MSP GREEN
Maritime Spatial Planning as enabler of the European Green Deal

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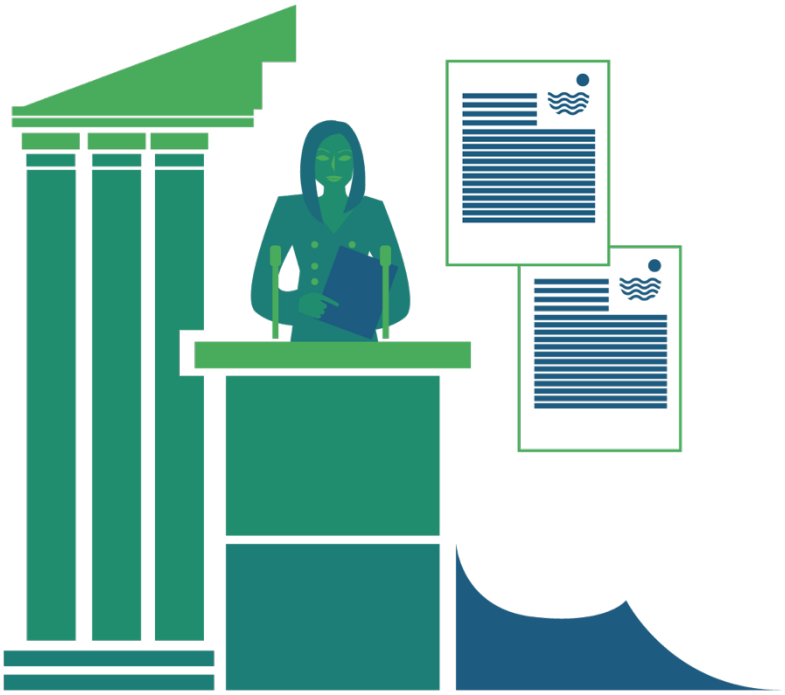

Maritime Spatial Planning as enabler of the European Green Deal

Final Policy Brief

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1. MSP-GREEN project in a nutshell

The MSP-GREEN project ran from 2022 to 2024 to contribute to aligning Maritime Spatial Plans (MS plans) with the European Green Deal (EGD) ambitions. The project provided a cross-cutting framework addressing key EGD topics relevant to the marine environment and the sustainable transition of the blue economy: climate change, circular blue economy, marine biodiversity, marine renewable energies, and sustainable seafood provision. Recommendations were prepared on how to enhance the EGD ambitions within EU MS plans. The project also promoted the sea basin dimension by considering environmental, socio-economic, and cultural specificities, supported by targeted Ocean Literacy communication efforts.

MSP-GREEN engaged 10 institutions as full partners or affiliated entities, including the Consortium for coordination of research activities concerning the Venice lagoon system - CORILA (project coordinator), the IUAV University of Venice, and the Institute of Marine Sciences of the National Research Council - CNR-ISMAR (all from Italy); the Centre for Studies on Risks, the Environment, Mobility, and Urban Planning - CEREMA, the University of Brest UBO, and the French national institute for ocean science and technology - IFREMER (all from France); the Spanish Institute of Oceanography – IEO (CSIC) (Spain); the Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia - MoSARD; the Regional Council of Southwest Finland - FI RCSW; and the Center for Coastal and Marine Studies - CCMS (Bulgaria). Two associated partners were also involved: Vision and Strategies Around the Baltic Sea - VASAB and the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency - BSH (Germany).

With participation from partners across seven European (EU) countries, the project encompassed all five EU sea basins. This diverse partnership enabled a wide range of geographical, socio-economic, and cultural perspectives to be considered, along with varied approaches to Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) encompassing different mandates, governance systems, and strategies related to the coastal and maritime economy.

This document represents the second (and last) brief prepared by the MSP-GREEN project. It summarises the achievements of the project and guides to access other relevant project documents.

