

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) for Blue Growth

How to plan for a Sustainable Blue Economy?

Key messages from the 'MSP for Blue Growth' Conference in Brussels on 11/12 October 2017

At the conference actors in MSP processes and in Blue Growth sectors expressed support to meet the commitments made under the Paris agreement and to achieve SDG14 for the Oceans (please refer to the 'Our Oceans conference' held early October 2017).

A. Maritime Spatial Planning processes

- **Framework for certainty, enabler of investment:** MSP is key to provide certainty for sectors ('de-risking') - thus creating a stable and predictable regulatory environment and so helping to promote investment.
- **Come out of your bubble!** MSP practitioners should go out to the sectors and learn to speak their language.
- **Anticipation is key!** Get started but look beyond 2021 as the first generation of MSP expires - keep ongoing afterwards.
- **Long-term visions have to be complemented by long-term commitments.** This includes time to build trust and confidence.
- **Highlight the benefits of MSP for the sectors.** Work with the sectors so that they learn the benefits of engagement. Emphasise opportunities as an entry point into engagement and cooperation. Start and take the easy wins. MSP can promote knowledge exchange between sectors too. There is a need for solid evidence about what sectors need and their impacts.
- **Location, location, location!** A lot of sectors require long-term and stable locations - based on specific resource potential (ocean energy, marine aggregates, aquaculture, oil and gas) - a challenge to combine this with adaptive management and flexible planning practices.
- **Mapping of areas of high potential is key.** - Take into account the markets (what sort of fish) and future demands (what type of sand we need for tomorrow's concrete).
- **MSP also can promote synergies between governments.** It requires cross-cutting and inter-ministerial / departmental cooperation, including that of regulatory bodies.

B. Stakeholder and sector engagement

- **Engaging with stakeholders is of critical importance for MSP.**
- **MSP needs to interact with individual sectors (and at multiple scales).** This can go through sector platforms and fora (e.g. shipping and aquaculture).
- **There is an enormous variety and diversity of sectors.** Not only a differentiation between sectors but also within sectors.
- **Have a robust need for a structured, strategic and step-by-step approach to stakeholder engagement.** Reach out at the right time; start with the individual sectors, then broaden to multiple sectors and then to the broader audience.
- **Work with the media as a force to engage with.** They are a lever to the public and to politicians too.
- **Watch out: traditional sectors also change!** They do because of new technologies. This creates new opportunities, for example in shipping, digitalisation in fishing, VMS, or tourism).
- **MSP is an important tool to support the 'new kids on the block'** - to encourage and provide the future space for emerging sectors such as ocean energy and aquaculture.
- **MSP can promote collaboration between sectors.** Synergies are difficult to obtain - it is difficult to get them top-down. Interaction with sectors is more nuanced than a table with 'red' (tensions) and 'green' (synergies). Watch out for over-generalisation and find opportunities from case to case. But simply by bringing together sectors, synergies can develop spontaneously. Emerging sectors are often more open to synergies than mature ones.