124492>.

MARSPLAN I and II supporting the cross-border collaboration in implementing the MSP Directive. Regarding enforceability, as the Plan is implemented, detailed action plans for specific marine areas will be developed, which may fall under the responsibility of either the same or different authorities.

National MSP authority

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW)

Planning at a regional level

Some general measures, that cover MSP and ICZM, are mentioned in the Development Strategies of the coastal districts (Burgas, Varna and Dobrich), in the National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture in Bulgaria (2014-2020) and in the National Regional Development Strategy (2012-2022). Pilot plans have also been developed as part of cross-border projects (e.g. PlanCoast, MARSPLAN-BS I and II).

Regional MSP authority

Not applicable

Details

The **Maritime Space, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act** establishes the legal framework for the maritime space and for maritime spatial planning. In March 2018, a new Chapter titled “Using the Maritime Spaces and Protection of Marine Waters” was introduced into the Act. According to the new **Article 51a**, maritime spaces of the Republic of Bulgaria are to be used in compliance with the principle of integrated maritime management. To promote sustainable growth of the marine economy, sustainable growth of the Bulgarian Black Sea region and sustainable use of the natural resources, Maritime Spatial Planning is applied – an instrument of the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Union. The provision explains the term “Maritime Spatial Planning”: it includes analysis of all activities related to the use of maritime spaces and organising them in a way, which allows their joint existence to achieve environmental, economic and social objectives.

The overall management and coordination of the Maritime Spatial Planning related activities is performed by the **Minister of Regional Development and Public Works**, who is also responsible for developing and maintaining the Maritime Spatial Plan of Bulgaria (Article 51b). Furthermore, an Advisory Council on Maritime Spatial Planning has been established as a subsidiary body to the Minister. The latter supports the cooperation and coordination between relevant stakeholders during the Maritime Spatial Planning process. Its tasks and responsibilities are defined within the ‘Regulation on the Functions, Tasks and Composition of the Advisory Board on Maritime Spatial Planning to the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works’, effective from 25th September 2018, issued by the Minister, and published in the State Gazette.

The next new article stipulates that Bulgaria’s Maritime Spatial Plan shall cover its maritime spaces pursuant Art. 5, paragraph 1 of the same Act, including coastal waters. The Plan will not be used for defining and delimiting maritime boundaries in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It defines the spatial and temporal distribution of existing activities and those planned for the future with regard to maritime spaces, except those activities related to defence and national security.

Relevant MSP provisions have also been introduced in the [Regional Development Act](#)⁴. Art. 14 (2) and (3) stipulates that the scope and the content of the Maritime Spatial Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria as well as the terms and conditions for its elaboration, adoption, implementation and actualisation are stated in the Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act. The Act also provides that the Maritime Spatial Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria should be developed by a state consulting company at the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works.

The Maritime Spatial Plan of Bulgaria covers :

1. The maritime traffic regulation system of the Republic of Bulgaria;
2. Zones and polygons designated for military trainings;
3. Zones for exploration, extraction and exploitation of natural resources;
4. Fishing zones;
5. Aquaculture zones;
8. Protected zones and protected areas of the national ecological network;
9. Protected zones of national cultural heritage;
10. Routes of underwater linear objects (e.g. pipes & cables) of the technical infrastructure;
11. Installations and facilities related to shipping;

⁴Regional Development Act, promulgated State Gazette No 50 of 30 May 2008; last amended: State Gazette No 21 of 13 March 2020; the act is available in Bulgarian at: <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135589285>.

6. Zones for tourism and recreational activities;
7. Zones for scientific research;

12. Installations and facilities used for exploration and exploitation of mineral and energy resources;
13. Objects of underwater cultural heritage.

The Maritime Spatial Plan of Bulgaria was developed on the basis of analysis of existing environmental, geological, geomorphological and physical information, data accessible through the National Spatial Data Portal, and data on the social and economic activities listed above. The following issues are being taken into account:

- specific features of the Black Sea region;
- status of biological, mineral and energy resources;
- existing and future activities related to the use of marine spaces as well as their impact on the environment, underwater cultural heritage;
- land-sea interactions;
- cross-border cooperation in the Black Sea region.

