

DELIVERABLE N°2.1.

The Green Deal component of the EU MSP Plans

Appendix 4 - Summaries of key findings
at country level





CONTRIBUTORS

Emiliano Ramieri, ISMAR-CNR Pierre-Yves Belan, Cerema; Mónica Campillos-Llanos, IEO(CSIC); Martina Bocci, Pierpaolo Campostrini, CORILA; Fabio Carella, IUAV University; Cristina Cervera Nuñez, IEO(CSIC); Alexandre Cornet, Cerema; Annija Danenberg, MoEPRD; Kira Gee, BSH; Eider Graner, UBO; Bettina Käppeler, BSH; Laura Pietilä, FI RCSW; Heikki Saarento, FI RCSW; Folco Soffietti, IUAV University; Hristo Stanchev, CCMS; Margarita Stancheva, CCMS; Marta Štuba, MoEPRD & Tiina Tihlman, Ministry of Environment Finland.

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Summaries of key findings at country level

1 Introduction

The present collection of factsheets wishes to support the accessibility and promotion of the extensive research presented in the main body of “Deliverable 2.1-The Green Deal component of the EU MSP Plans”. The key findings of European Green Deal elements in the Maritime Spatial Plans of the analyzed countries are briefly presented according to the common taxonomy developed by the project and presented in Annex I.

The documents are summaries of the results available in the Country chapters of D2.1. They are organized in one page per project country, to allow for dissemination, as single documents, through the project web page (www.mspgreen.it) and/or the EU MSP Platform. The limit of one page clearly impose a great degree of simplification and elision, the interested reader is invited to access the extended version of results.

Summaries are made available in national languages on the project website and the partners websites to facilitate dissemination among national and sub-national authorities.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: BULGARIA

MSP in Bulgaria

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. At sea the 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 for use; 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 MSP Authority is the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW). The Plan is supported by Environmental Impact Assessment and a document by the Ministry of Environment and Water (MOEW) with additional measures to reach the targets of EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. The Plan was approved on 11 of May 2023 by the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria.

The European Green Deal in Bulgarian MSP Plan

1. Climate change mitigation

Climate change mitigation is not directly addressed in the vision, strategic objectives and measures of the MSP Plan. It is generally considered as a transversal topic: from renewable energy production, decarbonisation of maritime sectors, to green transformations in ports and blue carbon storage. The Plan highlights the potential for developing offshore renewable energy, however without formulating explicit quantitative objectives or allocation of reserved areas. No quantitative objectives are foreseen for clean energy transition, transformations in ports or to blue carbon storage.

2. Climate change adaptation

Adaptation is addressed in the Plan through the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Action Plan (2019). It is mainly tackled in relation to expected impacts of climate change, such as risks of sea floods, accelerated coastal erosion and applying more nature-based solutions for coastal protection. Green infrastructures to enhance coastal resilience and marine connectivity are not reflected in the Plan's goals/objectives and no specific measures are foreseen. Protection of climate-sensitive marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, and landscapes is indirectly reflected – through the provisions of the MSFD and Programme of Measures, fully integrated in the Plan. No areas are identified to be used in the future by specific sectors due to climate change (e.g., fisheries, aquaculture, MPAs, etc.).

3. Sustainable seafood production

The Plan's strategic goals and specific objectives aim to ensure that fisheries and aquaculture are developed in a sustainable and efficient way based on the ecological, economic and social pillars of the blue economy. It is addressed by various measures in line with the Common Fisheries Policy implementation: effective control on fishing areas, science-based quotas for exploited species and control on unregulated fishing, diversifying aquaculture production by tapping in economic synergies with tourism, recreational fishing and enhanced environmental services in MPAs, and promoting good aquaculture practices and market expansion. The Plan integrates the current EU and national legislation on fisheries and aquaculture. No future (reserved) zones for aquaculture are envisaged in the Plan.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

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 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. The new designated MPAs will be reflected in the Plan in the course of its revisions, however no measures on restoration or ecological blue corridors are envisaged. The Plan does promote synergies between economic sectors and ecosystem protection, through the foreseen multifunctional zones, based on the Multi-Use concept and the EMFF MARSPLAN-BS II project case study results (e.g. tourism, underwater cultural heritage and environmental protection).

5. Blue Circular Economy

The Plan recommends applying principles of the circular economy in the Black Sea region and some of its strategic goals and specific objectives do support circular economy. For example, waste prevention is addressed by a list of measures through the provisions of the WFD, the MSFD and Programme of Measures, as well as in the context of cross-border cooperation to reduce pollution. The Plan states the need to encourage investment, innovation and technological transformations in support to development of the blue economy emerging sectors.

