Working Group on Data for MSP

Subgroup 1 – Mapping of existing and available MSP data across the EU

Tuesday 30 June 2020 – Online Meeting

Synthesis
Version of 24/08/2020

Presence or represented:

Please refer to attached list of participants.

Meeting summary

The recently formed Technical Expert Group on MSP Data was established to increase dialogue within the European MSP community and to move towards more robust and common standards in terms of MSP-related data collection and delivery. Under the TEG, a working sub-group has been formed to focus on Mapping of MSP-related studies and data sources.

This is the first meeting of Subgroup-1 which aims to address the issue of data sources, availability and requirements, which will require cooperation across sea basins to identify the needs in the area of MSP data for implementation. The key questions to be addressed are:

- What data is available?
- What data is missing?
- What issues can be resolved?

In the first session, MSP Planners were invited to provide their perspective with regards to the availability and access to relevant data sets. A synthesis of the presentations is given below.

In the second session, the floor was open to all participants, which allowed for:

- Discussion of the existing data sets for MSP in each of the EU sea basins
- Consideration of the MSP Data needs at the EU level.

MSP data Availability from the Planners Perspective

1) *Baltic Sea Perspective – Latvia: The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia. HELCOM-VASAB Data Expert Group. Presented by Kristine Kedo*

   The Latvian MSP covers Latvian waters. Its aim is to balance the interests of different marine space users. The Plan was adopted in May 2019 and is valid until 2030. Further focus should be made on improvement of data for decision-making and new uses. This particularly refers to environmental and fisheries data. The adopted version of the Plan is published on the national geoportal and regional HELCOM data portal. Extensive work was undertaken on data mapping.

The main challenges encountered:

- Converting the large amounts of paper data into a digital format (i.e. multiple data tables had to be integrated and analysed);
- The data was in different scales and formats and was not georeferenced (i.e. depth data, modelling data for wind platforms, land-based information to connect energy to transmission infrastructure on the coast); and
- Limited environmental data.

A significant amount of the data has been reported to HELCOM (i.e. data on sediments and nature conservation areas, ecosystem services mapping etc). The seas were divided in GRIDs, followed by production of ecological value maps (i.e. mammals, birds, alga etc.). Regarding shipping, the AIS data was applied within the national process. The data was combined with structured interviews conducted in ports. The evidence-based approach was applied. Overall, the shipping data is in a good state.

Among the most distinguished projects in the Baltic Sea is the Baltic SCOPE and the Pan Baltic SCOPE. During the Baltic SCOPE project in 2016, an attempt to understand what kind of data the countries use for MSP was undertaken. The joint mapping exercise was implemented in the Central Baltic area that used "energy" as an input data. The data had different coverage. As a result of the exercise, it was concluded that representatives from an entire region had to come together and discuss the issue once again. The Baltic SCOPE project ended in September 2019. It initiated a discussion on different types of data (i.e. marine protected areas, Ramsar sites, birds, a joint map of an entire region etc), with a focus on environmentally valuable areas (i.e. green infrastructure). All countries of the Baltic Sea region came together to share access to the data to be used by different states. To produce the base maps, the data had to be harmonised. Combining different MSPs (Latvian, Polish etc) required the consideration of the way in which the areas of the sea are designated and by which maritime sectors they are occupied. This is a success story of the Baltic Sea. The Data Expert Group consists mostly of planners and representatives of MSP authorities. The issue of input data remains complicated, and the debates are ongoing. The TEG-1 could potentially assist the Baltic Sea Group to address this issue.