At sea the MSP Plan includes the internal waters, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The land boundary is determined at the municipal level or by beach boundaries for recreational purposes. The Plan features four types of zoning of the sea space: restricted zones for use; zones with specific conservation regime; multifunctional zones; and areas for future use. It includes main strategic goals and specific objectives, aligned with the key international, EU and national policies. The Plan has four scenarios for future development: i) A – Economic growth; ii) B – Ecology; iii) C – Social balance; and iv) D – Integrated (EU, local, national and regional priorities). The Plan is supported by Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report and a standpoint by the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) with additional recommendations and measures to reach the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

Maritime Spatial Plans

Progress

The draft version of the Maritime Spatial Plan was presented to the European Commission on 31 March 2021 and was open to public consultation until 26 June 2021. At the same time, the Environmental Impact Assessment, which is an integral part of the plan, was launched.

The process of public consultations for the draft National Maritime Spatial Plan covering the period 2021-2035 and the Report on the Ecological Assessment of the plan, were completed. On 31 August 2021, a public online event called “Public discussion of the two major documents” was carried out and hosted by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. The feedback, remarks and comments received during the consultation process from all stakeholders were reflected within the draft Maritime Spatial Plan and the Report on its EIA. The final approval of the MSP EIA was provided by the Ministry of Environment and Waters as a competent authority.

The Plan was approved on 11 of May 2023 by the Council of Ministers. The next steps have been as follows:

- Notification to the Black Sea countries, the European Commission and the Member States (Art. 14 Directive 2014/89/EU) within a 3-month period from the plan approval.
- Review the plan and considering updates to address changes in the geopolitical situation in the Black Sea: 2024 - 2025.
- Plan implementation and monitoring of the set indicators (every 2 years report on the impact monitoring on the environment from the plan application (to the Ministry of Environment and Water).

In parallel with the MSP process at national level, several European projects supported directly and indirectly the progress of maritime spatial planning in Bulgaria:

- **EMFAF MARSPLAN-BS I and II**, supported coherent, cross-sectoral MSP in Bulgaria and Romania under the framework of the Directive 2014/89/EU and established a long-lasting mechanism for the Black Sea Basin cross-border cooperation on MSP. The MARSPLAN-BS II (2019-2021) was coordinated by the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works and focused on the analysis of Land-Sea Interactions (LSI) and their operational integration in the MSP, as well as exploring opportunities for Multi-Use (MU) between different uses and activities in the marine space.

- **EMFAF MSP-GREEN Project** (<https://mspgreen.eu/>): coordinated by CORILA, Venice (2022-2024) aimed to contribute to aligning MSP Plans with the European Green Deal (EGD) ambitions in five EU sea basins: the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea (Bulgaria), the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. The project provided a cross-cutting framework addressing key EGD topics relevant to the marine environment and the sustainable transition of the blue economy: climate change, circular blue economy, marine biodiversity, marine renewable energies, and sustainable seafood provision. Recommendations were prepared on how to enhance the EGD ambitions within EU MS plans. The project also promoted the sea basin dimension by considering environmental, socio-economic, and cultural specificities, supported by targeted Ocean Literacy communication efforts. The Bulgarian MSP Plan was analysed to identify the components in line with the various elements of the EGD actions (<https://mspgreen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MSP-GREEN-D2.1-Full.pdf>), as well as new action for the exploration of offshore aquaculture to be integrated in MSP was elaborated by the project partner Center for Coastal and Marine Studies (CCMS), (<https://mspgreen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/D3.2-Complete.pdf>). Bulgarian Competent MSP Authority (MRDPW) was involved in the MSP-GREEN Steering Committee and participated in the regular meetings and workshops to consult project activities.

