

## NEW ACTION: A study on multi-use options in the EEZ as a basis for a revised MSP plan

### Short description

This action aims to support any future revision of the EEZ maritime spatial plan and related processes by (1) comprehensively assessing the potential of areas in the North Sea and Baltic Sea for different types of multiple use, (2) analysing the framework conditions for implementing multi-use, and (3) assessing the environmental and technical prerequisites under which such multi-use could be implemented as part of the EEZ MSP. The action is a study commissioned by BSH on behalf of the competent authority (Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building, BMWWSB). The study is guided by a steering group composed of all relevant national ministries which are coming together in this format for the first time. As such the study also encourages an exchange on the practical aspects of multiple use of sea areas ahead of any potential MSP plan revision.

### Project partner(s) responsible for the preparation of the new action

BSH

### Action typology

(v) Analysis

### Topics addressed

A1.4: Multi-use of sea space: combination including energy installations

C1.6: Multi-use of sea space: combination including fisheries

D1.5: Multi-use of sea space: combination including biodiversity and ecosystem protection

### Geographical scope

National (EEZ)

### Sectors/Activity involved

Fishing/aquaculture, nature conservation, offshore wind farming and other offshore renewables, cables, shipping, defence, CCS as a new form of use, cables & pipelines.

### How does the new action support the Green Deal in MSP

**One of the challenges of implementing the EGD is its potentially conflicting objectives, especially in maritime areas that are already busy.** In the German EEZ, most of the maritime area is covered by at least one spatial designation, making it increasingly difficult to find suitable space for new or expanding activities. Further deployment of offshore wind farming enjoys strong political support in the wake of climate change mitigation, but so do biodiversity protection, while other spatially relevant activities such as fishing are coming under increasing pressure. Although the last MSP plan was able to find a compromise between all relevant uses, more ambitious goals for both offshore wind farming and biodiversity protection are likely to increase the potential for conflict. Aquaculture as a potentially evolving industry and CCS have not yet been spatially considered in the EEZ MSP, and changes in the fisheries sector as well as other, evolving sectors also need to be taken into account. Better understanding is therefore needed of the spatial compatibilities and options for multi-use, predominantly focusing on offshore wind farming, biodiversity protection and – among others – fishing/aquaculture in the EEZ, but also taking into account other existing uses such as shipping and defence. While the current MSP plan makes some provisions for overlapping uses and includes some textual regulations for this, it does not consider multi-use systematically or in an anticipatory way. **The new action therefore intends to produce a basis for decision-making by highlighting different options for multi-use and developing concrete recommendations for the next round of MSP and sector planning.** As such, it supports implementation of several objectives of the EGD,

while also showing current limits of multi-use and where trade-offs between different objectives will need to be made.

### Governance context

Although there is a need to accommodate more ambitious offshore renewable energy targets in the German EEZ, expectations are that the current MSP plan for the EEZ will not be revised ahead of its usual 10-year lifespan. The new action still feeds into the standard plan revision process but does so ahead of the formal planning and consultation process for the next EEZ plan. Expectations are that study results might feed into the current and future processes of revising the Site Development Plan for Offshore Wind, the Suitability Assessment for certain planned Offshore Wind Sites and the licencing procedures.

An important aspect is that the action also aims to improve the interaction between the ministries responsible for MSP, nature conservation and the various blue sectors. For this purpose, the study is accompanied by an inter-ministerial steering group that meets regularly to discuss progress and interim results. Implementing multiple EGD objectives will require high level guidance on what priorities should be set where; this in turn requires an integrated approach to spatial management that is based on a realistic assessment of synergies and options for multi-use and considers all potentially competing sectors, especially also “weaker” sectors such as fisheries. Agreed priorities at the ministerial level support the subsequent planning process in that planners and stakeholders can communicate and work to a clearer guiding vision, making the MSP process more efficient and less contentious.

### Other stakeholders to be involved in the new action

This action is a research action designed to develop options for multi-use in the German EEZ. The first part of the study relies on an analysis of existing multi-use options in Germany and other European countries.

During the first research phase, interviews are therefore planned with researchers and other partners involved in European projects on multi-use mainly in the North Sea, with the aim of bringing together existing knowledge and ideas. Consultation will also take place with representatives of all relevant authorities, sectors and other stakeholders, such as insurers, to discuss the administrative prerequisites for implementing multi-use and any relevant enablers and barriers. Lastly, there will be a comprehensive round of consultation with German knowledge holders and authorities based on different formats of consultation (interviews, online surveys, workshops), to discuss specific multi-use options developed for the German EEZ and to validate them.

### Description of the new action

This new action is a research and preparatory action designed to run over a period of 18 months. It is led by a team of consultants that have been commissioned by the responsible authority for MSP. BSH as the plan-making authority is the primary point of contact for the action and liaises closely with the consultants through bi-weekly meetings. BSH has also installed an internal consultation group designed to represent the various tasks and knowledge bases of the BSH itself, especially with respect to environmental impact assessment and licensing for offshore wind farming.