2) *Black Sea Perspective – Bulgaria: The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works of Bulgaria. Presented by Mrs Maria Georgieva*

Raised the issues of data quality and data availability. For the national MSP, the data and information were collected from multiple sources (i.e. private companies, universities, research institutions, aquaculture sites etc.). The data mostly covered the continental shelf and coastal areas. The data is contained in different shapefiles. All data is in ArcGIS and is in line with requirements of the national legislation. More concrete harmonisation between different institutions is necessary. A common methodology was applied during the MARSPLAN project: cross-border MSP for the Black Sea that included Bulgaria and Romania. During the preparation phase, the official data was applied, as well as the data (directly or indirectly related to the targeted area) obtained from studies, ministries, ports, infrastructure companies, universities, research institutes, NGOs, EMODnet, the MSP platform, Eurostat and other sources.

The main challenges encountered:

- A lack of good communication between various institutions;
- Differences in the way the data is maintained and processed (i.e. different shapefiles classifications etc.);
- Difficulties in accessing the data from different projects;
- A lack of cultural tradition for data sharing.

Good data is important for planning and future uses. As such, security of data sources is very important. The difficulties were overcome in different ways. In relation to the lack of data, by using different services or platforms, data from different projects related to the targeted area could be accessed, as well as by keeping the constant dialogue with representatives of different entities.

The Working Group, consisting of representatives of Bulgaria and Romania, was established to address the issue of data harmonisation and consistency within the Maritime Spatial Plans. There was an attempt to reach consensus regarding the delineation of the cross-border area, in order to work only on that area, but there is no official decision at this stage.

Round Table Discussion – Existing data sets for MSP

During the session, the floor was opened to discuss what types of data are used for the MSP processes (i.e. maritime uses, socio-economic data etc.), the data collection, and the state authorities responsible for these processes:

- What types of data exist at sea basin and EU level?
- What sectors does this data address (e.g. environmental, social)?
- Who has produced this data and where is it held?

Yolanda Sagarminaga (AZTI): highlighted their attempt to cover the information required and to use the original data sources/providers. For the moment, the data sets available constitute those related to infrastructure, data on the wastewater plants, data on different applications and uses, and the maritime traffic map.

Chair: agreed with the difficulty of finding the data and highlighted the value of EMODnet on data harmonisation at the European level.

Stefano Menegon (CNR): shared experience of using the coastal land-use data. The experts of the Institute of Marine Sciences (ISMAR) are largely involved in modelling. They use a Hydrodynamic model. This particularly refers to the Adriatic model for the discharge from the main coastal cities (of the countries surrounding the sea basin). This also involves modelling of organic matter and land-sea interactions. For now, only the hydrodynamic model (without considering other aspects) is applied. The work on developing a tool, allowing users to simulate their own discharge, is ongoing.

Alessandro Saretta (CNR): complemented the experiences of using the coastal land-use data. The ISMAR-CNR experts added to the system of classification (i.e. sea data classification list) the *land uses* and *activities* as they were missing but are important for considering the land-sea

interactions. The distance from the shore and attractiveness from the MSP perspective were also taken into account. In relation to the river discharge and distribution of pollutants, the coastal area is not really considered or classified. As adding additional elements on different topics related to MSP might be necessary, one of the things to be agreed upon is a common system of classification of the topics for MSP. As differences are possible, having a matching table for the comparison of issues would be very valuable.

Defining MSP Data needs at EU level

During the session, the following questions were discussed:

- What are the main issues relating to MSP data at the sea basin and EU level?
- How are planners overcoming the data gaps?
- What support can this sub-group provide to address these data gaps?

MSP AM: the MSP data comes from different sources and sometimes lacks geo-referencing. Are these the common themes to different countries? What can the TEG can do to address these issues?

Adam Leadbetter: confirmed that the issue of data from different sources is common. However, whether the data quality is good or bad is a very subjective issue. What is good for one purpose is not necessarily good for another purpose. It is important not to end up with different datasets for different purposes. The maturity and suitability is a better way of describing the data rather than the quality. It is not a question of poor data, but rather a question of data being not suitable for that particular purpose.

Kristine Kedo: highlighted that the good historical data, as well as knowledge of GIS and other available tools (including online tools) are also important for producing better quality data. It is important to cooperate and work on the same principles.