- **HORIZON EUROPE MSP4BIO Project** (<https://msp4bio.eu/>): coordinated by s.Pro-Sustainable projects (Germany), 2022 – 2025: developed and demonstrated the ways in which knowledge-based MSP becomes a vehicle and a tool for the protection and restoration of biodiversity. By developing and testing the modular Ecological and Socio-Economic (ESE) Framework, it supported biodiversity integration in MSP in the six test sites across five EU sea basins: Baltic Sea, North Sea, Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, and Black Sea. MSP4BIO emphasized participatory methods and provided decision-support tools to help planners, policymakers, and stakeholders across the EU. With MSP4BIO tools and platform the upcoming revision of national MSP plans will be better equipped to integrate biodiversity objectives. Within the EU, these revisions will support biodiversity targets set by the EGD, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 (EUBS), and the European Ocean Pact. The Black Sea cross-border test site between Bulgaria and Romania aimed to: i) Identify the conservation priorities to support the expansion/establishment of new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and the efficiency of the current network of MPAs; ii) Harmonize MPAs to integrate into MSP, supporting a coherent network that bases management actions on prioritization and ecological criteria, and iii) Shape MSP to sustain and support the evolution of the current conservation plans to have it coherent, efficient and shared (at national and cross-border level). The MSP and MPAs competent authorities from Bulgaria and Romania were involved in the established Communities of Practice (CoPs) to align the project developments with local needs and challenges.

Existing Maritime Spatial Plans

Bulgaria adopted its maritime spatial plan, the Maritime Spatial Plan of the Republic of Bulgaria, in May 2023.

The Plan will be reviewed every 10 years or earlier if significant changes in the socio-economic conditions of the country occur.

Overview of MSP related uses and issues

The maritime sectors in Bulgaria play a major role in the national economy. However, technological progress and emerging societal challenges are increasing demands on the limited sea space. Bulgarian inshore waters are becoming increasingly crowded with various human activities, raising the risk of conflicts with other sectors or MPAs.

MSP Driver: need to balance among blue economy sectors and biodiversity protection with opportunities for multi-use and co-existence of the key maritime activities and natural values.

- Current main uses: traditional: e.g. ports and maritime transport, military, coastal and maritime tourism, nature protection, fishery and aquaculture, underwater cultural heritage.
- Future uses: extension of existing MPAs or including the newly designated and their integration in MSP Plan. The Plan includes zones for future use, that can accommodate potential emerging blue economy sectors: development of Offshore Wind Farms (OWF) and offshore aquaculture.

Functions and uses in the Plan are grouped into four types of zones: i) restricted zones for use - ones with usage bans are those designated for a single function due to legal restrictions or incompatibility with other maritime activities. These bans aim to mitigate risks to safety, human life, and health, as well as to prevent accidents and protect important infrastructure or cultural values. Examples: military training zones, zones with bans on navigation and anchoring, and also the areas with underwater linear objects of the technical infrastructure that are at risk of being affected by other maritime activities. Two types of zones are indicated: one with a permanent ban and another with a temporary ban for us; ii) zones with a specific conservation regime: cover MPAs of the National Ecological Network and the protection zones of cultural heritage, water protection zones under Art. 119a of the Water Act.; iii) multifunctional zones: combine different compatible functions without conflicts in certain sea areas. Currently any combinations are possible except those with specific legally regulated restrictions; and iv) areas for future use: determined due to the identified gaps in the knowledge in the offshore areas.

Aspects of the MSP process

Sustainable development and growth in the maritime sector

The core focus of the MSP Plan is sustainable blue economy development and ecosystem services. This platform is also utilized to create potential development scenarios. The three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are the basis for three different scenarios, in each of them a relevant aspect is prioritized: i) Scenario A – Economic growth; ii) Scenario B – Ecology; iii) Scenario C – Social balance; and iv) Scenario D – Integrated local, national, regional and Pan-European priorities. The first scenario, "Economic/Blue Growth," focuses on fully exploiting marine resources to drive economic growth, competitiveness, and high-value maritime industries. The second scenario, "Ecology," emphasizes preserving the Black Sea's unique and fragile ecosystem. The third scenario, "Social Balance," prioritizes social cohesion and balanced development of Black Sea municipalities with diversified local economies. The fourth scenario combines the best predictive elements from the three scenarios, aiming to avoid extremes and reduce pressure in one area without compromising others.