6. Zero pollution

The Plan's vision foresees reducing the pollution, mainly through the Bucharest Convention for the Black Sea and by achieving the Good Environmental Status of sea waters with the implementation of WFD and MSFD (Programme of Measures). The specific objectives of the Plan also include a package of measures to prevent pollution, mostly related to reduction of pollutants from all maritime sectors and all types of pollutions to levels that are not harmful to marine ecosystems by preventing accidents at the sea, introduction of alien species and by effective management of land-based sources of pollution and waste. In this context, the Plan also envisages measures on the minimization of waste and marine litter originated from the maritime transport and port activities.

Fair and just transition

Stakeholders' involvement took place via formal consultations and dialogue at all stages of the Plan's elaboration, by means of thematic round tables, focus groups, interviews and public discussions. Sectoral representation of all stakeholder groups was not ensured in the planning process and mostly key governmental/state stakeholders were directly involved. The Plan does not consider gender balance in maritime professions and does not include a socio-economic assessment of its effects on different sectors, communities or groups.

Challenges and obstacles identified

Being a strategic and guiding document, the MSP Plan is more generic, and its effect is expected to be limited if more detailed and legally binding provisions are not set up during its implementation phase. Issues related with limitation of space availability and lack of high-resolution data, are pointed out as important challenges. Operationalisation of the recently adopted Plan, is considered as the most urgent challenge to be overcome. More focus on climate change impacts, offshore renewable energy and biodiversity protection will facilitate the inclusion of the EGD objectives in the Plan's implementation and revision. Involvement of all stakeholder categories in the implementation phase is key to provide up to date and accurate data, and to take all stakes in the process. There is also a need for improved articulation on the integrating role of MSP to create a practical blueprint for sea use and ecosystem conservation.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: FINLAND

MSP in Finland

The Finnish Maritime Spatial Plan 2030 was approved in December 2020. The plan has been prepared in parts in three planning areas (Northern Bothnian Sea, Quark and Bothnian Bay, Archipelago Sea and Southern Bothnian Sea, and Gulf of Finland) and covers the whole sea area of Finland starting from the coastline and including territorial waters and the EEZ. Eight coastal regional councils together with the Ministry of the Environment are responsible for the plan preparation. The MSP plan is a strategic document with an indirect impact on planning through a guiding effect on the plans of the Finnish land use planning system. Additionally, the impact arises from the linkages with other policy guidelines and strategies, regional programmes and from supporting the goals of regional development projects and other maritime management, conservation, and restoration plans. The MSP plan does not set any quantitative objectives.

The European Green Deal in Finnish MSP Plan

1. Climate change mitigation

In the Finnish MSP plan climate change mitigation is mostly considered by the promotion of offshore wind farms (OWF) and the use of new technologies and innovations in maritime sectors. The 2030 vision for the sustainable use of marine areas foresees a transition to a low-carbon and resource efficient society mainly through these methods. On the objective level, the plan aims to improve the operating environment for OWF by promoting topics such as the role of the government and regional land use plans in supporting and guiding the development. The plan map identifies potential areas for OWF development. To support the energy transition in the maritime sectors and ports the plan considers objectives for the use of new technologies and supporting research and innovation.

2. Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation as a concept is not used in the Finnish MSP plan, but there are direct and indirect references to the topic. A central measure is the identification of significant underwater natural values which are considered key areas for the provision of ecosystem services such as the protection of coastal areas in the future. The plan also includes many areas with no strategic objectives identified, providing flexibility regarding the future. To achieve the objective of a good status of the marine environment in the long-term, further consideration of how to adapt to climate change is needed. The impact of climate change on marine sectors will be further considered during the second cycle of MSP in Finland.

3. Sustainable seafood production

The plan identifies fisheries and fish farming as the main actors in sustainable seafood production in the visions, objectives, and measures. The vision identifies them as sustainable and climate-friendly sources for food in the future. The objectives support sustainable fishing that has a positive impact on the status of the marine environment and the continuation of the fishing profession. Eutrophication is a challenge for fish farming: to reduce the nutrient loads the plan identifies multiple objectives to support both technological and practical solutions. The plan map identifies potential areas for professional coastal net fishing and open sea trawl fishing. The MSP plan considers the aims of the Finnish Aquaculture Strategy to increase production and identifies potential areas for fish farming with a generalised strategic map marking. Mussel and algae farming is challenging due to the environmental settings, but the plan does address them to a lesser extent.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

One of the main objectives of the Finnish MSP plan is to support the achievement of the good status of the marine environment. This topic together with biodiversity and ecosystem protection are considered in the visions, objectives, and measures of the plan.

The plan aims to create an overview of the network of valuable marine nature areas and ecological connections but does not suggest new conservation areas. The plan does not promote any potential marine uses that are likely to lead to conflict with significant nature values.

The plan map identifies areas with significant underwater natural values, where special focus needs to be put on the preservation of the characteristics of the underwater habitats when developing marine uses. Restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems will be further investigated during the upcoming planning cycles.