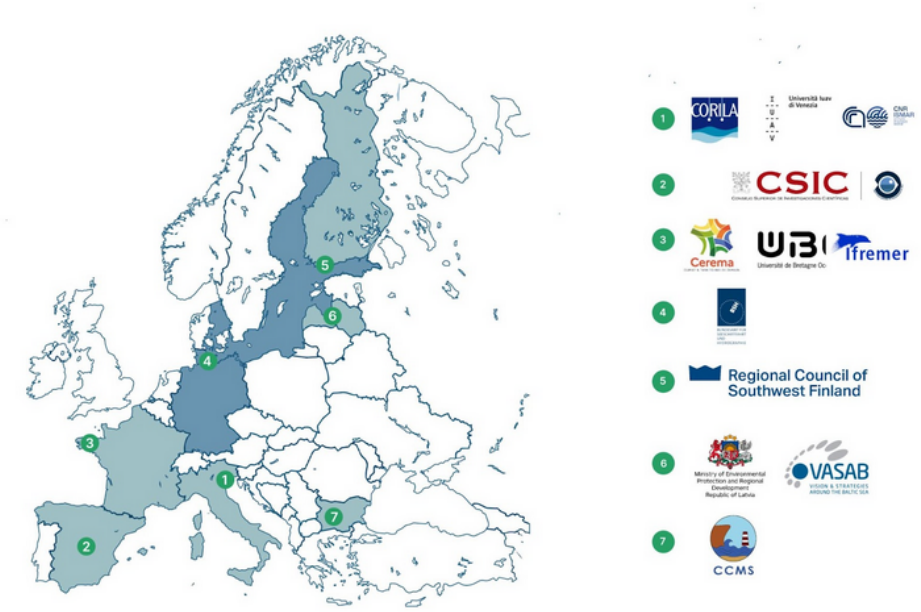

Figure 1. MSP-GREEN partner and associated countries and entities.

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2. The Green Deal component of the EU MS plans

A methodology was developed to assess the integration of EGD components in the partner countries' national MS Plans. This methodology included the definition of an **EGD-MSP nomenclature**, derived from an analysis of relevant policy documents. The methodology consisted of a set of guiding questions that used the EGD-MSP nomenclature to examine the vision, objectives, and measures (where available) of the MS plans, as well as zoning provisions (if any) and the overall planning process.

The analysis included a desk-based review of MS plans, supporting documents, Strategic Environmental Assessment studies, communication materials, and websites. To further validate the findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted. In addition to examining the **six main topics identified in the EGD-MSP nomenclature** (see Figure 2), the related sub-topics, and other detailed elements, the analysis also addressed whether, and in what ways, the **principle of a fair and inclusive transition** to a sustainable blue economy was reflected in the MS plans.

EGD-related policy documents

- The European Green Deal (2019)
- A new approach for a sustainable blue economy (2021)
- An EU Strategy to harness offshore renewable (2020)
- Climate Law (2021)
- REPowerEU Plan (2022)
- Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambitions (2020)
- EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (2021)
- A Farm to Fork Strategy (2020)
- Zero Pollution (2021)
- Circular Economy Action Plan (2020)
- Sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture (2021)
- Restoration Law (2024)

EGD-MSP NOMENCLATURE
List of Topics

EGD-MSP KEY TOPICS

A. Climate change mitigation
B. Climate change adaptation
C. Sustainable sea-food production
D. Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration
E. Blue circular economy
F. Zero pollution

JUST AND INCLUSIVE TRANSITION (G)

"No one left behind" - Stakeholder participation
Criteria for stakeholder identification e.g. proximity, power, gender, etc.
Consideration of local participatory initiatives
Comprehensive sectoral/group representation
Integration of local and expert knowledge
Integration of citizen science information
Capacity of participants to influence planning decisions
Accessibility requirements (Directive 2019/882)
Assessment of the socio-economic implications of the plans
Assessment of impacts on different sectors, groups, communities
"Leave no place behind" - Spatial aspects of the planning process
Marine areas equally represented
Identification of the areas most likely to be affected by MSP

Figure 2. Methodology to assess the integration of the European Green Deal (EGD) components in the national MS plans: the EGD-MSP nomenclature.

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The assessment of MS plans confirmed MSP as a key enabler of the maritime components of the EGD mainly due to its cross-sectoral approach. The analysis also highlighted that national contexts — specifically MSP scope and mandate, governance systems, and developments in the maritime and blue economy — strongly influence how EGD elements are integrated into MSP. Depending on these conditions, **MSP may have varying levels of capacity to support the objectives of the EGD**.

The **results of the assessment for the single EGD topics** showed that:

