

Workshop Briefing Paper

Maritime Spatial Planning in Small Sea Spaces

Version: 28 February 2018

This document was developed by the European MSP Platform for the European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. It was developed to facilitate discussion at the 15 – 16 March 2018 Workshop ‘Maritime Spatial Planning in Small Sea Spaces’. The information contained in this document does not represent the official view of the European Commission.

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Introduction

The seas and coasts in Europe are becoming increasingly crowded. Direct uses of the sea range from extraction of raw materials to recreation¹. In Europe, there is strong interest in enhancing the sustainable growth of maritime economy sectors, according to the Blue Growth initiative². Moreover, the European seas host important hotspots of maritime uses and natural values: e.g. the shipping route in the English Channel; the complex pattern of sea uses in the North Sea; the biodiversity richness of the Mediterranean Sea, etc. All these factors pose challenges to Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes, particularly in small sea spaces.

Some European Union (EU) Member States (MS) possess relatively small sea areas under their national control. But issues that are typical of small spaces may also become relevant for countries with relatively large maritime jurisdictions. That is because such countries may choose to develop more than one plan. Smaller areas may need a dedicated maritime spatial plan because of their geography (bays, lagoons, straits island waters, etc.), their dense pattern of use, specific socio-cultural characteristics or their environmental vulnerability³.

In this paper, we refer to the preparation of separate plans for smaller sea areas as a 'multi-scalar' approach. Plans can be developed for different sea areas with or without spatial overlap. In the first case there is no hierarchy between the plans: they apply - with different scales and resolution - to different areas, which are part of the same national sea space. The second case involves a (factual, and sometimes formal) hierarchy of plans: a primary level of a large-scale plan has a secondary level of more detailed plans for smaller areas within it; this is also referred to as a 'nested' approach.

Moreover, a multi-scalar approach to MSP is also possible in a cross-border context (from sea basin to national / sub-national level); in this case the aim is to ensure coherence of different national plans of neighbouring countries. However this is not within the scope of this paper and workshop.

The following figure visualizes the different contexts for MSP in small sea spaces, as outlined above.

¹ Tarvainen H., Tolvanen H., Repka S. 2015. How can maritime spatial planning contribute to sustainable Blue Growth in the Baltic Sea? *Bulletin of the Maritime Institute in Gdańsk* 30(1): 86-95.

² European Commission 2012. Blue Growth - Opportunities for marine and maritime sustainable growth. http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/documentation/publications/documents/blue-growth_en.pdf

³ Schaefer N. & Barale V. 2011. Maritime spatial planning: Opportunities & challenges in the framework of the EU integrated maritime policy. *Journal of Coastal Conservation*, 15: 237-245.