5. Blue Circular Economy

Blue circular economy is to some extent considered a cross-cutting theme for many of the sectors covered by the plan. The vision promotes a future where resource-efficient and circular economy solutions form the basis for a sustainable blue economy. To some extent, the objectives consider solutions for promoting circular economy actions in the sectors. The MSP plan considers other relevant strategies and policies related to the maritime sectors, such as the Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, but is not directly connected to their objectives.

6. Zero pollution

Zero pollution is considered to a lesser extent in the MSP plan. The references to the topic in the visions and objectives mostly focus on pollution prevention in the different marine sectors. For example, the plan considers the risks of oil and chemical accidents which could occur in maritime traffic. The MSP process examined the future needs for dredging of ports and merchant shipping fairway and the most suitable banking sites for dredging masses in terms of protecting the marine environment.

Fair and just transition

The Finnish MSP plan was formed through a collaborative planning process. All authorities and organisations whose areas of activity are covered by the plan and the public interested in MSP were engaged in the plan preparation. The aim was to secure equal representation of stakeholders and the planning areas. The actualization of this goal was also followed throughout the process. The involvement of the coastal regional councils supported the promotion of regionally important actions. In practice, national and regional events were organized in all stages of planning, starting with the definition of a common approach for MSP in Finland. The aim was the co-creation of knowledge and the formation of a shared understanding and vision for MSP. The resulting MSP plan aims to cover all areas equally, by considering the operating environment for different sectors in all parts of the planning area. The planning process included an examination of the impacts that the realisation of the plan would have on multiple socio-environmental aspects such as human living conditions, biodiversity, and natural resources.

Challenges and obstacles identified

The EGD adds new objectives that MSP needs to adapt to. For example, the societal pressure to guide the green energy transition at sea requires fast and adaptable planning. MSP is a new planning tool and the ways that it can support the EGD in practice are still developing. Although Finland has extensive experience and a collection of valuable data regarding the marine topics, lack of information or understanding supporting sustainable planning decisions was identified as one of the most difficult and urgent challenges to overcome. Further assessment of the cumulative impacts of planning solutions is needed, but achieving this is challenging due to the complexity of the marine environment and the multiple new sea uses. Understanding the national and regional environmental context is crucial to solving these challenges.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: FRANCE

MSP in FRANCE

In France, four MSP documents (*Documents stratégiques de façade – DSF*) are prepared corresponding to each sea-basin/*façade* (South Atlantic, Mediterranean, North Atlantic-West Channel, East Channel-North Sea). All DSF implement the National Strategy for the Sea and the Coast (NSSC, 2017) and address the requirements of both MSP and MSF Directives. The strategic part (2019) of the plans includes an indicative zoning assigning priority sectors) and functions to sub-planning units (*vocation areas*). The operational part includes monitoring mechanisms and an action plan (last one published in 2022). The drafts of the four DSF were elaborated by the administration and were discussed within the *Façade* Maritime Councils, regrouping the main stakeholders and specifically established for this consultation. The final versions of the plans were submitted to online public consultation (8000 connexions/384 advices). The revision process of the plans is ongoing and the new NSSC is anticipated by Autumn 2023.

The European Green Deal in French MSP Plans

1. Climate change mitigation

Climate change (CC) mitigation is mostly addressed by MSP plans (hereon: the plans) in an indirect manner. This topic is considered in a transversal manner including objectives and measures for offshore renewable energy (ORE) production, storage and transportation. Quantitative energy targets are established through a national sectoral policy (the Multiannual Energy Plan). Besides ORE, all plans include measures and objectives targeting the clean energy transition in maritime sectors (low-carbon maritime fuels or sustainable maritime transportation). None of the plans includes provision on blue carbon.

2. Climate change adaptation

CC adaptation is included in the vision and/or strategic objectives measures in all plans. CC adaptation is addressed from the coastline perspective, covering issues such as coastal erosion, sea level rise and risk management (including nature-based solutions referred to as "*soft*" or "*flexible*" management). CC adaptation provisions beyond the coastal context are limited, and concern issues such as the adaptability of fisheries and the development invasive species.

3. Sustainable seafood production

Sustainable seafood production is included in the vision of three out of four plans and concern mainly fisheries and aquaculture, without making any explicit reference to sustainable algae farming/production. The plans' strategic and specific objectives include sustainable seafood production as well as several specific measures to improve regulations, control bycatch and reduce the environmental impact of fishing gears, among others. Within vocation maps, this topic stands out as a main priority in three out of four *façades*.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration is considered in the plans' vision, particularly referring to the achievement of Good Ecological Status (GES). This issue is addressed in one plan through the lens of ecosystem services (benefits for society) provided by the environment. The plans' objectives and measures for biodiversity and ecosystem protection are based on MSFD and its descriptors. Thus, non-MSFD relevant issues such

as connectivity and MPA networks or overall restoration of degraded ecosystems, are not often directly addressed in the plans' objectives. From a spatial perspective, plans recognise existing tools such as MPAs. Since June 2023, state and MSP authorities have proposed indicative targets and modalities for the designation of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs).