The project is divided into four key stages:

1. Analysis of the current state of knowledge on multi-use, derived from EU projects and other research projects, as well as existing multi-use concepts in other North Sea and Baltic Sea countries;

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2. Assessment of use combinations that could realistically be implemented in the German EEZ, considering different levels of compatibility, the existing legal framework, technological prerequisites, safety, seasonality, economic efficiency, environmental impact and impact on other maritime users;
3. Developing multi-use cases for specific areas of the German EEZ,
4. Developing concluding recommendations for the implementation of multi-use in the German EEZ.

The project is expected to deliver recommendations on the following:

1. **Recommendations for integrating multi-use more effectively in planning:** Assessing site-specific factors so that the potential of sites for different use combinations can be determined ahead of planning decisions; recommendations for integrated design that takes into account different user requirements, such as seasonality and resource use, and ensures optimum spatial efficiency; recommendations will also be made for involving interest groups including industry, municipalities and regulatory authorities.
2. **Technical concepts and considerations:** Recommendations will be developed for creating synergies in using infrastructure; further recommendations will address the technological compatibility of operations and uses, e.g. with a view to safety and the most efficient co-use of resources, such as using renewable offshore energy to operate aquaculture installations within wind farms.
3. **Framework conditions:** Recommendations for how to adapt the necessary legal framework and how to improve existing approval and licensing processes; recommendations will also be developed with a view to insurance and the legal responsibilities for multi-use operations.
4. **Mitigation measures and risk:** recommendations for minimising environmental impacts and monitoring long-term environmental impacts of multi-use operations, including compensation measures and restoration; recommendations for establishing mechanisms for conflict resolution between users and interest groups to promote collaboration and coexistence; developing approaches for evaluating the socio-economic benefits of potential multi-use projects.
5. **Recommendations on future research and development.**

Ongoing validation of interim results is a key aspect of the project, which foresees regular interaction with stakeholders and authorities and briefing meetings. A final workshop will represent an opportunity for all stakeholders to comment on the draft recommendations.

### Possible challenges/risks related to the new action

Challenges relating to the study:

- ✓ One of the challenges is to transfer examples of multi-use from other countries (with different contexts) to what could work for the German EEZ. Some forms of multi-use, such as combinations with tourism and further activities more closely linked to coastal communities, are not applicable in the German EEZ, so careful selection and calibration is required.
- ✓ Expectation management is an important concern as

multi-use will not be able to address all conflicts or resolve all problems of prioritisation. Fundamental conflicts are expected to still persist between strict biodiversity protection and other uses, for example, which better data can only partially resolve.

Challenges with acting on the results of the study:

- ✓ Challenges will continue to exist with respect to the necessary framework conditions for establishing multi-use, such as an integrated, efficient regulatory framework flanked by efficient environmental impact assessment based on sensitivity mapping and cumulative impact assessments. These respective instruments are being developed to different timescales by different actors, and their integration is likely to take time. This also applies to practical concerns such as insurance, added investment costs for multi-use and payment for pilot applications. The temporal gap between developing recommendations and implementing the first multi-use projects can therefore be considerable.
- ✓ Planning for and installation e.g. of offshore wind farms without consideration of co-use options will be on-going, while decisions are being taken and solutions being developed.
- ✓ Sectors and sectoral ministries may need to compromise and come to an agreement as to the type of multi-use that is supported. They need to clearly communicate the reasons for their choice to all relevant stakeholders to pre-empt conflicts down the line at the level of MSP.

Challenges specific to MSP:

- ✓ The study's results represent an opportunity for MSP to establish itself as an enabler of multi-use, at least through the necessary spatial regulations. MSP is therefore in a position to contribute to de-risking innovative approaches and making multi-use more feasible. At the same time, the planning authority needs to carefully consider its spatial instruments, how to designate appropriate areas for different multi-use objectives and priorities, and how these may impact on subsequent sectoral (spatial) planning and licencing procedures.

### Gaps or elements that the new action does not consider

- ✓ The current study focuses on offshore wind farming and additional uses and functions such as fishery and nature conservation, although it also addresses other combinations of activities relevant in the framework of MSP. It does not further elaborate on activities sharing the same space that are or will not be steered by MSP.
- ✓ The action does not have explicit links to Germany's new Maritime Strategy which is currently being developed.

### Replicability /Elements which can be capitalised

As a research action the approach taken by this study, or elements of it, is easily transferable to other contexts. The study design follows logical steps and is adaptable to specific questions or settings. Multi-use is set to become more relevant in all MSP countries, so given sufficient resources and willingness of stakeholders to become involved there is no reason it cannot be replicated.