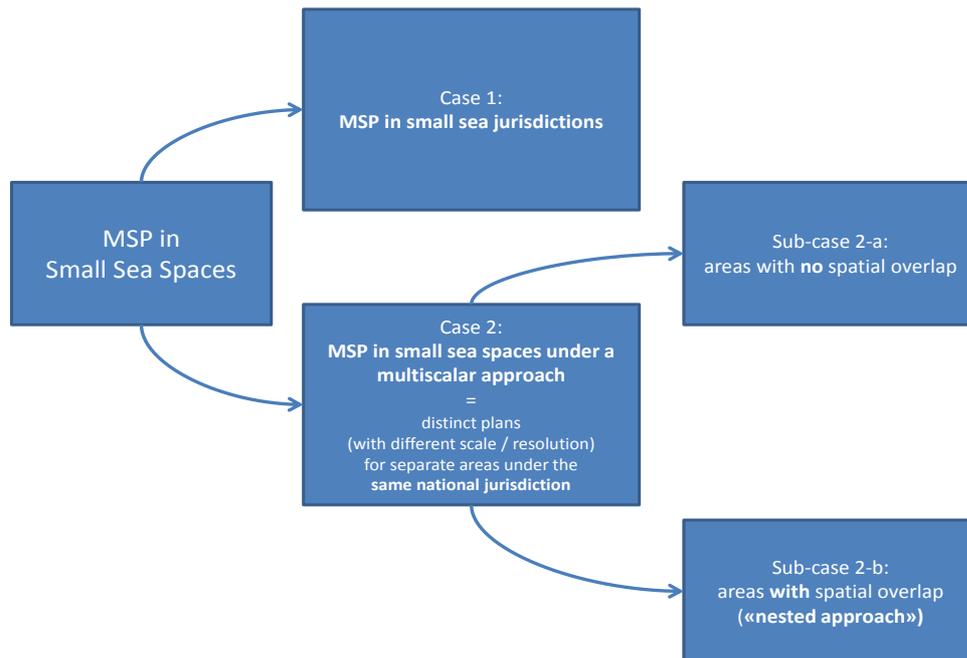


Figure 1. Different contexts for MSP in Small Sea Spaces

MSP in small sea spaces poses peculiar challenges to MSP authorities and planners. At the same time, a range of approaches and methods derived from existing experiences is available to deal with such challenges.

This briefing paper aims to provide a basis for discussion during the Workshop on MSP in Small Sea Spaces that will take place on 15 and 16 March 2018 in Portorož, Slovenia. It gives a preliminary understanding of issues (including challenges and approaches/methods) relevant for these particular MSP contexts, to be amended and enriched by the outcomes of the workshop.

Suggested topics for discussion

- How would you define a small sea space in relation to MSP?
- Is the proposed conceptualisation of small sea spaces valid? Would you propose any modification?
- What are the main commonalities of running a MSP process in small sea spaces; e.g. more detailed data and information needs, more intensive stakeholder interaction, more about current conflict resolution, links to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) processes?

Small sea jurisdictions

The limited extent of sea area under national jurisdiction is a common characteristic of several EU MS: e.g. Slovenia, Belgium, Lithuania, and Estonia. MSP in small sea jurisdictions can have some advantages: national priorities can be easier to identify, one unique MSP vision for the entire national sea area can be developed, stakeholder coordination might be easier (but not necessarily) and the MSP process can benefit from a closer link to ICZM. Nevertheless, having only limited space available to satisfy national demands poses specific challenges to the use of the sea and to the national MSP process.

For example, in the Belgian experience, the presence of many uses in a small area gives rise to pressures, related to both multiple activities taking place in the same area, and natural resources being limited in space and quantity. From an operational point of view, consideration and weighting of the different values associated with maritime activities and marine environment were

identified as key methods for developing a complete spatial structural marine plan for the Belgian part of the North Sea⁴.

A list of issues (including challenges and possible approaches/methods) relevant for MSP in small sea jurisdictions are described in the following paragraphs. It is worth noting that no specific approaches have been developed at the moment for MSP in small sea jurisdictions. Nevertheless, some tools available in general for MSP can fit particularly for small sea spaces. Some of them are given in the following paragraphs as examples. Additional useful experiences can be also accessed through the Practices database of the EU MSP Platform website⁵. Their effectiveness for MSP in small sea spaces needs to be verified.

Concentration of uses and occurrence of conflicts

In sea areas with limited extension, concentration of uses is relatively high (in comparison to countries with larger sea areas) and the occurrence of conflicts and their magnitude may be high as well. In fact, due to restricted space, sectors can encounter constraints in their development, and frictions with other sectors can become more evident and difficult to manage. Concentration of uses can affect all the spatial dimensions of the marine domain (surface waters, water column, sea bed and also air space above the sea, and sub-soil), thus posing specific challenges to MSP processes having to reconcile the tensions among sectors and interests in all these dimensions.

Conflicts may be relatively more difficult to solve because there is often no additional space to be used as compensation. Vested interests may also attempt to influence the planning process. These factors may lead to prolongation of the overall duration of the planning process. At same time, the higher density of uses may also lead to new alternative solutions: there will be more pressure on all stakeholders to look for synergies and multi-uses, which may even create new economic opportunities.

Available tools for conflict analysis (and formulation of solutions) become particularly relevant in small sea jurisdictions. Different methods have been applied and tested in several case studies across Europe, in order to provide solutions to specific tensions between economic, ecological and social dimensions of MSP. For example, a guidance document was prepared under the COEXIST project⁶ providing a comprehensive assessment of the conflicts and synergies between fisheries, aquaculture and other activities in the coastal zone in six case study areas (including countries with relatively small sea spaces: Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands). More examples are available on the EU MSP Platform website e.g. Best practice in sector conflict management for MSP⁷ or the Adriplan conflict score tool⁸.