5. Blue Circular Economy

All plans include blue circular economy in their vision, although in some cases it is limited to key topics such as naval repair, sustainable decommissioning or recycling. In terms of strategic and specific objectives, all plans cover blue circular economy including circular design, waste prevention/reduction in maritime sectors and collection/valorisation of industrial waste. Some specific actions also involve the general public through ocean literacy and citizen-science related provisions.

6. Zero pollution

From a general perspective, zero pollution objective of the EGD is not directly focused in the four MSP plans. However, two plans identify pollution prevention and remediation objectives in their vision, and various strategic objectives encompass pollution-related matters. This topic is approached both by considering the impacts of land-based activities on the environment and referring to pollution prevention in maritime sectors. These objectives are included because of MSFD environmental objectives.

Fair and just transition

Consultations were organized at all stages of the French MSP plans development. At the first stage (consultation of the draft version), state and territorial authorities, users of the sea, NGOs, Unions and representatives of maritime sectors were included. The second stage consisted in an online public consultation (final version) and "*citizen workshops*" involving the general public and other groups of people. While diversity and inclusion are not explicitly mentioned in the plans, some references to gender balance perspectives in maritime sectors are included in plans' measures. MSP process in France aims to foster synergies between maritime stakeholders across all key sectors, as for example the promotion of collaborations between scientists and citizens. Regarding this issue, some specific objectives focus on data availability and open access to scientific resources for the general public.

Challenges and obstacles identified

Challenges linked to the complexity of scaling MSP in France have been raised, including the difficulty faced by some stakeholders in conceptualizing planning at a *façade* scale and the lack of precise mapping of vocation areas (considered too broad). Some stakeholders considered the plans as a general framework rather than a planning document, most likely not easily comprehensible for the general public. Other challenges concern the procedural mismatch between French planning timeline and EGD objectives; the lack of consideration of ongoing changes in maritime economical sectors (e.g. ORE) concerning the medium-to-long-term vision of the plans; the absence of harmonization and dissemination of available data, and the problems of availability of space in relation to emerging activities promoted by EGD (e.g. ORE).

COUNTRY SUMMARIES: GERMANY (EEZ)

MSP in Germany

Germany borders two seas, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. In line with Germany's federal structure, responsibility for MSP is divided among four MSP authorities. Three (at State level) are responsible for MSP in the territorial seas and one (at the federal level) is responsible for the EEZ. The Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB) is the authority in charge of MSP for the EEZ, with the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) responsible for coordinating the planning process. For the EEZ, the first MSP plan came into force in 2009, prior to the existence of the EGD. The current plan is a second generation MSP plan and has been in force since 1 September 2021.

The European Green Deal in Germany's EEZ Plan

1. Climate change mitigation

Renewable energy production is regarded as the central tool for climate change mitigation and a key driver of the German EEZ plan. The plan designates priority and reservation areas for offshore wind in line with the federal government's expansion targets for offshore wind (20 GW by 2030 and 40 GW by 2040). In total, 10.1% of the EEZ have been designated as priority area for offshore wind and 5.9% as reservation area, securing enough space to allow the 40 GW target to be met. For implementation, the plan largely relies on the (sectoral) Site Development Plan for offshore wind which specifies the areas to be developed and in what order. The plan indirectly refers to the clean energy transition in maritime sectors through the provisions it makes for shipping and references to existing conventions such as MARPOL and the MSFD. There is no reference to blue carbon storage as this is prohibited under current German legislation.

2. Climate change adaptation

The plan does not contain any specific objectives related to climate change adaptation, although some of the general principles for protection and improvement of the marine environment also meet adaptation objectives (protecting climate-sensitive marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems). As the plan does not cover territorial waters there is only indirect reference to green infrastructures or coastal resilience. No reference is made to anticipating the effects of climate change, although shipping route designations are to some degree anticipatory (Northern routes). There are no priority or reservation areas specifically dedicated to Green Infrastructures or Nature-Based Solutions.

3. Sustainable seafood production

The plan does not refer to sustainable food production as an overarching or strategic objective, and fishing and marine aquaculture are covered by the same strategic principles as other uses. Fishing is not regulated by MSP, which is why the plan does not restrict fishing directly. A reservation area for Norway lobster has been designated to ensure this area remains available for fishing by keeping it free of incompatible uses. Currently there is no aquaculture in the German EEZ, but there is a planning objective for aquaculture which aims to encourage co-use with existing installations (such as offshore wind farms).

