



Communicating MSP

An inspiring era of cooperation
between institutions



Communicating MSP Webinar

Date: March 16th | 14h00 – 17h00 CET

Event report

Foreword:

The European MSP Platform organized an online event dedicated to communication tools, strategies and examples which have proven successful for Maritime Spatial Planning advancement in Europe. In partnership with IOC UNESCO MSP global initiative, this event reached stakeholders well beyond European Member states with participants from Morocco, China, Iran, Norway and Iceland.

As pointed out in the introduction to the webinar by Felix Leinemann (Head of Unit, DG MARE), Maritime Spatial Planning is a key tool to create synergies between sectors. With the deadline for developing MSP strategies in Europe the 31st March 2021, this event was aimed at taking stock of successful practices in informing, disseminating, and engaging the various audiences and stakeholder levels needed to produce effective, shared and well-adjusted strategies. The Directive requires states to work together across borders. How do we manage to deliver on the objectives? Why should we communicate about this? Is MSP well known? These are some of the questions addressed in this event and for which each expert and speaker involved shared their answers and advice. We hope you will find these examples interesting and look forward to communicating MSP.

Content of the report:

Below you will find the first section presenting the material and guidance provided by the MSP experts from IOC UNESCO MSP Global and from the European MSP Platform. Section two presents three projects selected to demonstrate how MSP can be communicated and made more interactive, and includes the material and video presentations of the invited speakers.

1. Communicating MSP: expert inputs and survey results

a. Demonstrating MSP in the making Aya Khalil (MSP global):

Since its beginning, and with the publication of the Communicating MSP handbook, the European MSP Platform has collaborated with IOC UNESCO MSP Global on several occasions. During this webinar, Aya Khalil took the opportunity to explain how the MSP Global website is a corner stone of the effort to demonstrate and build the MSP capacity of stakeholders internationally. Insisting on the key question “*How to show stakeholders your involvement and actions in the MSP process?*” MSP Global showed for instance how they promote pilot MSP projects in the West Med and South Pacific with content available in local language, how to properly keep the audience informed and up to date with news and event resources. The importance of user friendly and accessible media libraries such as photo galleries,

was also highlighted. Finally, choosing the right connections between your website and social media was underlined, opening the way to further details on the use of social media platforms with examples such as the Irish online MSP campaign further described.



Q? Taking the MSPglobal website as an example, what other type of content/resources would you add to communicate better with MSP stakeholders?

The availability of MSP related videos was identified as a key priority for most of the participants

MSP websites need to put an emphasis on video content (videos of conferences and workshops, short videos explaining MSP elements/phases, video factsheets).

Other resources identified included

- Stakeholder contact list
- links to national MSP documents
- Clubhouse meetings
- Notice board type function to facilitate exchange outside of ‘formal events’

Q? In one or two words, define what you expect to get from an MSP knowledge hub.



Q? What communication action would be more beneficial to involve private stakeholders at the local scale? (fisheries, logistics, engineering, food service industry, etc.)

Although in an ever more digital era, participants highlighted the need to organise face to face meetings and stakeholder consultations, with agendas outlining clearly the specific opportunities for each sector to be involved. MSP communication actions must be tailor made to fit the priorities and interests of the targeted sector.

Other actions identified included

- interactive and sector specific workshops and world cafés
- Consultations, engagement with representative associations, organisations, multi stakeholder platforms.
- Explanatory booklets sent when inviting stakeholders
- set the clear idea – why stakeholders would like to be involved?
- presence in local media, brochures
- Local roundtables and early involvement in MSP

b. Visual and experience communication: Patrycja Enet (European MSP platform)

Patrycja Enet is the North Sea basin expert of the European MSP platform. Giving an overview of several experiences and good practices from Member states, Patrycja described several types of communication tools insisting on data and visual communication. From maps to charts, interactive visuals and diagrams, the bottom line of efficient data-based communication is quality: quality data is crucial for MSP, for developing new activities, policy-making, monitoring etc. as well as to deliver precise and robust messages. Regardless of the stage of your MSP strategy, Patrycja reminded participants that communication takes place at every stage of the process. From improving public participation through public consultations to sharing lessons learned by the Member states, all these steps rely on the quality and attractiveness of the data and information you will share with the audience. Vigilance must be kept on unharmonized data ([Refer to the recent work from the TEG Data for MSP](#)), and this is where joint initiatives and data sharing platforms such as Copernicus and

EMODnet are essential to achieve the objective of creating harmonized data sets. Such efforts are key to make MSP attractive, understandable, and easier to communicate.