In order to minimize conflicts and to build synergies, uses should be concentrated where possible. There is still relatively little experience on how to integrate multiple uses and functions so that they share the same space and/or time at sea. The challenge is not only to find compatible economic activities, but also combinations between environmental protection efforts and maritime uses such

⁴ Douvere F., Maes F., Vanhulle A., Schrijvers J. 2007. Role of Marine Spatial Planning in Sea Use Management: The Belgian Case. *Marine Policy* 31(2):182-191

⁵ <http://msp-platform.eu/msp-practice/database>

⁶ Stelzenmüller V., Schulze T., Gimpel A., Bartelings H., Bello E., Bergh Øivind, Bolman B., Caetano M., Davaasuren, N., Fabi G., Ferreira J.G., Gault J., Gramolini R., Grati F., Hamon K., Jak R., Kopke K., Laurans M., Mäkinen T., O'Donnell V., O'Hagan A.M., O'Mahony C., van Oostenbrugge H., Ramos J., Saurel Camille, Sell A., Silvo K., Sinschek K., Soma K., Stenberg Claus, Taylor N.; Vale C., Vasquez F., Verner-Jeffreys D. 2013. Guidance on a Better Integration of Aquaculture, Fisheries, and other Activities in the Coastal Zone: From tools to practical examples, Ireland: Coexist project, 2013, 79pp.

<http://www.coexistproject.eu/coexist-results/best-practices-guidelines>

⁷ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/best-practice-sector-conflict-management-msp>

⁸ <http://msp-platform.eu/practices/adriplan-conflict-score-tool>

as aquaculture or tourism. The on-going H2020 MUSES project⁹ (which also takes into account results of previous projects like Maribe, Tropos and Mermaid) is developing practical suggestions on how multiple uses can be combined in practice in European seas.

Spatial dynamics

Planning small sea spaces can become particularly challenging in relation to the temporal dimension of spatial needs, determined by the dynamics of economic sectors and natural processes. Changing intensities of human activities at sea (e.g. seasonality of shipping traffic; future evolution of economy-driving sectors) and changing vulnerability of important habitats (e.g. spawning grounds; resting areas for migrating species during certain periods of the year) are examples of spatial dynamics. These are more difficult to reconcile in small sea spaces with a high concentration of uses, with additional management needs for these maritime regions during the implementation phase of the plan.

Simulation models for sector dynamics can provide scenarios of evolution of spatial needs and effects of other sectors and the environment (e.g. DISPLACE project¹⁰). Their results can be considered in conflict analysis, thus introducing dynamic elements.

Land-Sea Interaction

The MSP Directive requires Member States to take into account Land Sea Interaction (LSI) during the MSP process¹¹. The relevance of LSI for MSP has been extensively discussed during the MSP Conference - Addressing Land-Sea Interactions, held in Malta in June 2017¹². LSI becomes even more relevant when the sea space facing the coasts is relatively small: the implication of coastal activities on the use of marine space (e.g. space for shipping routes to ports; space for grid connection of off-shore activities) are more intense and impacts of terrestrial activities (e.g. waste water discharge from urban areas) are higher. On the other hand - as pointed out during the LSI conference - LSI may be considered more easily by MSP in small sea space jurisdictions, where often links with ICZM are strong or the MSP forms an integral part of the terrestrial planning process (e.g. as in Lithuania¹³ or the German case of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern¹⁴).

Although many LSI issues are common to all European seas, the specific experience of LSI varies significantly between countries, particularly in relation to physical and human geography factors. The report from the MSP and LSI conference¹⁵ highlights several key issues for LSI, some of them of particular relevance for small sea spaces. For example, the transect planning approach (TPA) can be particularly useful in integrating LSI within MSP in small sea spaces. In fact, this approach focuses on particular hotspots, such as when there are overlapping uses in maritime areas and connected land zones. Due to their limited dimension, small sea spaces themselves represent hotspots and the TPA might be particularly useful.

⁹ www.muses-project.eu

¹⁰ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/model-spatial-fishery-planning-and-effort-displacement>

¹¹ Directive 2014/89/EU. Art. 4 (par. 2 and 5). Art. 6 (par. 2a). Recital 9. Recital 166.