The preparation of the Bulgarian MSP plan started in 2019 when also the EGD was formally published. Therefore, the EGD has been reflected in the **Plan's Specific objective 2.1. Coordination of sectoral policies in the maritime economy in support the EGD**. The main goal is to coordinate and create a synergistic impact from various sectoral policies related to maritime activities—like shipbuilding, maritime transport, tourism, offshore wind energy, fisheries and aquaculture.



Ecosystem-based approach (EBA)

According to the Ordinance for Environment and Sea Water Protection, promulgated in State Gazette 94/30.11.2010, the Marine Strategy should be based on the EBA.ⁱⁱ In addition, the Ordinance gives a definition for a Maritime Protected Area. It does not however deal with issues strictly pertaining to MSP.

It should be noted that all measures elaborated by the Ministry of Environment and Waters, with the participation of the responsible public bodies according to Art. 13 of the MSFD, are in compliance with the ecosystem-based approach.

Considering the novelty of the MSP process in Bulgaria, the MSP and MPAs designation (which has been implemented longer than MSP) are not yet linked (MPAs establishment, designation and management is a separate process from MSP and is regulated/guided by another legislation (Protected Areas Act, 1998 and Biodiversity Act, 2002).

Biodiversity, ecosystem and cultural heritage protection are considered in the Plan's goals and scenarios as cross-cutting and overarching priorities, referring to the implementation of the MSFD, WFD and environmental national legislation. The Plan integrates all existing MPAs (nationally designated and Natura 2000), it does not envisage areas for new or extended MPAs, as it is in the remit of the MOEW. The Plan supports reaching the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and progression of the MPAs network, also additional measures are included in the document by the MOEW to its EIA. The new designated MPAs will be reflected in the Plan in the course of its revisions and the Plan supports the EBA and the coherent network of MPAs.

Under the MSP4BIO Project the Bulgarian test site spatial planning solution, developed by CCMS, focused on the integration of MPAs and MSP by applying trade-offs analysis and Cumulative Effect Assessment (CEA) tool. It addressed several gaps: lack of operational management of MPAs, insufficient coherence among MPAs designation and MSP process, and the key management question of how to evaluate cumulative impacts and trade-offs in MSP and MPAs. The solution also aimed to identify potential conflicts arising from the proposal to enlarge an existing MPA, facilitate MPAs coherence at national and cross-border contexts, and preserve valuable mobile species (marine mammals). A combination of tools was applied to support the solution: trade-offs analysis with SeaSketch Participatory Mapping and CEA Plan4Wise4Blue tool. The focus of testing was on mobile species, i.e., marine mammals, and existing and future uses that might impact them, such as shipping, fishery, tourism, OWF, and offshore aquaculture, (<https://msp4bio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/D5.3-Test-sites-planning-solutions-revised-Final-checked-260325-for-website.pdf>).



Resilience to climate change impacts

In October 2019 the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy⁵ and Action Plan for the Republic of Bulgaria was approved by the Council of Ministers. This strategy is setting a series of general strategic objectives:

- Mainstream and integrate climate change adaptation.
- Build institutional capacity for climate change.
- Raise awareness on climate change adaptation.

⁵ Documents available here: <https://www.moew.government.bg/en/climate/international-negotiations-and-adaptation/adaptation/>

- Build climate change resilience.

It also defines objectives in various fields such as agriculture, energy, biodiversity and ecosystem services, forestry, human health, tourism, transport, urban environment and water. The document considers the possible impacts and risks to the marine environment. Rising temperatures can have negative effects on aquaculture and fisheries as the droughts may lead to a reduction in the water levels, which could threaten farming systems. Spawning seasons can also be affected by possible temperature rises. Rises in sea-levels represent a threat for tourism, as it can lead to the loss of coastal areas. Burgas, Varna and Dobrich regions offer the main tourism products, as they are popular sites, especially in the summer. A rise in sea-levels is also a threat to infrastructure such as energy infrastructure, which could become more vulnerable.