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

MSP has no direct remit for nature conservation or biodiversity management but is tasked with contributing to protection and improvement of the marine environment. Although the plan does not specifically refer to restoration, climate refuges, ecosystem services or similar, the plan does cover EGD biodiversity and ecosystem protection objectives. The total extension of all priority and reservation areas for nature

conservation amounts to 44.10% of the EEZ, with non-strictly protected areas (N2K, OECM – including candidate areas) amounting to 30%. No specific areas have been set aside for restoration. No specific mention is made of improving marine connectivity, although provisions are made for migratory species (birds and mammals). In the context of avoiding barrier effects for marine mammals, explicit reference is made to the MSFD. The plan also contains a planning objective designed to preserve the EEZ as a natural area and for preserving the marine landscape without visible large-scale infrastructure. There are no quantitative objectives for any of these elements.

5. Blue Circular Economy

Circular design, waste prevention, and reuse, repair, upgrade, recycle are not covered by the German EEZ plan as they are dealt with at the level of licencing for individual projects. Consequently, there is no mention of the blue circular economy in the EEZ plan.

6. Zero pollution

Pollution prevention and remediation are regulated at the level of sectoral planning and licencing for offshore wind or other projects. Nonetheless, some of the plan's objectives do have impacts on pollution prevention, including noise pollution and the reduction of pollutants in the water/air. The framework for these policies is not the EGD or a zero pollution target but other international conventions (MAROPL, OSPAR, HELCOM) and policies (MSFD). There are no quantitative objectives.

Fair and just transition towards EGD

Planning is designed with fairness in mind as it aims to balance the various uses of the sea in the best possible way. Aspects of fairness and equity are also covered by the planning process, where representation of stakeholders is an important consideration. At the same time, there are no targets for stakeholder participation, or any definitions of representativeness or diversity criteria, nor any specific attempts to include disadvantaged groups. No socio-economic impact assessment was carried out (e.g. as part of the SEA), and no distributive effects of the various provisions of the plan were considered. Requirements to ensure public access to data and the plans themselves are set out in the Federal Spatial Planning Act. An important aim was also to generate greater understanding and acceptance of the plan by stakeholders by making planning options transparent and laying out the planning process in a series of logical steps.

Challenges and obstacles identified

The EGD is perceived as rather abstract by stakeholders and in need of interpretation by national policy. It is also perceived as contradictory with respect to its goals: since there is not enough space in the German EEZ to deliver on all EGD objectives, prioritisation and trade-off decisions are needed. Smaller sectors are concerned that they may lose out against larger more powerful sectors. A national maritime strategy could help to decide how to deal with contradictory objectives. For planners, one of the key challenges is that the maritime spatial dimension of EGD objectives is not always apparent. There is also the limited scope of MSP: While the plan can achieve direct steering effects through area designations, it relies on other tools to implement some of its policies and with this EGD objectives. A challenge specific to the German EEZ plan is its lack of a direct connection to the coast which restricts the relevance of some EGD topics. The plan also had to include aspects that contradict the EGD, such as making provisions for hydrocarbon extraction.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: ITALY

MSP in Italy

Italy has developed three MSP draft plans (hereafter referred as the plans), made available for public consultation on September 15th, 2022. The three plans refer to the following maritime areas of the Mediterranean Sea: the "Tyrrhenian - Western Mediterranean", the "Ionian - Central Mediterranean" and the "Adriatic". The plans apply to the territorial waters up to 12 NM (nautical miles), the continental shelf and the ecological protection zone (West Mediterranean, Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Sea). The plans consider a multi-scalar approach with maritime areas, sub-areas, and planning units (the latter providing MSP zoning). This approach is reflected also in the definition of objectives and measures: both national and regional level (sub-area scale) are considered for plans' objectives (strategic objectives and specific objectives, respectively) and plans' measures (national measures and sub-area measures are identified). The draft plans are still under finalisation, based on the results of the public consultation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment consultation which has not been officially closed yet.

The European Green Deal in Italian MSP Plan

1. Climate change mitigation

Climate change mitigation and decarbonization of maritime sectors are considered in the vision, strategic objectives and measures of the plans, supporting the European and national decarbonization and energy transition objectives. Climate change mitigation is considered as a transversal topic: from renewable energy production, storage and transportation to clean energy transition in maritime sectors, transformations in ports and blue carbon storage. No quantitative objectives for marine renewable energy are foreseen by the plans that, for this purpose, refer to the current version of the National Integrated Plan for Energy and Climate (PNIEC) and its next evolution.

2. Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation is addressed in the vision, strategic objectives and measures of the plans. Adaptation is tackled in relation to different aspects: need to improve the understanding of climate change effects on MSP (cross-cutting measure); improved coastal protection and resilience through measures focusing on green infrastructures; improved protection of biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem through a specific package of provisions and measures. Concerning the first aspect, to strengthen its provision in relation with climate change adaptation and fill the current gaps, the plans include a cross-cutting measure foreseeing the development of a study on the impacts of climate change on the plans and on the identification of adaptation measures, to be considered in the mid-term assessment and revision of the plans.