¹² <http://msp-platform.eu/events/msp-conference-addressing-land-sea-interactions>

¹³ <http://msp-platform.eu/countries/lithuania>

¹⁴ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/maritime-spatial-plan-territorial-sea-mecklenburg-vorpommern>

¹⁵ Hannah Jones, Sue Kidd 2017. Maritime Spatial Planning Conference: Addressing Land-Sea Interactions. St. Julian's Malta, 15 - 16 June 2017. Conference Report, Version of 26 September 2017.

Free space

The possibility to leave some sea space free of any use is an important asset for MSP. Free space is relevant for the present (e.g. to leave part of the marine ecosystem undisturbed) and also for the future, in view of future spatial needs related to economic developments (e.g. international trade, transport and logistics, security of energy supply, research and innovation) and also for flexibility to cope with future scenarios, for example with the adaptation needs related to climate change. Free space is therefore a valuable resource which is much more scarce and precious for countries with small sea jurisdictions.

The concepts of co-or multi-use of sea and 'spatial efficiency' are also relevant for addressing the challenge to maintain some space free of any use.

Implementation of the ecosystem-based approach

According to the MSP Directive, MSP has to apply an ecosystem-based approach (EBA)¹⁶. In order for MSP to be considered ecosystem-based, the following should hold true: aligning with ecosystem boundaries; managing for multiple benefits; considering cumulative impacts; using best-available science and information; 5) applying the precautionary approach to deal with uncertainty; and managing adaptively¹⁷.

EBA application is in itself already challenging for any MSP process. However, implementation of an EBA in MSP in small sea jurisdictions is even more complex, as the MSP process should consider the functional boundaries of the ecosystems (as well as the effect on adjacent ones), which are often going beyond the national jurisdictional borders. Countries with small sea jurisdictions are therefore often heavily (if not almost completely) dependent upon neighbouring countries for the quality of their marine ecosystems and the services they provide.

Moreover, an EBA can also be particularly tricky to implement in small sea jurisdiction with respect to stakeholder involvement: many different actors and interests need to be considered despite the scarcity of sea space.

Some approaches to integrate EBA principles in MSP process have already been developed. In the Baltic Sea, for example, several issues have been identified for consideration in MSP within the 'HELCOM-VASAB Guidelines for the implementation of the EBA approach in MSP'¹⁸. In the Mediterranean, the ADRIPLAN methodology¹⁹ provides techniques and methods based on an EBA for the practical implementation of MSP in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region. Tools and guidelines from these and other experiences are relevant to help integrate EBA with MSP in all planning contexts. However, they have not been adapted to small sea spaces yet.

Cross-border interactions and cooperation

Interactions across borders are particularly relevant for MSP in relatively small sea spaces. The movement of organisms across borders can influence marine ecosystem status and may also have consequences on the availability of natural resources of commercial interest. Water circulation across the borders influences water quality in neighbouring areas (e.g. by bringing contaminants released from pollution sources located beyond the border). Many maritime activities have relevant cross border implications: e.g. shipping routes, installation of cables and pipelines, etc.

¹⁶ EU Maritime Spatial Planning Framework Directive (2014/89/EU). Art. 5.

¹⁷ <https://www.cbd.int/ecosystem/>

¹⁸ HELCOM-VASAB 2016. Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the Baltic Sea area.

¹⁹ <http://msp-platform.eu/practices/adriplan-methodology>

For countries with small sea areas under their national jurisdiction, these factors are particularly significant because they can strongly influence planning options and choices. Effective cross-border cooperation under the MSP process may be more important for them than for the neighbouring countries with more space. In this case, the former might find it useful to understand the latter's priorities. A classic example of this is when there is a need to manage shared larger functional ecosystems.

The question of how to achieve effective cross-border cooperation and consultation is the subject of numerous projects, initiatives and studies²⁰ and will also be explored in the new Technical Study to be prepared in 2018 by the EU MSP Platform. Most notably, the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group has agreed on principles for transboundary consultation suggesting to combine formal and informal consultation and consultation with cooperation²¹.

Moreover, the Transboundary Planning in the European Atlantic (TPEA) Project delivered A Good Practice Guide²² pointing out some lessons learned for transboundary cooperation such as adopting a flexible approach to defining a transboundary area, considering geography, governance, activities, cross-border effects and stakeholders' views.

Cross-border cooperation can also be supported by overarching macro-regional and sea basin strategies and initiatives, which can provide a common environment for cooperation among MS, thus facilitating issues which might be difficult to approach and solve bilaterally. The Study on MSP and Blue Growth and the resulting Handbook on Visions²³ (to be published in early 2018) provide guidance on these aspects.

