

VALUABLE PRACTICE: Multifunctional zones and multi-use of the sea space

Description

The MSP Plan includes zoning of the sea space. It is indicative (i.e. possible direction of development = "this can come here") zoning, e.g. list of allowed uses, prioritisation of uses, not-allowed uses, etc. The grouping of functions and uses are into four types of zones, namely: i) restricted zones for use; ii) zones with a specific conservation regime; iii) multifunctional zones; and iv) areas for future use.

Multi-functional zones have been defined in the MSP Plan aimed at reducing conflicts, supporting the efficient use of the sea space and better coordinating sectoral maritime policies. The Plan states that currently any combinations are possible except those with specific legally regulated restrictions or bans. However, there are still some barriers for co-existence related to policy, legislation and single sector development.

The Plan includes some examples of multi-use combinations: maritime transport and fishing - it complies with the requirements of the United Nations Convention on maritime law, of the Maritime Spaces, Inland Waterways and the Ports of the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the limitations of the Separate System movement, the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act. Fishing is carried out in a way to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and fisheries resources and compliance with the rules for recreational fishing, fish farming activities and breeding aquaculture. Maritime transport, fishing and tourism, environmental protection, fish resources, and at the same time, finding a balance between these activities for their long-term sustainable development and diversification of tourism activities. Tourism and underwater cultural heritage - this combination includes co-existence between the cultural values and compliance with tourist safety rules. Scientific research, underwater cultural heritage and MPAs - this combination implies synergies and integration of financial sources and resources for conducting scientific research in areas being subject to different types of protection. Another example of multi-use can be a combination of marine aquaculture and nature conservation which can be combined by developing aquaculture activities in marine protected areas.

Practice typology

(iv) zoning

Topics addressed

Main	A. Climate change mitigation [A.1 Renewable energy production, storage and transportation (A.1.4 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including energy installations)].
	C. Sustainable sea-food production [C.1 Sustainable fisheries: sustainable fisheries management, including area and time-based measures (C.1.6 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including fisheries) and C.2 Sustainable aquaculture and shellfish production (C.2.4 Multi-use of the sea space: combinations including marine aquaculture)].
	D. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration [D.1 A coherent network of marine protected areas (D.1.5 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including biodiversity and ecosystem protection)].

Sectors/Activity involved

Aquaculture and fisheries, maritime transport, coastal and maritime tourism; maritime defence, nature protection, landscape protection, scientific research, underwater cultural heritage, marine

industry (e.g., blue bioeconomy and biotechnology); and multisector.

Stakeholders involved

Competent MSP Authority, all ministries, executive sectoral agencies, relevant stakeholders, etc. Consultation and implementation. National scale.

Geographical scope

The analysis for this zoning has been applied for the territorial sea of Bulgaria (12 NM).



Figure 1. Area for multifunctional zones and multiuse in Bulgaria.

Governance context

Currently, the Bulgarian sea space combines several functions/uses among sectors, except for zones with restricted access, mainly related to military exercises. Many combinations are possible except those with specific legal regulations and restrictions, including those mentioned above. For multifunctional zones and its regulation, the Plan refers to the shared different competences of the EU and national legal frameworks, not clear yet how these multifunctional zones will be operationalised in practice during the Plan implementation.

How this MSP practice can support the EU Green Deal

The aspect on which this practice mainly supports the EGD is in A.1.4 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including energy installations; C.1.6 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including fisheries; C.2.4 Multi-use of the sea space: combinations including marine aquaculture; D.1.5 Multi-use of the sea space: combination including biodiversity and ecosystem protection.

The Plan does promote synergies between economic sectors through the foreseen multifunctional zones, based on the Multi-Use (MU) concept. The main goal is combination of compatible functions for more efficient use of maritime spaces; achieving synergy and economy of space and scale; and improved coordination of maritime sectoral policies. The Bulgarian MSP Plan presents generally some potential opportunities of combining functions/activities at sea or in specific areas.

MSP can directly support MU by indicating preference for joint uses as opposed to single uses and through the imposition of certain conditions for the developers during the permitting process. Furthermore, MSP is useful in identifying knowledge gaps and informing future agendas (e.g. cumulative and in-combination impacts of the MU) as well as helping to clarify potential legislation and efficient practices for combining different uses in marine areas.



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Challenges/gaps/inconsistencies still to be addressed

The scientific rationale for the Plan is provided under the EMFF MARSPLAN-BS II project (2019-2021), that supported MSP process in Bulgaria, and the elaborated Multi-Use case study on Tourism, Underwater Cultural Heritage and Environmental protection (Source: Stancheva *et al.*, 2022 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308597X21005388>), however, this research rational/methodology was not included in the plan.

Limitations towards the achievement of EGD objectives:

- ✓ While competing needs for sea space can result in conflicts, they may also lead to mutual benefits for different sectors, when sustainable combinations are properly foreseen in MSP.
- ✓ Depending on the planning approach of a given country, the MU concept can be supported by MSP through various ways as, for example, in the planning stage via the identification of strategic and specific objectives that focus on the MU development, not just delimitation of the zones suitable for MU. Together with stakeholders, to identify suitable areas and comprehensive policies promoting MU, especially for new joint developments. In the planning phase, MSP must prevent conflicts among those sectors that are already present in the sea and between uses and environmental components, as well as plan for conflicts that may arise among new and emerging sectors.
- ✓ The Bulgarian MSP Plan integrates a delimitation of such multifunctional zones at its preparation and planning phase, and some preliminary multifunctional combinations are generally described. However, no methodological justification/rational was conducted (i.e., just spatial delimitation without analysed in depth socio-economic and environmental benefits). The Plan does not include in-depth analysis of the potential of multi-use combinations and the evaluation of overall MU effects/added values or multiple barriers for transfer of the MU from concept to practical implementation. Also, no consultations with stakeholders on their MU perception were conducted in the Plan.

Despite a number of good international examples of successfully applied multi-uses, the MU concept is still novel for Bulgaria, its decision-makers, spatial planners and stakeholders. These actors must adjust policy, planning, consenting and management reform in order to advance synergies between maritime uses that are usually managed under different sectoral institutions and owners.

Replicability /Elements which can be capitalised

- ✓ MSP is still the main process providing the policy framework needed to overcome the multiple barriers to MU development;
- ✓ MSP can act as a transparent tool for communication with stakeholders in the early stages, which can then result in more sustainable solutions on MUs (that indeed requires the engagement of different typologies of stakeholders, not accustomed to working together). Continuous engagement between stakeholders from different sectors to learn more about their different ways of thinking and to find common solutions at different levels is especially useful for MU combinations.
- ✓ Advancing the development of multifunctional zones implies a radical change from single use to co-existence and thus requiring a willingness of policy makers, governmental authorities, businesses, investors and other actors, as well as adjusting policy changes.
- ✓ It is important that specific capacity needs (including know-how, training, finance, logistics and public awareness) are provided

for actors to boost and advance MU development.

- ✓ Capacity building is a priority especially for fishery, aquaculture, and UCH related MU.
- ✓ The Plan includes multifunctional zoning; however, its operationalisation is not clear yet: there is a need of comprehensive legal framework and to adapt the MU methodology tested under the MARSPLAN-BS II project, with focus on the environmental impacts (EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets for MPAs) and socio-economic benefits.