3. Sustainable seafood production

The vision and objectives of the plans foresee that fisheries and aquaculture are developed in a sustainable and efficient way, pursuing a sustainable use of fishery resources, with the objectives of protecting and rebuilding stocks and promoting the development of small-scale fisheries practiced with sustainable techniques, also in synergy with other sectors, in order to add value to the product and provide benefits for the local communities. Sustainability of both fisheries and aquaculture are targeted by various measures of the plans. The plans integrate the existing fishing management measures already in place within: Marine Protected Areas (MPA), Biological Protection Zones (BPZ), Fishery Restricted Areas (FRA), deep sea (below -1000m) and the zone within the 3NM or within the bathymetry of -50 m where trawling is forbidden. Some planning units have been assigned with aquaculture and/or fishery as priority use. In all others these activities are always allowed, where not specifically forbidden.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

The vision of the plans foresees that biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage protection are recognized as cross-cutting, overarching principles for all plan provisions. Several measures dealing with biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration are included in the plans. The plans also promote coexistence between specific economic activities (e.g. fishing and tourism) and ecosystem protection, aiming at developing synergies between their related needs. The plans target the ecosystem restoration by foreseeing the preparation of a National Plan for Environmental Restoration. The plans consider all areas at sea already identified for natural protection (including MPAs and Natura 2000 sites) and do not identify new MPA but indicate nature conservation as a priority in large areas having suitable characteristics to be considered for designation of new MPAs.

5. Blue Circular Economy

The vision of the plans foresees that maritime activities are reorganised, exploiting the opportunities offered by the circular economy. The plans consider the circular economy as one key component of the cross-cutting, overarching principle of sustainable development. In addition, circular economy is addressed by a rich package of specific sector measures targeting e.g. shipbuilding and repair, fishing and aquaculture.

6. Zero pollution

The vision of the plans foresees that their implementation should guarantee the achievement and the maintenance of Good Environmental Status of marine waters (ex MSFD). The vision also clearly states that all maritime sectors should have a role in the reduction of polluting emission, waste and introduction of alien species in the environment. To this regard, within their strategic objectives, the plans target the minimization of pollution derived from maritime transport and port activities, in particular.

Fair and just transition

The Italian plans are the results of a co-design process involving Ministries and Regions, aiming at getting benefits from both national and sub-national knowledge and expertise, as well as at coherently responding to the needs of the two governance levels. Local data about coastal and underwater cultural heritage sites and values as well as protected landscape areas were also made available at sub-national level by the superintendencies (local branches of the Ministry of Culture). The planning process did not include a socio-economic assessment of the plans' effects; a specific measure is included in the plans to fill this gap in view of their future adaptation.

Challenges and obstacles identified

The plans have been commented to be somehow generic and their effect is expected to be limited if more detailed provisions will not be identified during the implementation phase. Lack of identification of areas suitable for offshore wind energy development has been identified as a main gap in the context of the consultation phase. Issues related with limited space availability were pointed out as an important challenge for some areas. Some gaps still persist regarding some spatial data: this is for example the case of the distribution of fishing areas of small-scale fisheries that was not possible to document in the plans. Limited integration of climate-change impacts and adaptation in the MSP plans and their provisions has also been pointed out, specifically in relation with the formulation of climate change scenarios and projections, the identification of most impacted areas and of related the relative area-specific measures.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: LATVIA

MSP in Latvia

In Latvia there is one national level long term maritime spatial plan - "[The Maritime Spatial Plan for the Marine Inland Waters, Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Waters of the Republic of Latvia](#)".

The Maritime spatial plan of Latvia 2030 was approved by the Government on 21 May 2019. Responsible authority for elaboration, implementation and assessment of the MSP is the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia (MoEPRD). The legal base for MSP (including the responsible authority) is laid down in the Spatial Development Planning Law of Latvia enforced on 1 December 2011. The Latvian MSP consists of four parts: the explanatory part, strategic part, description of the permitted use of the sea and the graphical part. It is both a strategic and legally binding planning document which includes long-term vision for the use of the sea with strategic priorities and MSP solutions part with zoning as well (e.g. priority uses of the marine waters). So far, the first cycle of MSP in Latvia consists of the elaboration of the first MSP (2014 – 2019) and interim assessment (MSP evaluation in 2023).

The European Green Deal in Latvian MSP Plan

1. Climate change mitigation

Latvia's Strategy for the low-carbon development by 2050 draft version was considered when elaborating the Plan. One of Latvian MSP priorities is offshore renewable energy production – offshore wind energy. Latvian MSP considers 5 offshore wind farm energy zones (6% of total MSP area), but it is not indicated how much energy those areas are supposed to produce. There are no specific quantitative objectives, but in the climate section of the Plan the reducing of carbon emissions via port infrastructure development is noted.