The Strategy is intended to serve as a reference document and sets adaptation actions and priorities until 2030.



Land-sea interactions

In Bulgaria, there is not exact definition for the concept of LSI in the national framework, but the legal framing is established by the Maritime spaces, Inland waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act, in which the MSP Directive was transposed in 2018, of taking LSI into account when developing national MSP. Although the national legislation calls for an integrated approach embedding LSI into MSP, the extent to which this is operationalized is still limited. In Bulgaria, terrestrial and maritime spatial planning systems do not provide a formalised approach to address LSI. The two planning systems overlap with an unclear distribution of responsibilities on LSI aspects. All these legislation instruments overlap but they do not necessarily integrate. This makes the LSI analysis and its integration into MSP rather challenging both from a methodological and an operational perspective.

The EU funded MSP projects in the Black Sea (**MARSPLAN-BS I and MARSPLAN-BS II**) were recognised as having an important enabling role in building LSI knowledge, also through pilot case studies specifically focused on LSI. These projects strengthened the capacity of LSI of Bulgarian and Romanian MSP competent authorities, as well as of other involved MSP actors, underpinning the national MSP process. Case studies (including that of Burgas and Shabla) showed that focusing on local key LSI issues can act as triggers for more integrated and closer links between MSP and local municipality planning. Capitalizing on previous experiences, **in particular MARSPLAN-BS II** developed and tested a methodological framework for LSI analysis, and integration in the MSP, which might be considered useful in the next phases of Bulgarian MSP, possibly including monitoring and revision, but even more in-depth analysis (Source: Stancheva et al., 2024, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X24004160>).).



Stakeholder Involvement

The identified stakeholders in the preparation of the MSP Plan were ministries, state and executive agencies or their territorial units, regional governors and local authorities, representatives of academia, legal entities and citizens, including Black Sea regional organisations. The identification of stakeholders follows Step 2 from the Standards of the Council of Ministers for conducting public consultations (2009)

and the main criteria:

- Transparent representation of both collectors of information governing the processes of the implementation of the plan and those whose stakes are most affected by the implementation of the plan.
- Considering diverse interests, perspectives and expectations from development and the implementation of the maritime spatial plan.
- Balance between economic and environmental stakes, policies, priorities and goals.
- Inclusion of representatives with diverse experience, competence and knowledge, and with specific previous experience of participating in public consultations.

The local participatory initiatives were also engaged, for example fishery local action groups (FLAGs) along the coast were involved in the public discussions, focus group meetings and seminars.

Stakeholder involvement took place through consultation and dialogue at all stages of preparation of the Plan and in the formal public discussion of the draft MSP Plan and its EIA (in 2021). The local and expert knowledge was integrated through in-depth interviews during the plan preparation. Consultation procedures were selected and a Consultation Plan was developed in accordance with the time plan schedule and with the requirement to reconcile the procedures for preparing the Plan and its EIA. The following documents were considered in the Plan: Law on Access to Public Information (promulgated SG No. 55/2000, amended SG No. 17/26.02.2019) and the Law on Access to Spatial Data (promulgated SG No. 19/2010, amended SG No. 17/26.02.2019), which regulate the use of information and data generated and maintained by public bodies, subject to compliance with the requirements for intellectual rights, protection of personal data, confidentiality of information.

The Bulgarian MSP Plan and its documents are published on the national MSP website: <http://mspbg.ncrdhp.bg/>



Co-existence of uses

Co-existence of uses and synergies between economic sectors and natural values are promoted in the MSP Plan through the foreseen multifunctional zones, based on the Multi-Use (MU) concept. The main goal is to combine compatible functions for more efficient use of maritime spaces, achieving synergy, optimizing space and scale, and improving coordination of sea-related sectoral policies. The Bulgarian MSP plan presents analysis of the opportunities of combining functions/activities at sea or in specific areas. The scientific rationale for the plan is provided by the EMFF MARSPLAN-BS II project and the elaborated by CCMS MU case study on Tourism, Underwater Cultural Heritage and Environmental protection (Source: Stancheva et al., 2022 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X21005388>).