- *Climate change mitigation* - MS plans address this topic, primarily by promoting energy transition at sea through offshore wind energy. Other forms of renewable energy are minimally considered, and only a few plans include mitigation provisions beyond offshore renewable energy (ORE).
- *Climate change adaptation* - This topic is not generally treated as an overarching priority in MS plans. While some plans address specific climate-related risks or sector-specific provisions, these are rarely integrated into a comprehensive adaptation strategy within MSP.
- *Sustainable seafood production* - This topic is well represented in MS plans; all assessed plans include at least some provisions related to fisheries and aquaculture for fish and shellfish, with more limited consideration of seaweed production.
- *Biodiversity & ecosystem protection and restoration* - Biodiversity is addressed as a cross-cutting or overarching objective in all plans. Although the designation or expansion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is typically outside the MSP scope, conservation is supported through various measures. However, the inclusion of restoration of marine habitats in the plans is currently limited.
- *Blue circular economy* - The integration of the blue circular economy varies significantly according to each country's MSP scope and mandate. Where included, these provisions are heterogeneous across plans, targeting different maritime sectors.
- *Zero pollution* - While all plans address pollution drivers and pressures, zero pollution provisions are only partially covered. Efforts are mainly preventive and tend to be sector-specific.
- *Fair and just transition* - The extent to which MSP addresses this EGD aspect is closely linked to stakeholder engagement, which is approached through diverse practices. MSP processes widely engage stakeholders to achieve an optimal balance of sea uses and area allocations. However, critical issues such as the socio-economic impacts of the plans and the actual influence stakeholders have on planning decisions are either absent or only in the early stages of development.

More details on the results of the assessment are available in the project deliverable *D2.1 The Green Deal component of the EU MSP Plans*, in the *D2.1 Infographics* and in the *First MSP-GREEN Policy Brief*. *Country summaries of the analysis of MS plans* in English and national languages are also available.

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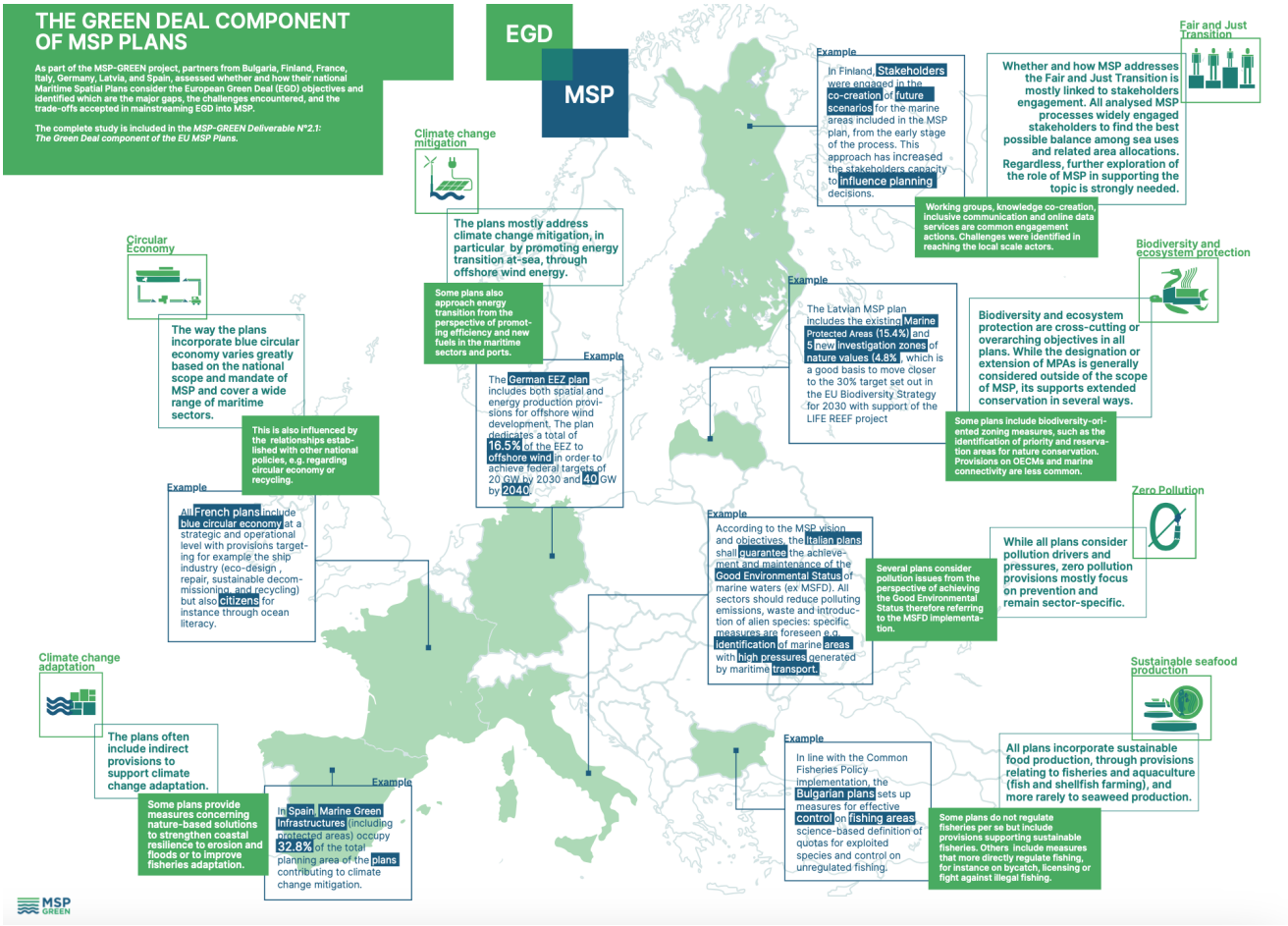