 **Video of the session**



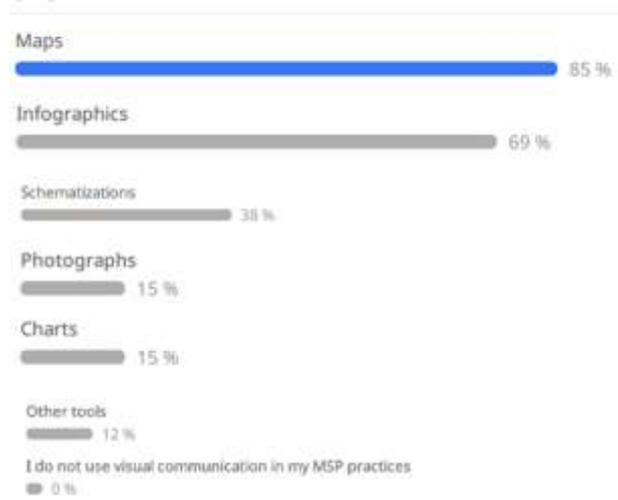
Q? What in your opinion would help with visual communication?

To use data visualization, most of the participants highlighted the need for **training** and ensuring that the tools and software can be used within institutional and governmental limitations. Together with the need for access to quality and transferable data, tools and methods to produce visual outputs are indeed a topic on which guidance, examples and capacity building could be provided.

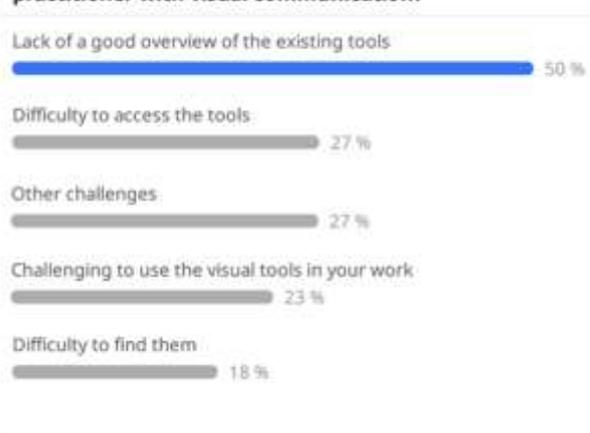
Other suggestions identified included

- 3d representation of the uses
- Balance between printed and digital materials
- 4D representations of sea areas
- have stakeholders make their interests visual in their own chosen format
- Templates and easy to edit materials

Which type of visual communication is most relevant in your opinion to communicate MSP principles and methods?
(1/2)



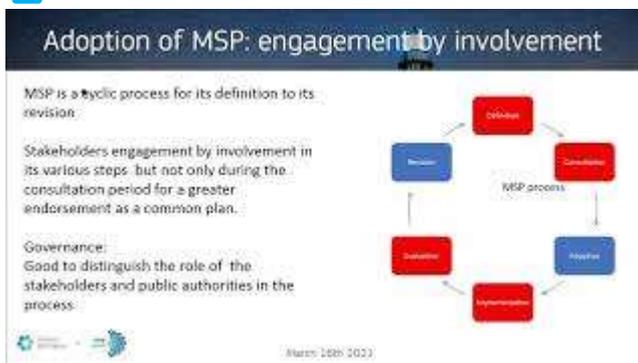
What are the challenges you meet as a practitioner with visual communication?



c. Adoption of MSP: engagement by involvement: Frederick Herpers (European MSP platform)

Frédéric Herpers is the Atlantic sea basin expert of the European MSP platform. Following his experience with MSP consultation and engagement processes in this area and in France in particular, Frédéric shared his experience of shared diagnosis to define, map and engage different audiences in the collective management of their maritime and coastal capital. In the case of the Loire Atlantique region, such initiatives took the form of a “ maritime and coastal challenge”, a territorial consultation and engagement process which emphasized on the land/sea connection and different visions and understandings of MSP seen from these different angles. With this example Frédéric also highlighted the importance of the cyclical aspect of MSP processes from definition to revision: stakeholder engagement and involvement needs to be planned for the different stages and not only during the initial consultation period, in order to ensure greater endorsement as a common plan.

Video of the session



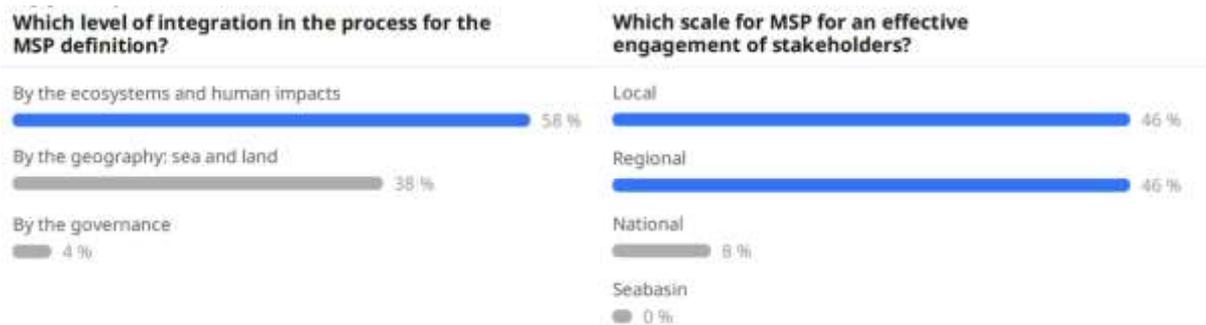
Q? Land/sea interactions are pivotal for MSP definition. How can MSP process improve involvement of land-based stakeholders?