2. Climate change adaptation

Currently the MSP considers that climate change by 2030 in general could have a relatively small but negative impact as the impacts of the change will result in a reduction in the stability of the marine ecosystem, as well as potential changes in the distribution of species and habitats, which may necessitate a reassessment of the existing and planned network of marine protected areas.

To some extent issues on protection of climate-sensitive marine and coastal biodiversity and ecosystems, and landscapes are noted like the issue of coastal erosion. In the Latvian MSP there are some measures regarding coastal (dune) protection in case of high erosion risk. Action plan of the MSP sets the task 3.4 to be done until 2030: "To develop spatial solutions (measures) for minimising erosion effects, including identifying sites suitable for extraction of sand for beach nourishment, as well as places that require beach nourishment, without posing a risk of negative impact on the marine ecosystem."

3. Sustainable seafood production

As one of six strategic priorities defined in Latvian MSP is sustainable fisheries. Existing information on the most important fishing areas has been assessed to consider and designate other sea use zones. Fish nursery areas, spawning grounds were identified. Also, fish catch data (both statistics and spatial distribution even per species) is included in the MSP to be considered in the licensing process. The Latvian MSP does not include zoning for aquaculture. There are no specific quantitative objectives set for aquacultures, but a list of conditions and recommendations for aquaculture development areas in the MSP.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

One of three Latvian MSP strategic objectives: SO2 The marine ecosystem and its ability to regenerate is preserved, ensuring the protection of biological diversity and averting excessive pressure from economic activities. In the line of strategic objective there are lists of measures requiring qualitative assessment included in the MSP. Territories of marine protected areas are included in the

MSP as conditions for sea use from the general legislation. Currently the total area of marine protected areas in the MSP territory of Latvia is 15,4%. In addition, there are 5 nature investigation zones designed in the MSP of Latvia 4,8%. But it is not enough to meet the 30% target set out in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The ongoing LIFE REEF project is essential to address the 30% target and study 4 of 5 nature investigation zones of MSP.

5. Blue Circular Economy

The Latvian MSP sets circular economy principles for disposal site operations. Traditionally, sediment material from the dredging and maintenance of ports and shipping lanes has been used in construction processes or deposited at sea in officially designated disposal sites. Dumping the sediment from dredging into the sea is considered a wasteful use of natural resources. The MSP points out that the use of these resources for construction and port development should be considered, as well as for beach nourishment, thereby reducing the risk of coastal erosion.

6. Zero pollution

The MSP includes indirectly the zero-pollution principle in the plan of measures. The MSP addresses mainly pollution prevention issues related to maritime traffic and ports and aquaculture as well. In particular, the Latvian MSP plan highlights the need to reduce the total load of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Gulf of Riga and the Baltic Sea, as well as the spread of alien species, harmful chemicals and solid waste, and with that calls upon a methodology to evaluate spatial cumulative impacts from the use of the sea as part of the EIA process.

Fair and just transition towards EGD

To ensure stakeholder participation in the MSP development process, the Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group was established in 2014. It was initiated to ensure the regular involvement and participation of government institutions, planning regions, coastal municipalities and members of the public in the marine spatial plan process, ensuring coordination and exchange of information on sectoral policy objectives and development interests. In 2022 the new Maritime and Coastal Spatial Planning Coordination Group was formed by merging two pre-existing working groups - the Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group and the Coastal Cooperation and Coordination Group, as the issues they address often overlap and involve all relevant authorities. A national [geo-portal](#) is used to ensure access to MSP and MSP spatial data by relevant stakeholders. Part of MSP spatial data as web services for download are available also in [Latvian open data portal](#). During the whole elaboration process of the Plan (and the SEA process), consultations with stakeholders provided the feedback on the impacts on different groups.

Challenges and obstacles identified

One of the main challenges including EGD and related policy elements within the MSP seemed to point out contrasts between maritime sector development and nature protection. While the EGD states that biodiversity should be protected, it also states that marine energy should be developed. Therefore, cooperation between different interests, understanding the effects of one action and their compensating mechanisms is crucial.

With the development of new sea uses for the Blue economy an impact on traditional sea use sectors is expected. For example, with the development of the renewable energy sector, traditional uses may have new physical obstacles to free movement in the sea.

Limitations in the MSP process itself and policy fragmentation regarding the implementation of the EGD is another challenge. For instance, the question is how to translate quantitative measures into MSP to integrate EGD objectives.