Figure 3. Results of the assessment of MS plans in a nutshell. *MSP-GREEN infographics*.

3. Valuable Practices of EGD incorporation in MS plans

Into the framework of MSP-GREEN, **a Valuable Practice (VP) was defined as an action (measure, zoning, process-related approach) that deals with contents and/or processes aiming at strengthening the integration of EGD components in MSP**. VPs are concrete examples coming from national experiences that can act as a source of inspiration for other countries. Due to the transdisciplinary nature of the EGD and the MSP processes, several identified VPs address one EGD element directly but also link to others, contributing to them or identifying them as challenges.

21 VPs were identified, each illustrated through a common factsheet. Browse through the VPs by using the table below.

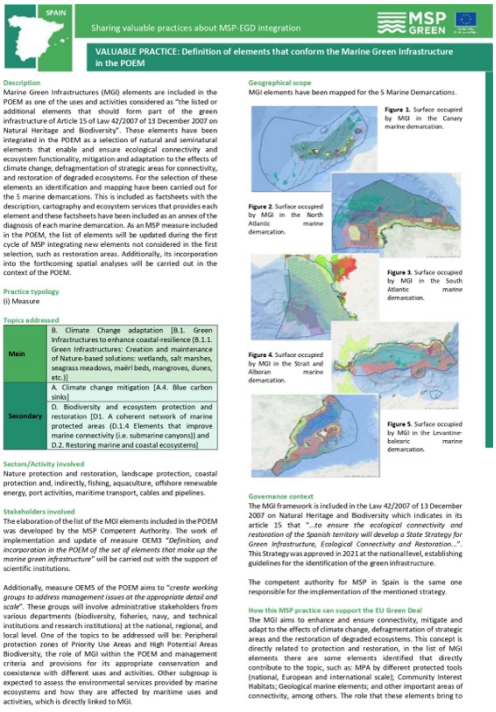

Figure 4. Example of VP factsheet.

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Table 1. List of identified VPs and main EGD elements they address. EGD topics are based on the EGD-MSP nomenclature: A = Climate change mitigation; B = Climate change adaptation; C = Sustainable sea-food production; D = Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration; E = Blue circular economy; F = Zero pollution; G = Fair and just transition.

Country	VP	EGD topic(s) addressed
Italy 1	Zoning areas for environmental and natural resources protection	D
Italy 2	Coordinating zoning for aquaculture areas and MSP	C
Italy 3	Zoning sources and sinks of sands in MSP: a need for climate change adaptation	B
Finland 1	Delineation of ecologically significant marine underwater areas (EMMA) in the Finnish MSP plan	D
Finland 2	Delineation of potential areas for offshore wind farm development in the Finnish MSP plan (Offshore wind farm location optimisation)	A
Finland 3	Co-creation of scenarios for the future of maritime areas (together with stakeholders)	G
Latvia 1	ELWIND offshore wind park development - experience in off-shore wind energy project implementation in cooperation with Estonia	A
Latvia 2	Coastal assessment for evaluation of tourism and recreation pressure on ecosystem and public infrastructure	A, D, F
Latvia 3	Balancing social, economic and environmental interests in offshore wind park development	G
Spain 1	Definition of High Potential Areas for Offshore Wind Farms in Spanish MSP	A
Spain 2	Definition of elements that conform to the Marine Green Infrastructure in the POEM	B
Spain 3	High Potential Areas for aquaculture	C
Spain 4	Zoning for biodiversity conservation	D
Bulgaria 1	Exploring the potential for allocation of offshore aquaculture areas and their integration into MSP	C
Bulgaria 2	Multifunctional zones and multi-use of the sea space	Cross-cutting
Bulgaria 3	Pollution prevention from land-based activities and sources	F
France 1	From energy transition to spatial reconfiguration into ports	A
France 2	Development of Marines cultures (shellfish and algae)	C
France 3	Public debates on offshore wind farm planning and MSP	G
France 4	An example of a marine MPA (Natura 2000 site) in a cross-border area	D
France 5	MPA and fisheries activity	C

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Some VPs demonstrate how **MSP can operationalize EGD objectives through zoning**. For instance, MSP can allocate specific areas for existing or potential MPAs, Offshore Wind Farms (OWF), or aquaculture development. Zoning is a common approach in many Member States' plans, but the added value of different VPs lies in the methods and criteria used to identify these areas. These methods may include diverse indicators, sometimes incorporating social factors, as well as inclusive approaches to stakeholder engagement.