Trans-boundary cooperation

For its Maritime Spatial Planning, Bulgaria is cooperating with other countries in the Black Sea region, as well as key regional actors as the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Black Sea Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution. Cooperation with Romania is aimed at promoting consistency and coordination of the national maritime spatial plans on all issues of transnational nature. Cross-border MSP process is coherent for the two EU Member States Bulgaria and Romania under the two EMFF projects MARSPLAN-BS I and II supporting the cross-border collaboration in implementing the MSP Directive. Furthermore, the MSP4BIO Project and the Black Sea test site supported the cross-border collaboration in improved integration of biodiversity protection in MSP.

The Bulgarian MSP Plan foresees regional cooperation on specific actions/sectors (e.g. pollution prevention, biodiversity protection, fisheries management, energy transition) through some of the goals and objectives:

- **Strategic goal 4:** International and regional cooperation for conservation and use of the Black Sea resources. Protecting resources and biodiversity in the Black Sea calls for collaborative efforts among regional countries and their institutions. This cooperation aims to involve all Black Sea nations, aligning with the priorities of current programs and strategic documents for the region. Joint initiatives will focus on promoting a circular economy, building stakeholder capacity, and raising awareness through campaigns to encourage sustainable practices.
- **Specific objective 4.2.** Cooperation for effective fisheries management and reducing overfishing. It addresses the preservation of marine mammals, sea birds, sustaining traditional livelihoods and meeting the needs of the population and sea tourism and to reduce the pressure of fishery and aquaculture sectors while achieving more sustainable development in a healthy marine environment.



Use of best available data

The Maritime Spatial Plan of Bulgaria was developed on the basis of analysis of existing environmental, geological, geomorphological and physical information, data accessible through the [National Spatial Data Portal](#), EMODNet and in full compliance with the INSPIRE Directive.

Coherence with other processes

Marine Strategy Framework Directive

The MSFD was transposed into the Bulgarian Water Act and into other relevant regulations (e.g. Ordinance for Environment and Sea Water Protection, No. 273/23th Nov. 2010) in November 2010ⁱⁱⁱ. The Ministry of Environment and Water of Bulgaria (MOEW) is responsible for the implementation of the MSFD.

In December 2016, the Council of Ministers adopted the Marine Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria^{iv}, and a Programme with measures for its implementation^v. The Strategy assesses the status of the marine waters (in compliance with Article 8 of the MSFD), determines Good Environmental Status, and establishes environmental targets (in compliance with Articles 9 and 10 of the MSFD) in accordance with 11 descriptors. The Programme contains both existing and new measures for implementation of the Strategy. Among the existing measures are (i) monitoring of marine waters for assessing the resources stock; (ii) preventive measures against invasion of alien species; (iii) and strengthening the Black Sea coast for protection against landslides. New measures, both of national and cross-border influence, are (i) adoption and implementation of a Regional Action Plan for the Black Sea in relation to marine litter; (ii) encouraging environmentally friendly practices for fishing vessels engaged in small-scale fishing; (iii) development of multi-annual management plans on certain fish groups; (iv) and others.

The MSFD and the national Marine Strategy are fully integrated in the MSP Plan and the alignment of MSP and MSFD is described, including detailed descriptions of activities conducted under the MSFD Programme of Measures that have provided input to MSP.

The environmental EU legislation and international commitments are considered in the Bulgarian MSP Plan through the provisions and implementation of the EU directives: the MSFD and the national Marine Strategy and descriptors, the WFD objectives and the international conventions ratified by Bulgaria. The EU Biodiversity Strategy is mentioned in the plan, without details on how to reach the ambition for 30% protected areas (of which 10% strictly protected) until 2030, nor any definition of strictly protected areas.