With this question, participants predominantly referred to **Ocean literacy** as the vector to improve the connection with communities and stakeholders not physically linked to the coastal and maritime environment. Education on maritime issues, not only for younger generations but also in entrepreneurship and governance bodies, showing that the economic impacts and linkages between activity on land and at sea need to be amplified with ocean literacy actions.

Other keywords and concepts included

- Economic impact assessments.
- Link up through the national land planners and their stakeholders
- Link with schools, chambers of commerce
- Demonstrating the importance of land-sea links for different sectors, e.g. tourism, trade
- Clarify the connections

This session also showed that for a majority of the participants, **ecosystems and human impacts** are the most relevant level to integrate in the definition of MSP strategies. It also appears that the most adapted levels for effective engagement around MSP are the **local and regional** levels.



2. Focus on three MSP projects: speaker inputs and take home messages

a. MSP communication initiatives: Maritime spatial plan Finland 2030

The workshop ‘Finland Maritime Spatial Planning 2030’ focused on the Finnish experiences in the development of a national maritime spatial plan (MSP) covering a range of constituents in a collaborative process [of developing MSP]. Mari Pohja Mykra¹ from the Regional Council of South West Finland gave an overview of the Finland’s Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 and presented the achievements and challenges in the process of MSP development in Finland. The presentation was followed by a Q&A session that gave an opportunity for participants to engage in the discussion. Tiina Tihlman, Ministerial Advisor from the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, provided additional insights on experiences and processes from Finland in the discussion part of the session.

The discussion focused on examples of successful experiences from Finland that other countries could look at, specifically in order to scale them up. These also included challenges that Finland faced and overcame, with useful lessons learned to share with other countries. On this occasion, we heard about the focus of the specific methods that Finnish planners used and relied on in the process of stakeholder involvement and engagement throughout the MSP process.

Based on the experiences in the development of Finland Maritime Spatial Planning 2030, as well as the outcomes from the discussion that followed, we formulated the following key take home messages:

1. “Looking through scenarios into the future is an important element of stakeholder engagement in MSP”

Future scenarios and visions were prepared and discussed by stakeholders during several workshops. This participatory planning encompassed 350 stakeholders in the scenario phase (discussing key change factors, such as the marine environment, environmental attitudes, climate change, urbanization, security situation, maritime sectors) and 380 stakeholders in the vision phase (including Shared Vision 2050, Sector-specific visions 2030, Roadmaps). It has been recognized in the process of these workshops that looking into the future through scenarios is not only an important part of MSP

¹ **Mari Pohja Mykra** is a coordinator of the Finnish Maritime Spatial Planning Cooperation. She is an ecologist specializing in biodiversity research, with a PhD in Environmental Science, and she has 20 years of experience in natural resource conflicts, adaptive management, and collaborative governance. Before joining MSP, she has been a senior researcher at the Ruralia Institute and at the Institute of Sustainability Science, University of Helsinki in Finland.

(i.e. to include considerations of future developments in MSP), but it also serves as a participatory approach for engaging stakeholders to discuss possible pathways for planning of marine/coastal areas.

2. “Effective communication is key to conflict mitigation. Take it to the local level. Wise planning includes anyone that the plan affects.”

These messages came as key points from the presentation and discussion highlighting that at the core of the MSP process is conflict management with participatory approaches encompassing local-level knowledge, and that maintaining effective communication among stakeholders is important in conflict mitigation. Therefore, MSP planners should be involving and engaging all parties that the plan affects, including stakeholders from the local level, in planning processes. It was mentioned that perhaps during the first process (despite the collaboration and shared vision), not everyone was sufficiently involved and not all maritime sectors were satisfied with the final plan, but there are lessons learned and opportunities to take forward to the future to reach out to more local stakeholders during the next planning round.