Another approach showcased is the **identification of specific measures to advance EGD targets**. Examples include transformations and reorganizations, such as integrated logistical chains in French ports to support ORE projects, or the integration of Marine Green Infrastructure for climate change adaptation in Spanish MS plans.

Some VPs extend beyond zoning and specific measures by focusing on **cross-sector and cross-border cooperation**. For example, ports may collaborate to adapt infrastructure in support of future ORE deployment. Other VPs emphasize the significance of land-sea interactions (LSI), especially regarding zero pollution, climate change adaptation, and mitigation. This includes considerations for the full lifecycle of ORE installations, from development through deployment and decommissioning.

VPs focused on **biodiversity conservation and restoration contribute meaningfully to other EGD objectives**, such as climate change mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable seafood production. Healthy oceans underpin various EGD elements through the provision of essential ecosystem services. These practices are crucial for anticipating future ecological impacts of climate change and for identifying climate refugia that protect marine species and habitats.

Some limitations in assessing the VPs were identified, primarily concerning the planning phase of the MSP cycle. Consequently, it was not possible to evaluate how these practices are being implemented, whether they are likely to achieve the intended outcomes, or if they may have unforeseen side effects. This underscores the importance of monitoring and evaluating planning measures to assess their effectiveness and actual contribution to EGD objectives.

Further details on the Valuable Practices can be found in the project deliverable *D3.1 Sharing valuable practices for boosting the Green Deal through MSP.*

4. New Actions to strengthen the EGD components of MS plans

MSP-GREEN identified, designed, and set the basis for the implementation of 12 examples of New Actions (NAs), aimed at fostering the achievement of selected EGD objectives using MSP as an enabler. Each NA is illustrated through a fact sheet. Browse through the NAs by using the table below.

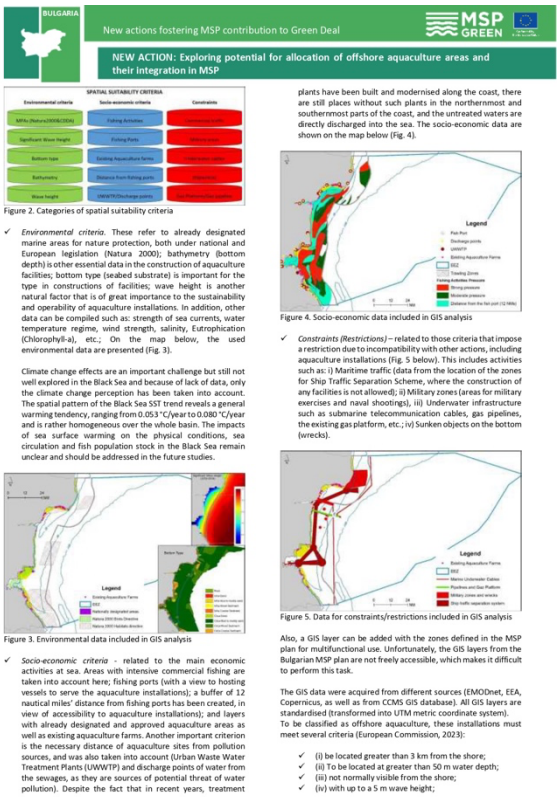

Figure 5. Example of NA factsheet.

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Table 2. List of identified NAs and the main EGD elements that they address. EGD elements are based on the EGD-MSP nomenclature: A = Climate change mitigation; B = Climate change adaptation; C = Sustainable sea-food production; D = Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration; E = Blue circular economy; F = Zero pollution; G = Fair and just transition.