Integrated Coastal Zone Management

Some general measures that cover ICZM, are mentioned in the Development Strategies of the coastal districts (Burgas, Varna and Dobrich), in the National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture in Bulgaria (2014-2020) and in the National Regional Development Strategy (2012-2022). Except via regional planning, there are no specific national strategies in place. There is no clarity about how MSP will be linked to ICZM. One of the main barriers why ICZM is not taken forward is the lack of a common ground across different ministries.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive) applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes (e.g. on land use, transport, energy, waste, agriculture, etc.). It is transposed into domestic legislation by the Environmental Protection Act, Chapter Six: Ecological assessment and environmental impact assessment, Section I and II (<https://www.moew.government.bg/en/environmental-protection-act-7628/>), which is in force since 2001, and was last updated in 2012; and by the Regulation on the Terms and Conditions to Carry out Ecological Assessment of Plans and Programmes, last updated in 2019. (<https://www.moew.government.bg/bg/naredba-za-usloviyata-i-reda-za-izvurshvane-na-ekologichna-ocenka-na-planove-i-programi/>)

A set of guidance is available on <https://www.moew.government.bg/bg/prevantivna-dejnost/ekologichna-ocenka/ukazaniya-po-prilaganeto/rukovodstva/>.

The draft MSP Plan was submitted to the European Commission on 31 March 2021 and remained open for public consultation until 26 June 2021. Simultaneously, the EIA, an integral part of the plan, was launched. Feedback from stakeholders throughout the consultation process was incorporated into the draft Plan and its EIA Report. The Ministry of Environment and Waters, as the competent authority, gave the final approval to the MSP Plan EIA.

Cooperation with third countries

For its Maritime Spatial Planning, Bulgaria has been cooperating with the riparian countries in the Black Sea region, including the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation ([BSEC](#)) and the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution. Cooperation with Romania is aimed at consistency and coordination of their respective national maritime spatial plans on all issues of transnational nature. Black Sea non-EU countries were involved in the **Advisory Board of the MARSPLAN-BS II project** coordinated by the Bulgarian MRDPW and actively involved in the project activities supporting and advising the development of the MSP Plan.

The regional cooperation has been also supported within the **Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea**, established in 2019 aimed to sustainable economic development. Its main goals are:

- Healthy marine and coastal ecosystems.
- A competitive, innovative and sustainable blue economy for the Black Sea.
- Fostering Investment in the Black Sea blue economy.

Sources

Relevant legislative acts

- Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act, <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2134907392> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments] http://www.marad.bg/upload/docs/Sea_Spaces_Act.doc [In English];
- Ordinance for the Protection of the Environment in Sea Waters, http://www.bsbd.org/bg/page_5376710.html [In Bulgarian]
- Water Act, <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134673412> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments]; http://www.bsbd.org/uk/page_9640752.html [In English, consolidated version with amendments until 2014];
- Environmental Protection Act, <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135458102> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments]; http://www.bsbd.org/uk/page_9640752.html [In English; consolidated version with amendments until 2014]
- Protected Areas Act, <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2134445060> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments]; http://www.bsbd.org/uk/page_9640752.html [In English, consolidated version with amendments until 2014]
- Black Sea Coast Development Act, <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135555697> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments], http://www.bsbd.org/uk/page_9640752.html [In English; consolidated version with amendments until 2014]
- Underground Resources Act, <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2134650880> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments], <http://www.me.government.bg/en/library/underground-resources-act-321-c25-m258-1.html> [In English; consolidated version with amendments until 2011]
- Waste Management Act, <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135802037> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments]
- Spatial Planning Act, <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135163904> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments]
- Disaster Protection Act, <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135540282> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments], <http://www.mi.government.bg/en/library/disaster-protection-act-304-c25-m258-1.html> [In English; consolidated version with amendments until 2011].
- Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135184393> [in Bulgarian, consolidated version with all amendments].

Specific citations

ⁱ Ministry of Environment and Waters (2013), Report on Art. 8, 9 and 10 from the MSFD, Sea Basin Black Sea, p. 4.

ⁱⁱ http://www3.moew.government.bg/files/file/Legislation/Naredbi/vodi/N_morskite_vodi.pdf.