In all cases, the tools, methods and approaches suggested can be particularly relevant for the development of maritime spatial plans for MS with small sea jurisdictions.

Suggested topics for discussion

- Do you agree with the issues for MSP in small sea jurisdictions identified in the briefing paper? Are there any other issues you would like to add?
- Among the identified issues, which are of the greatest importance for MSP in small sea jurisdictions?
- What specific approaches and methods (tools) could be applied to deal with MSP in small sea jurisdictions?
- To what extent could sea basin cooperation facilitate planning of small sea jurisdictions? To what extent could commonly agreed planning principles assist?
- How could an ecosystem approach (e.g. ecosystems which stretch across administrative / national borders) be aligned with national responsibility for MSP?
- Could a common methodology (e.g. a 'blue print') for planning small sea jurisdictions be identified or should planning be conducted differently in each case (no 'one-size-fits-all' approach)?

²⁰ Study on International Practices for Cross-Border MSP. EASME. 2017

²¹ Guidelines on transboundary consultations, public participation and co-operation.
<http://msp-platform.eu/node/651>

²² <http://msp-platform.eu/practices/tpea-good-practice-guide>

²³ Maritime Spatial Planning for Blue Growth. Final Technical Study under the Assistance Mechanism for the Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning. 2018.

Small sea areas as part of a multi-scalar approach

Based on the characteristics of the sea space under national jurisdiction (e.g. dimensions, geographic features, intensity of uses, presence of vulnerable areas, synergies between uses) national MSP authorities may adopt a multi-scalar approach to MSP and prepare distinct plans for different marine areas. This approach includes a variety of situations: different areas can spatially overlap or not; different plans can be under the responsibility of the same or different authorities, and there can be a hierarchical relationship between plans. When a multi-scalar approach is applied to areas covered by plans at different levels (e.g. a national overarching plan for the entire sea space and sub-plans for some sub-areas included in this space), this is also referred to as a nested approach.

This variety of possible situations is reflected in EU countries, for example:

- In **Sweden**, three distinct plans for separate areas, covering the territorial sea from 1 nm outward of the base line and the EEZ, are under preparation by the same national authority; while coastal regions also have the right to prepare their plans up to 12 nm;
- In **Poland**, one plan covering almost the entire sea space and separate plans for lagoons and ports are under preparation (with no hierarchy between these plans);
- In **Estonia**, two maritime spatial plans have been adopted for two small sea areas' (Hiiumaa and Saaremaa Islands as well as Pärnu Bay), which now need to be integrated into the overall Estonian plan that is currently under preparation;
- In **Germany**, there is no hierarchy between the different plans; e.g. the plan prepared by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for its 12 nm zone is not under a hierarchical order of the plan prepared by the Federal Government for the EEZ;
- In **Finland**, some plans exist at regional level, which now need to be integrated into the three strategic plans that are to be developed;
- In the **UK**, the preparation of marine plans is the responsibility of the respective governments within the UK. For example, Scotland has prepared Scotland's National Marine Plan, which provides a single framework for managing Scotland's seas. This plan will be supplemented by eleven Regional Marine Plans, prepared by the Marine Planning Partnerships;
- In **Italy**, national guidelines for the preparation of maritime spatial plans have been recently finalized and three plans are going to be developed for three distinct marine areas, with the possibility to also develop small scale, nested plans for hotspot sub-areas.

In addition, plans for small sea areas can be developed independently from formal MSP processes. For example, the Scottish Sustainable Marine Environment Initiative (SSMEI), which was initiated by the Scottish Government to inform the debate on how to improve the management of Scotland's marine and coastal waters, has promoted the development of pilot plans for four Scottish marine areas: the Firth of Clyde²⁴, the Shetland Islands²⁵, the Berwickshire Coast²⁶ and the Sound of Mull²⁷.