Title	EGD topic(s) addressed
BG1 - Exploring the potential for allocation of offshore aquaculture areas and their integration in MSP	C
FI1 - Multi-use of marine areas in Finnish MSP	A, C, D
FI2 - Adaptation of the fisheries sector to climate change	B, C, G
FR1 - Conservation & Sustainable Sea-Food: the case of «Celtic Seas – slope of Bay of Biscay» Natura 2000 site	D, C, G
FR2 - A case of Blue circular economy in MSP: supporting ports in reusing dredged materials on land.	E
FR3 - Better integration of maritime safety and MSP	Cross-cutting
DE1 - A study on multi-use options in the EEZ as a basis for a revised MSP plan	Cross-cutting
IT1 - An integrated approach towards the climate-proofing of maritime spatial planning in the Italian Northern Adriatic Sea	B
IT2 - Strengthening marine biodiversity conservation in the Southern Adriatic Sea, including the transboundary dimension	D
LV1 - Setting the course towards reaching the 30% Biodiversity Strategy's target at sea: Coordination of management and planning solutions in the Latvian MSP	D
LV2 - Designation of the innovation zone for the development of the blue economy by introducing a multifunctional use concept in Latvian marine waters	Cross-cutting
SP1 - Approach to define a methodology for the assessment of OWF impacts on fisheries activities	A, C, G

The **NAs are designed to provide solutions to some selected gaps in the integration of EGD into MSP**, as identified in the analysis of MS plans and processes. They address cases where, for example, specific EGD elements (topics, sub-topics - see EDG-MSP nomenclature) have not been currently covered by MSP, where there is a need to consider additional aspects of some already considered EGD themes, or where there is a need to include innovative concepts supporting multiple EGD related objectives, such as multi-use. **NAs propose a range of methods, processes, and tools that could be applied in different national contexts to address some of the gaps.** Some actions deal with one specific EGD-related topic or sub-topic, while others tackle transversal issues, i.e. multi-use of marine areas and maritime safety, which are relevant for most if not all, EGD topics.

The **implementation of NAs demands certain conditions to be met**, including **closer collaboration between MSP and other national, EU and international processes,** levels of planning, and decision-making processes (e.g. implementation of environmental protection policies, maritime sector plans, energy plans, urban planning in coastal areas, etc.). **Stakeholder engagement** is a cornerstone of MSP and is essential across all NAs supporting EGD, including the identification of innovative solutions to integrate stakeholder knowledge into national MSP processes. Since many NAs need a cross-sectoral approach, **establishing interlinkages** among EGD topics and **reconciling different EGD objectives** remains a key challenge. **Multi-use of sea** areas is regarded in several NAs as a promising tool for addressing EGD-related challenges, such as limited sea space, compatibility of different sea activities, uncertainties in future developments, and the integration of LSI in MSP. However, the concept of multi-use is not yet fully operationalised and uncertainties persist regarding the successful implementation of this approach.

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Finally, given the rapid dynamics of coastal and maritime environments, technological advancements, shifting political targets, and the impacts of climate change, **monitoring the impact of NAs and maintaining adaptive capacities are essential**.

A Repository of VPs and NAs has been prepared to accommodate the information from the valuable practices and the new actions in a simple and workable catalogue that can be updated and integrated with other practices over time.

5. Recommendations on how to strengthen the integration of EGD maritime components into MSP

Based on the outcome of MSP-GREEN activities, **Recommendations on how to strengthen the integration of EGD maritime components into MSP** were defined through an EU-wide co-creation process. This included a cascade of actions and events (expert-based focus groups, an EU-level workshop, and sea-basin workshops), engaging experts and stakeholders within and beyond the project partnership. Results from previous projects were also capitalized with particular reference to eMSP.

57 recommendations were identified and organized into three main groups:

1. EGD-MSP-focused cross-cutting recommendations, including the following topics:

- MSP processes and approaches to improve EGD implementation
- Data and tools for MSP: new needs and opportunities driven by the EGD
- Governance and policy integration to strengthen MSP impact on EGD objectives
- Multi-use in MSP: a tool to reach the marine EGD objectives

2. EGD topic-based recommendations, including the following topics:

- Climate change adaptation
- Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration
- Climate change mitigation
- Zero pollution
- Sustainable seafood production
- Blue circular economy

3. Recommendations on the use of the EGD to work towards a fair and just sustainability transition in MSP.

The recommendations include several **examples of concrete actions** (e.g. creation of working groups, acquisition of data, development of new projects, etc.) for their implementation. Each recommendation is associated with **target users**: institutions, organizations, and experts working in MSP at the EU, national, sea-basin, or regional (sub-national)/local level. Additional implementation-related elements are provided both in terms of **urgency** and **readiness.**