The floor was then open to discussion of the following questions:

- What data is used / required?
- What data sets are available / missing?

Alessandro Sarretta: brought to attention the issue of data quality. During the data collection process is valuable to have information such as EMODnet *human activities*. In smaller areas, such as Adriatic, specific data is available. The most difficult is to work with partners to describe the data. It is difficult to assess the quality of data because it is not documented. The metadata quality is particularly important. The metadata is fundamental for using the data in different areas. Sometimes, the data is publicly available. Specific licences are applied to the data. The description of how the data can be used, for which purposes, and how to access the information, should be more explicit. The missing data is mostly related to the socio-economic aspects as it is difficult to collect it.

Adam Leadbetter: highlighted the importance of fare principle as data can be interpreted in different ways. Agreed that metadata is vital for the cross-border purposes at the European level.

Maria Georgieva: underlined the fact that there is enough socio-economic data (including the municipal data). However, there is a lack of data on the deep sea and "behind" the territorial sea.

Yolanda Sagarminaga: featured the Assessment Report on the socio-economic data, which takes into account the data on population density, employment value and other aspects that can be highly valuable.

Chair: added that the Marine Information System for Europe (Marine WISE)[1] is in the process of making the data more accessible. This also includes the socio-economic data.

Bruna Campos (BirdLife): posed a question on how the data/information is to be updated? For environmental data, a significant part of the analysis is still missing. How are these tools to be updated?

Kristine Kedo: touched upon the issue of planning zones and strategic plans. Dynamic environmental data cannot be adopted, it is a matter of using the best data possible. There is an ambition to have national services with data on regional geoportals. While it depends on the country, in the Baltic Sea, it has a regular implementation and revision cycle, and it is not subject to change. It is a matter of using the data that is most up to date.

Chair: highlighted the concept of spatial data infrastructure. It is valuable when the data producers and providers share their data. In some cases, at the end of the project, the data is no longer updated. Updating the environmental data is crucial.

Adam Leadbetter: noted that for some data the citations are provided. The question is whether the dataset is being enlarged or replaced? Is it a question of replaceability of different versions of datasets or is it a question of the most recent version of the dataset?

Bruna Campos (Birdlife): highlighted the importance of raw data. Every five years, the data should be updated. For the purposes of bird distribution, the analysis would be more helpful.

Conclusions & Wrap-up

While discussions on MSP data continue, the issues still exist, since a lot of data, crucial for decision-making, is still missing. This particularly concerns the socio-economic data, which is difficult to collect, as well as limited availability of high-quality environmental data. For the purposes of assessment of species distribution, environmental analysis was identified to be even more useful. Still, the Marine WISE is in the process of making the environmental data related to implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC more accessible.

As for the data quality, it could be improved by using the most updated datasets possible from reliable and secure data sources/providers. Availability of good historical data, assessment of data suitability, as well as knowledge of GIS and other available tools (including online tools) could also contribute to better data quality. The issue of data coming from different sources should be softened through harmonisation, applying INSPIRE principles, between different institutions.

[1] https://water.europa.eu/marine

One of the things still to be agreed upon is a common system of classification of the topics for MSP. One of the aspects which the TEG could provide assistance with is facilitating communication between different institutions and notifications from data producers on data availability. With regards to the metadata, which is vital for the cross-border purposes at the European level, it was recommended that descriptions of how the data can be used, for which purposes it is suitable, and how to access the information, should be more explicitly described in the metadata descriptions. International cooperation and data sharing were also encouraged.

The next meeting of the Subgroup-1 is planned to be organised in Autumn 2020. It is suggested to submit a proposal highlighting the areas in which such discussions can contribute and to set a clear goals/targets for the Group. The discussion should lead to the specific outcomes such as recommendations on how to harmonize certain types of data needed for MSP (e.g. what type of environmental data is needed (aggregated data products/raw data etc.). There are existing tools, methods and reflections to be shared, but it is important to determine how the group can contribute and to be able to provide recommendations.