The links between the plans developed under the same multi-scalar process may be of different nature: a national strategy (e.g. the Portuguese National Ocean Strategy 2013-2020²⁸), national guidelines for vertical and / or horizontal coordination of plans (e.g. the Dutch Policy Document on

²⁴ <http://www.clydemarineplan.scot/>

²⁵ <https://www.nafc.uhi.ac.uk/t4-media/one-web/nafc/research/document/marine-spatial-planning/simps/shetland-islands-marine-spatial-plan-SIMSP-fourth-edition-2015.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/seamanagement/regional/activity/SSMEI/latest-news>

²⁷ <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/soundofmull>

²⁸ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/national-ocean-strategy-2013-2020>

the North Sea 2009-2015²⁹), a national integrated plan (e.g. the Irish strategy Harnessing Our Ocean³⁰; the Dutch Integrated Management Plan for the North Sea 2015³¹) are all possible examples.

In all these different cases, specific challenges are posed to the use of the sea and to the MSP process in the small sea areas. Some of the issues identified for MSP in small sea jurisdictions - implementation of EBA and cross-border interactions - are challenging also in the context of MSP in small sea areas, as part of a multi-scalar MSP approach. For example, the existence of administrative borders (at sub-national level within the same country) and the limited dimension of planned areas, pose real difficulties for the integration of EBA and MSP, particularly when taking into consideration the functional limits of marine ecosystems and the effects on / from the neighbouring ones. Other issues identified for small sea jurisdictions - *concentration of uses, sea spatial dynamics, land-sea Interaction and the availability of free space* - might be met more easily when small sea spaces are part of a multi-scalar approach to MSP within the same country sea space. In fact, spatial needs in one sub-area can be shifted to other sub-areas under the same national jurisdiction: e.g. re-locating natural protected areas or free space. When this is not feasible, these challenges remain, and could be addressed through the approaches suggested in the previous section.

In addition, specific issues (including challenges and approaches and method to address them) may be identified for planning small sea areas as part of a multi-scalar approach. A list of these is provided in the following sub-paragraphs. It is worth noting that specific tools have not yet been developed for MSP in small sea areas under a multi-scalar approach. Nevertheless, some tools available in general for MSP can fit particularly for these types of small sea spaces. Some of these tools are given in the following paragraphs as examples. Additional useful experiences can be also accessed through the Practices database of the EU MSP Platform website³². As in the case of small sea jurisdictions, the effectiveness of these tools for MSP in small sea spaces needs to be verified and adjustments are probably needed.

Identification of hotspot areas

A crucial step under a multi-scalar approach to MSP is the identification of hotspot areas for which small scale plans are needed. Geographical features (bays, lagoon, straits, island waters), distribution of maritime activities (high concentration of uses of the sea), ecosystem vulnerability (hotspots of biodiversity, nursery / recovery areas for natural populations) are all possible criteria.

So far there are no commonly agreed criteria at EU level on how to identify such areas. It may be useful to apply the subsidiarity principle and deal with spatial challenges at the lowest possible level³³, by developing specific plans. Subsidiarity is one of the most important principles framing the system of spatial structure planning. It has an important role in determining the allocation of responsibilities and functions between the levels (or among different sub-areas): each level should be able to develop its own area-specific implementation plans for the specific marine area³⁴. This is

²⁹ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/policy-document-north-sea-2009-2015>

³⁰ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/strategy-harnessing-our-ocean-wealth>

³¹ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/integrated-management-plan-north-sea-2015-nl>

³² <http://msp-platform.eu/msp-practice/database>

³³ Gee K., Kannen A., Heinrichs B. 2011. Vision 2030. Towards the sustainable planning of Baltic Sea space. With inputs delivered by BaltSeaPlan working group "Vision 2030"

³⁴ Adams N. 2016. Regional Development and Spatial Planning in an Enlarged European Union. Routledge.

also in agreement with one of the principles of EBA, that management should be decentralized to the lowest appropriate level.

Integrated governance

Planning small sea spaces as part of a multi-scalar approach requires good integration among all actors involved, both vertically (between the large scale strategy or plan and the sub-plans) and horizontally (among plans of different sub-areas). Enabling integration of concerns and interests across sectors, between governmental levels and / or between government and stakeholders implies adequate knowledge of the implications, requirements and planning criteria for the various individual sectors. Therefore, it is important that MSP processes can proactively resolve spatial conflicts and promote spatial synergies. To achieve this, MSP needs to promote integrated governance by activating dialogue with actors involved at all levels.