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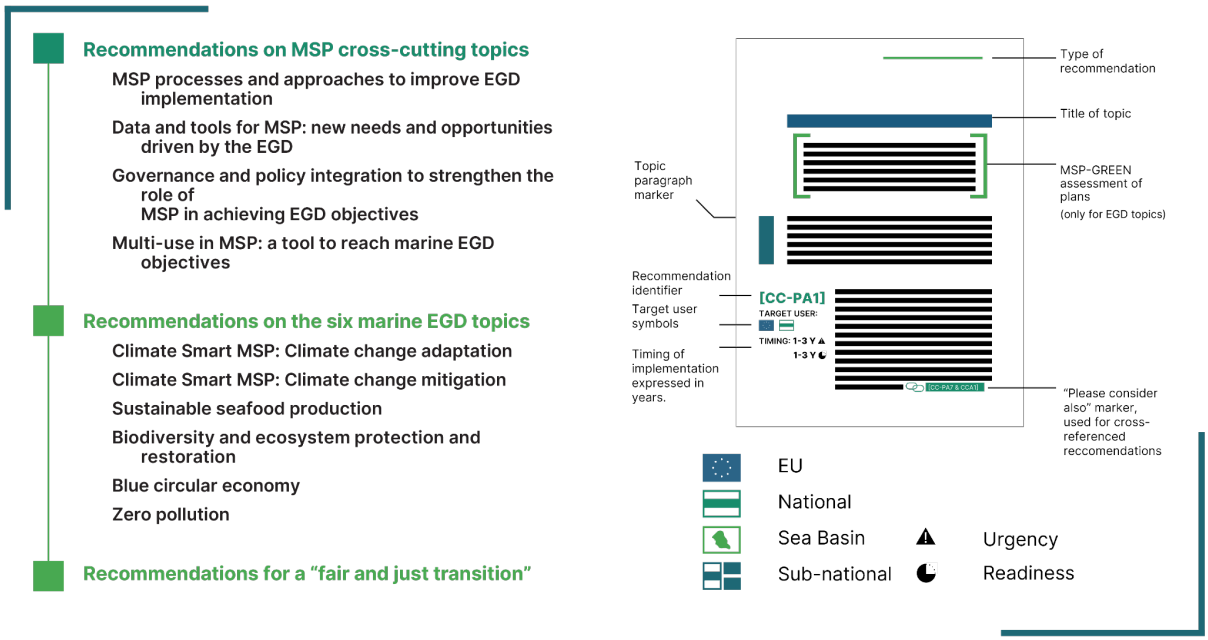

Figure 4. Structure of the recommendation catalogue.

Bringing the EDG ambition in MS plans: from challenges to solutions

MSP-GREEN has identified several challenges that can be faced when including EGD-related elements in MS Plans. These challenges are described in deliverable *D3.2 New actions fostering MSP contribution to Green Deal* and summarised in *the First project policy brief*.
The Valuable Practices, the New Actions, and the Recommendations prepared by MSP-GREEN represent possible solutions that can contribute to addressing the challenges. The table here below shows how the challenges can be linked to the solutions identified by the project.

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	Examples of solutions from MSP-GREEN		
	Valuable Practices	**New Actions**	**Cross-cutting recommendations**
Challenge 1. Spatial needs, distribution and compatibility of uses			
As sea space is finite, collaboration, multi-use, and innovation are vital to reconciling various uses while realising EGD objectives through MSP. The multi-use concept offers promise but requires further guidance and practical integration into MSP to address space limitations and support EGD goals effectively.	Bulgaria(1): Multifunctional zones and multi-use of the sea space	FI1: Multi-use of marine areas in Finnish MSP	Multi-use in MSP: a tool to reach the marine EGD objectives
	Latvia(1): Balancing social, economic and environmental interests in offshore wind park development	DE1: A study on multi-use options in the EEZ as a basis for a revised MSP plan	
		LV2: Designation of the innovation zone for the development of the blue economy by introducing a multifunctional use concept in Latvian marine waters	
Challenge 2. Limitations and gaps in knowledge and data			
A thorough knowledge-based analysis and objective data are essential for addressing gaps and uncertainties in EGD-driven MSP, aiding in comprehensive impact assessment and policy development.	Italy(1): Zoning sources and sinks of sands in MSP: a need for climate change adaptation		Data and tools for MSP: new needs and opportunities driven by the EGD
Challenge 3. Managing uncertainties			
MSP must adopt adaptive approaches to navigate uncertainties associated with EGD actions, employing a combination of tools to explore future scenarios and manage multiple sources of uncertainty that will increase in the future.	Finland(1): Co-creation of scenarios for the future of maritime areas	FI2: Adaptation of the fisheries sector to climate change	MSP processes and approaches to improve EGD implementation
	Spain(4): Zoning for biodiversity conservation	IT1: An integrated approach towards the climate-proofing of maritime spatial planning in the Italian Northern Adriatic Sea	