COUNTRY SUMMARIES: SPAIN

MSP in Spain

The Royal Decree 363/2017 establishes a framework for MSP in Spain, which is an extension of the Law 41/2010 on the protection of the marine environment, which implement Marine Strategies Framework Directive (MSFD). Legally, Spanish MSP and Marine Strategies are linked and have the same Competent Authority (Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge). The Maritime Spatial Planning Plans (POEM) agree with the environmental objectives of the Marine Strategies and are applied in 5 marine demarcations defined by the Law 41/2010. POEM have been approved by the Royal Decree 150/2023, being legally binding. The plans are not driven by any vision or strategy but constitute their objectives from policies, plans and strategies in relation to maritime uses and activities and Blue Economy at international, European and national levels. POEM have one general planning objective and others grouped in three categories: general-interest objectives, horizontal planning objectives (multi-sector) and sectorial planning objectives. Zoning have been designed for different maritime uses and activities differentiating Priority Use Areas (PUA) and High Potential Areas (HPA). For the implementation of the POEM, measures have been proposed for the first cycle of MSP.

The European Green Deal in Spanish MSP Plan

The European Green Deal (EGD) is mentioned in the Royal Decree 150/2023 although the Spanish MSP process started before the approval of the EGD, so that not all its aspects are totally integrated in the process.

1. Climate change mitigation

Climate change (CC) mitigation is considered in strategic objectives and measures of the POEM, supporting the objectives of the PNIEC (National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan), the Roadmap for the development of offshore wind and sea energies in Spain, the Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2021-2027 and the State Ports Strategic Plan. CC mitigation is viewed as a cross-cutting topic comprising the renewable energy production, storage and transportation, focusing on the establishment of HPA for the development of offshore wind, considering landscape impact, fishing sector, and marine ecosystems affected; clean energy transition in maritime sectors by studying the prospective of the blue economy and blue growth strategy; and transformations in ports.

2. Climate change adaptation

CC adaptation is addressed in specific objectives and measures of the POEM in order to achieve the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and the Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change on the Spanish Coast. Regarding the need to improve the connectivity and resilience of marine ecosystems the Marine Green Infrastructure (MGI) elements contributing to nature-based solutions are incorporated; the protection of biodiversity is tackled through measures focusing on improving coastal resilience, identification of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and declaration of Marine Reserves for Fishing Interest (MRFI); in addition to the anticipation of climate change-related effects by addressing erosion and the conservation of the maritime-terrestrial public domain, considering land-sea interactions.

3. Sustainable seafood production

Sustainable seafood production is included in the specific objectives and measures of the POEM. Regarding the objectives of the Pluriannual Strategic Plan for Spanish Aquaculture 2021-2030, spatial planning is aimed at protecting the marine ecosystem in established PUA and HPA including measures for elaboration of management

instruments for the declared Zones of Interest for Aquaculture (ZIA) and Zones of Interest for Marine Cultures (ZICM). In terms of sustainable fishing, actions focus on achieving maximum sustainable yield of commercial species and reduce the negative impact of fishing. Thus, although strategic objectives are absent, the POEM include MRFI sites as part of the PUA in order to protect, regenerate and develop resources for the maintenance of sustainable fisheries.

4. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration

POEM incorporate specific and strategic objectives as well as MSP measures to be implemented in order to address biodiversity, ecosystem protection and restoration aligned with international commitments, European directives and national policies. POEM aim to improve connectivity and resilience of marine ecosystems through the incorporation of the MGI elements and including current and future MPA through different protection tools by the designation of PUA and HPA for the protection of biodiversity.

5. Zero pollution

Among the specific objectives outlined in the POEM, the emphasis lies on pollution prevention, particularly concerning water treatment and quality. This entails averting adverse impacts of land-sea discharges on human activities and the environment, as well as safeguarding coastal water status.

Fair and just transition

In the Spanish MSP process, an MSP interministerial technical working group was formed in the framework of Spanish Marine Strategies, encompassing the Ministries with competences at-sea, and with the participation of the autonomous communities through the Marine Strategies Monitoring Committees for each marine demarcation. In addition, *ad hoc* groups tackled emerging issues, including the involvement of other stakeholders. To ensure accessibility of plan-related data information, the InfoMAR geoportal was developed, consolidating data and geographical information. In terms of an ecological transition towards a low-carbon economy and efficient in the use of resources, POEM aim to contribute efficiently and equitably towards decarbonization and, linked to the previous one, just transition in terms of employment. Moreover, one of the measures is the development of a prospective study and socio-economic characterization of various sectors of the Spanish blue economy.

Challenges and obstacles identified

Challenges integrating EGD objectives in the POEM focus on the MSP process itself, regarding the complexity of the legal system, limitations, integration of different policy objectives, lack of data, societal needs and difficulties in managing expectations of different stakeholders. The interviewees suggest improving communication with actors, coordination with the MSFD, application of the precautionary principle, assessing efficiency in the ecosystem-based approach application and to define priorities in the implementation of the EGD elements. Although the POEM have included some objectives of the EGD, since these MSP plans have recently been approved, time is still needed to evaluate their results.