Appropriated institutional and policy framework to effectively implement MSP under a multi-scalar approach can benefit from:

- Building a multi-level governance scheme for MSP and management, covering the national to the local level (vertical integration) and across different local levels (horizontal integration)
- Connecting governance and management schemes in order to ensure consistency to the implementation and monitoring of the system of plans developed.
- Finding agreement across government agencies with competing and sector-driven views on the marine domain may be more difficult than finding agreements between governments at different scales. For instance, while procedural rules form the basis of institutional arrangements between national and regional governments, the inter-departmental processes to deliver policies may be less clear. As a response, national jurisdictions often establish a central coordinating authority³⁵.

Data coherence

Data availability is crucial for all MSP processes. As an additional complexity, under a multi-scalar approach, data with different resolutions need be collected with different aims, in the frame of different planning processes and they should provide a coherent picture of interactions among the planned areas. Small sea spaces might rely on better data (which is not always true), but generally more detailed data are also needed to support more detailed planning.

Coordination and coherence among nested plans will improve if they are all based on the same data.

Despite not being specific to small sea spaces, some experience is available on data sharing functions. In fact, most countries are making efforts to develop evidence strategies for MSP and are considering options for MSP data infrastructures, including the creation of GIS databases to support the MSP process. In some cases this is under development in the context of a multi-scale MSP process. Fully operational MSP portals and GIS databases include for example those of the UK (England, Scotland) and to some degree Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Other countries are developing, or are planning to establish, GIS MSP portals (Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and UK (Northern Ireland))³⁶. Data portals can

³⁵ Hassan D., Kuokkanen T., Soininen N. (Eds.) 2015. *Transboundary Marine Spatial Planning and International Law*. Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN. ISBN: 978-0-415-73970-2.

³⁶ MSP Data Study Executive Summary. Technical Study under the Assistance Mechanism for the Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning, 2016.

provide the opportunity to zoom in on small areas and obtain detailed data on the area of interest. For example, the Welsh marine portal also includes data for small sea areas³⁷.

Despite these experiences, these methods would still need to be tailored to be fully exploited in small sea spaces, for example by developing operational and functional links between national and sub-national data infrastructures for MSP.

Integrated planning process and coherence of plans

The plans prepared under a multi-scalar approach should be coordinated and coherent in terms of objectives, methods (e.g. involvement of stakeholders), assumptions (e.g. continuation of shipping routes) and provisions. Coordination and coherence should be guaranteed both vertically, with the overarching plan – under a nested approach, and horizontally, among the different sub-plans. Challenges in vertical and horizontal coordination are different. For example, ensuring coherence of spatial provisions of different horizontal plans might be difficult due to the need to reconcile different priorities for maritime development in different neighbouring marine areas.

In addition, coherence of methods (e.g. stocktaking assessment, scenarios development, stakeholder engagement, etc.) might be more challenging when dealing with different planning levels, under a nested approach (e.g. activating local stakeholders in small area can be very time and resource demanding). In the case of hierarchically linked plans, coherence must be ensured at various levels, from visions and objectives to plan measures.

Timing is also an important factor, and one which needs to be coordinated, especially under a multi-scalar approach.

Developing a common vision for different planning areas can provide a base for / coordination of plans under a multi-scalar approach. This allows a system approach to MSP that considers a larger marine ecosystem that crosses boundaries between different planning areas (either overlapping or not). It might be particularly useful when the maritime sectors' development in one area may influence the maritime environment in another, and there is a need to find consensus. On the other hand, development requirements of a certain sector require coherence in planning certain aspects in bordering areas (e.g. shipping lanes, underwater cables), and the development of a joint vision can help in this regard. The 'Handbook on Visions' – prepared within the framework of the Technical Study: MSP for Blue Growth' by the EU MSP Platform and to be published in early 2018³⁸ – should support planners in developing such future vision

Planning under a multi-scalar approach requires an integrated stocktaking assessment of the entire planning area. This should be coherent with the more detailed sub-area assessments. Ensuring coherence of stocktaking at different scales implies data coherence (see previous point) but also coherence of methods, indicators and approaches between the different planning processes, when considering natural characteristics of the areas, the economic activities and the spatial requirements of both.