ⁱⁱⁱ Basin Directorate for Water Management in the Black Sea Region, http://www.bsbd.org/bg/page_1722859.html, accessed on January 2020. [In Bulgarian]

^{iv} Marine Strategy on Protection of the Environment in the Marine Waters of the Republic of Bulgaria, http://www.bsbd.org/UserFiles/File/Sea/Морска_стратегия_Р_България.pdf.

^v Programme with measures for implementation of the Marine Strategy: http://www.bsbd.org/bg/m_env_and_action.html.

Other sources

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works. The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works held the first official event under the MARSPLAN-BS project: <http://www.mrrb.government.bg/mrrb-provede-purvoto-za-bulgariya-ocialno-subitie-po-proekt-marsplan-bs/> [in Bulgarian];

Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, _The Bulgarian MSP aims to find the right balance between economic interests and ecological protection_ (<https://www.mrrb.bg/bg/prescentur/novini/page/19/>)

Report on the initial assessment of the marine sectors in Bulgaria with regard to the transposition of the Framework Directive for Maritime Spatial Planning, and to the implementation of MARSPLAN-BS project: <http://www.mrrb.government.bg/doklad-za-purvonachalna-ocenka-na-sustoyanieto-na-morskite-sektori-v-bulgariya-predvid-transponiranieto-na-direktiva-za-ustanovyavane-na-ramka-za-morsko-prostranstveno-planirane-i-izpulneniето-na-proekt-marsplan-bs/> [in Bulgarian].

COM, 640 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Green Deal, Brussels, 11.12.2019, COM (2019) 640 final.

COM, 2020/380 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives, Brussels, 20.5.2020, COM(2020) 380 final.

European Commission: European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency, ACTeon, BEF, Fresh Thoughts, GRID-Arendal, Milieu, WUR, Ruskule, A., Oulès, L., Zamparutti, T., Dworak, T., Lieberknecht, L., Strosser, P., Gea, G., Veidemane, K.Piet, G., Guidelines for implementing an ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning – Including a method for the evaluation, monitoring and review of EBA in MSP, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2926/84261>

European Commission, 2025. Commission staff working document: Evaluation of Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) (SWD(2025) 50 final, Part 1/2).

COM (2025) 281 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The European Ocean Pact, Brussels, 5.6.2025.

Cornet, A., Arki, V., Bocci, M., Ramieri, E., et al., (2023). The Green Deal Component of the EU MSP Plans, MSP-GREEN, Deliverable report D2.1., 2023, <https://mspgreen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MSP-GREEN-D2.1-Full.pdf>.

Ramieri, E., Bocci, M., Capurso, G., Soffiatti, F., (eds) et al. 2024. Recommendations on making MSP in the EU an enabler of the Green Deal- MSP-GREEN, Deliverable report D4.1, <https://mspgreen.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/D4.1-final.pdf>

Stancheva, M., Stanchev, H., Krastev, A., Palazov, A. & Yankova, M. 2017. Case Study 3 Burgas: Land-Sea Interactions. Report on WP1, Activity 1.1, Component 1.1.2, Cross border maritime spatial planning in the Black sea – Romania and Bulgaria (MARSPLAN–BS) Project. June, 2017, 126 p., ISBN: 978-954-9490-49-7 (<http://msp-platform.eu/practices/case-study-burgas-land-sea-interactions>).

Stancheva, M. et al. (2022) ‘Supporting multi-use of the sea with maritime spatial planning. The case of a multi-use opportunity development - Bulgaria, Black Sea’, Marine Policy, 136, p. 104927, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2021.104927>.

Stancheva, M., Ramieri, E., Stanchev, H., Bocci, M., Markovic, M., Roberts, T. 2025. Exploring integration of land-sea interactions in maritime spatial planning in the Bulgarian context, Black Sea, Marine Policy, Volume 171, 2025, 106416, ISSN 0308-597X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106416>.

Stancheva, M., et al., (2025). Site specific solutions for accelerating biodiversity protection and restoration in MSP (Deliverable – D5.3., under the WP5 of MSP4BIO project (GA n° 101060707)), <https://msp4bio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/D5.3-Test-sites-planning-solutions-revised-Final-checked-260325-for-website.pdf>