3. “Learning by selecting relevant communication tools that best address your stakeholders”

Finland developed and presented their MSP plan in a digital way only, Finland developed and presented their MSP plan in a digital way, a choice which was welcome by stakeholders and a large portion of the public. That included a platform for discussion and public hearing/ consultation (providing information that is required and enabling an easy way for cross referencing), a platform for interactive mapping (ArcGIS Online), and a platform for informing a wider public (with story/web maps summarizing the current state of the process, Vision 2030 videos). We discussed that in other countries the solely digital form might not be satisfactory since stakeholders would require more tangible ways for engagement. That was an example of differences between European countries, which experience participation and communication in different ways from one country to the another and have other needs for the types of communication tools to enhance participation². Therefore, we concluded, that selecting relevant communication tools that best address stakeholders in MSP is a process of learning and should be done based on the stakeholders’ needs and understanding.



² due to a diverse cultural background

b. Irish MSP communication

Conor Mc Cabe from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage presented the online communication strategy for the Irish MSP consultation processes, through social media and Twitter.

By means of a dedicated website page and Twitter account, Marine Planning Ireland has created a consistent and recognisable interlocutor addressing both a specialised audience (the website hosts the policy documents, MSP consultation and updates regarding MSP implementation) as well as a wider and more interactive public (the Twitter page informs over 1400 followers about public consultation updates, meetings and news about MSP in Ireland and Europe). Connor insisted on the strong points of social media which can help reach stakeholders such as political representatives active on these networks, and act as a stepping stone towards improved visibility of a consultation process or MSP update at local and regional level. One of the downfalls of engaging via social media can of course be the “trolling” suffered when poorly relevant comments and political attacks are made in reply to messages relating to local, regional or national policies. Although the risk exists, this should not discourage MSP stakeholders and institutions from investing some time into publicly sharing their progress, consultation announcements or any update about their MSP processes. The best way in such cases is to ignore such messages. Also, a point was made on the importance of engaging with a proactive and dynamic MSP social media community, with accounts such as [EASME](#), [DG MARE](#), [MSP Global](#) and of course [EU MSP platform](#). Interacting with these accounts, quoting them and tagging them (citing their account name in a picture associated with your message on social media as made possible by Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook), is a good way of creating engagement, ensuring your message is seen by a community of MSP enthusiasts who will echo your message and improve its visibility.

Take home messages:

- **Twitter and social media can be useful to reach out to public for consultation processes but also as a sort of “log book” of your regular activities and progress with MSP:** in the case of the Irish MSP, Twitter was used to keep communities informed of planned meetings on the ground and showed the “real life” of an MSP planning process on the ground.
- **Social media can provide a real boost to the visibility of your MSP state of play and process** by engaging specific communities: for instance **academy, marine renewables and aquaculture**, have proven to be key multipliers for MSP message in Ireland by picking up and sharing updates of the account [Marine Planning Ireland](#).
- **Some user communities are not present on social media**, and specific user groups such as fisheries communities must be met on the ground. But this can be a great opportunity to develop on the ground capacity building sessions with such users to familiarize them with the use of such tools and help these stakeholders to increase the ways in which they can express their opinions and gather information on MSP.

Video of the session



c. MSP Challenge

How can we demonstrate concretely what a Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process is and why we are doing it? The concept of the MSP Challenge first emerged in 2011 in the Netherlands – in parallel with the launch of the national process – to align the various demands and experiences of stakeholders in MSP.

Initially developed as an online simulation platform, a simplified board game version was later created in 2016 to complement it and open participation to a wider audience, including in different languages. As participants – with their own background and level of expertise – are asked to role-play different roles and collaborate on key issues, each session is unique and provides an opportunity to gain knowledge and focus on joint challenges within an informal, open learning environment.

For a decade now, the MSP Challenge has innovated the way we talk about and present MSP, diversifying the groups of stakeholders involved and growing a global community of practice in partnership with institutions such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and the European Commission (DG MARE). Looking towards the future, decision-makers and practitioners can use this best practice to develop communication and engagement activities for their own process and reach a consensus on MSP initiatives.

Key Recommendations and lessons learned:

- **Diversify** the groups of stakeholders playing the game to bring in various perspectives
- **Provide a safe environment** so participants feel free to speak out and express their opinions
- **Explains MSP** in an easy-to-understand way and crosses language barriers
- **Serious gaming innovates** the way we use to talk on MSP

Video of the session



3. Conclusions

Building on the success of the Communicating MSP handbook, this webinar allowed participants the authors, as well as the participants to explore key sections of the handbook in more detail, expanding on the examples and case studies.

Importantly the webinar in itself was an exercise and example in MSP communication, making use of a combination of tools, some traditional such as power point slides, and others more interactive such as the use of videos and live-polling through tools such as Slido.

In an era of frequent and often lengthy video conferences, necessitated by the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic, participants commented on the effectiveness of the more informal approach taken to the breakout rooms, which is something that could be considered as part of ongoing initiatives.

As was highlighted in the webinar and is true of all consultation, engagement, and communication initiatives, try to keep it short, simple and appropriate to your audience... and on that note... thank you for reading.

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