Shared tools can improve the coherence of stocktaking among different plans under a multi-scalar approach. Many practices and tools are available for integrated assessment in general, and

³⁷ <http://lle.gov.wales/apps/marineportal/#lat=52.5145&lon=-3.9111&z=8>

³⁸ Maritime Spatial Planning for Blue Growth. Final Technical Study under the Assistance Mechanism for the Implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning. 2018.

particularly for cumulative impacts assessment. A roundtable on this topic was recently organized by the EU MPS Platform³⁹. Among the available experiences of integrated, multi-scale assessment, the NEAT tool (Nest Environmental status Assessment Tool Methodology) developed under the DEVOTES project⁴⁰ can be mentioned. The central principle in the NEAT method is a hierarchical, nested structure of spatial assessment units (SAU) and habitats. The order of these hierarchies is such that the assessment begins with the hierarchically nested SAUs. This tool can help to determine how pressures from human activities and climatic influences can affect marine ecosystems and identify indicators available to assess biodiversity, specifically in a nested approach context.

Multi-scalar stakeholder engagement

A multi-scalar approach to MSP calls for specific tools to engage with stakeholders at different levels. Engaging stakeholders at the national level generally requires a more formal approach, with specific methods (e.g. formal meetings, circulation of official documents). Instead, stakeholders at the local level (including local representatives of sectors, NGOs, etc.) would require more direct and informal, but highly efficient methods (e.g. focus groups, workshops / interviews, web-based dialogue platforms). For a multi-scalar planning approach to be successful, interactions and exchanges between groups at different levels or among different sub-areas (horizontal dimension) must be ensured.

Examples of tools to support multi-scalar dialogue are widely available. For instance, a Latvian capacity building effort, which pays special attention to all stakeholders including smaller groups with limited resources and capacities,⁴¹ or the web application Boundary-GIS Geoportal that was developed in Estonia within the BaltSeaPlan project, could support stakeholder involvement. The web application allows any kind of stakeholder to view the current planning status of an area and to comment upon them. The user can do so without any specific IT skill⁴². The Dutch-developed MSP Challenge Simulation Game 2050 is a computer-supported simulation-game that gives actors insight into the diverse challenges of sustainable planning of human activities in the marine and coastal ecosystem⁴³. This valuable experience not only 'educates' those involved in the process of MSP but can develop an important shared understanding of the challenges involved and sharing of ideas for management solutions. Finally, practices for multi-scalar engagement and cooperation in a national MSP context can be also capitalized from cross-border (cross-country) experience. Recommendations have been developed under the PartiSEApate⁴⁴, BalticScope⁴⁵ as well as the BaltSpace⁴⁶ project. In particular, the Handbook on multi-level consultations in MSP provides an insightful checklist of tasks that MSP organizers should perform at different stages of the MSP process with stakeholders at multiple levels⁴⁷.

³⁹ Cumulative Impacts Tools Expert Roundtable. 18.01.2018. Venice, Italy. Agenda and presentations are available at <http://msp-platform.eu/events/archive>. A report with major outcomes is going to be published soon.

⁴⁰ www.devotes-project.eu

⁴¹ See Zaucha J. 2014. The key to governing the fragile Baltic Sea, Riga: VASAB available at <http://www.vasab.org/index.php/maritime-spatial-planning/msp-book-2014>

⁴² <http://msp-platform.eu/practices/baltseaplan-web-application-boundarygis>

⁴³ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/msp-challenge-simulation-game>

⁴⁴ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/projects/multi-level-governance-msp-throughout-baltic-sea-region>

⁴⁵ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/projects/towards-coherence-and-cross-border-solutions-baltic-maritime-spatial-plans>

⁴⁶ <http://msp-platform.eu/projects/towards-sustainable-governance-baltic-marine-space>

⁴⁷ <http://www.msp-platform.eu/practices/handbook-on-multi-level-consultations-in-msp>

Suggested topics for discussion

- Do you agree with the issues for MSP in small sea areas as part of a multi-scalar approach identified in the briefing paper? Are there any others issues that you would like to add?
- Among the identified issues, which are of major importance for MSP in small sea areas as part of a multi-scalar approach?
- How could hotspot areas be identified for which a nested approach is required? Is there a hierarchy between the plans and / or how is coherence between more strategic plans and nested plans achieved?
- How are existing (nested) plans integrated into overarching strategic plans (also potentially prepared later)?
- To what extent is the principle of ‘spatial subsidiarity’ (spatial challenges dealt with at the lowest most appropriate spatial level) known and adhered to?
- What approaches and methods can support vertical coordination with overarching plans / strategies?
- What approaches and methods could support horizontal coordination among sub-plans?