Challenge 4. Different scope and mandate of MSP			
While MSP can be an effective process in identifying potential collision courses related to EGD objectives and proposing new concrete actions to reconcile them, collaboration between other processes and levels of planning, policy and decision-making is needed to enhance the impact.			Governance and policy integration to strengthen MSP impact on EGD objectives
Challenge 5. Reconciliation of policy objectives			
MSP can be employed as a "scanner" of policy conflicts, thereby facilitating the proposal of operational solutions. There exists a need to update certain policies to incorporate new elements from more recent ones, thereby facilitating their coherent application.		IT2: Strengthening marine biodiversity conservation in the Southern Adriatic Sea, including the transboundary dimension	MSP processes and approaches to improve EGD implementation Governance and policy integration to strengthen MSP impact on EGD objectives
Challenge 6. Limitations of the MSP process			
Funding and Capacity Building: Continuous funding and capacity-building initiatives are essential for MSP to facilitate the green transition effectively and operationalise new knowledge and concepts in changing operating environments.			
Visibility and Political Agenda: MSP's role in enabling the EGD should be highlighted to improve its positioning in the political agenda, emphasising its societal impact and contribution to sustainability.			
Challenge 7. Fairness and stakeholder engagement			
Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement: Transparent communication and knowledge co-creation with stakeholders are pivotal for filling gaps in knowledge and addressing uncertainties, ensuring the validity of planning decisions and the consideration of sectoral objectives in EGD-related planning processes.	Finland(1): Co-creation of scenarios for the future of maritime areas	BG1: Exploring potential for allocation of offshore aquaculture areas and their integration in MSP	Use of the EGD to work towards a fair and just sustainability transition in MSP
	France(3): Public debates on offshore wind farm planning and MSP		

Stakeholder Engagement and Equity: MSP should prioritise stakeholder engagement to ensure fairness and equity, considering social objectives and local social and ecological values, while promoting inclusive decision-making processes.	Latvia(3): Balancing social, economic and environmental interests in offshore wind park development	SP1: An approach to define a methodology for the assessment of OWF impacts on fisheries activities	
Challenge 8. Land-sea interaction in MSP			
Integrated Land-Sea Perspective: EGD implementation requires an integrated planning approach that considers terrestrial and marine interactions, emphasising ecosystem-based adaptation for sustainable maritime development.	Bulgaria(3): Pollution prevention from land-based activities and sources	FR2: A case of Blue circular economy in MSP: supporting ports in reusing dredged materials on land.	Governance and policy integration to strengthen MSP impact on EGD objectives
	Latvia(2): Coastal assessment for evaluation of tourism and recreation pressure on ecosystem and public infrastructure		

6. The sea-basin perspective

MSP-GREEN recommendations were discussed at the sea basin level to reflect on regional specificities and identify priorities and examples of actions to be considered to advance in the implementation at the regional level of the most relevant EGD topics, through MSP. Four events were organised between June and September 2024:

- "Joint Black Sea Basin workshop: bridging maritime spatial planning with the European Green Deal and better integrating marine protected areas" (20th June 2024, Varna, Bulgaria);
- "MSP in the Baltic Sea region" (17th September 2024, Riga Latvia);
- "Maritime Spatial Plans as Enablers of the European Green Deal: insights from a Mediterranean perspective" (20th September 2024, Izola, Slovenia);
- "Maritime Spatial Planning and the European Green Deal: insights from the Atlantic and Channel-North Sea basins" (26th September 2024, Saint-Malo, France).

Atlantic & North Sea

Enhanced data and tools for MSP are considered crucial to advancing the goals of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy and strengthening the integration of the EGD into MSP in the North Sea, through the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI). Promoting information sharing, particularly through OSPAR technical groups, should be a priority. The expectations of citizens should be more prominently considered to guide the design of future scientific programs. Additionally, efforts toward developing a digital twin of the ocean should focus on providing practical applications for MSP.

Addressing climate change through mitigation and adaptation remains a top priority. European-level targets for offshore renewable energy must be translated into actionable objectives at the sea basin and national levels. Education, training, and increased funding for research are vital tools for developing climate-resilient MSP solutions. Other elements of the EGD are also recognized as essential for the Atlantic region and the North Sea.

In the Atlantic, greater coherence is needed at the sea basin scale to align the visions for MSP and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) implementation developed by individual countries. Ecosystem services assessments have been identified as valuable tools for pinpointing marine areas that require protection. Moreover, engaging land-based stakeholders is critical to addressing several EGD-related challenges, such as coastal resilience, zero pollution, circular economy, and sustainable seafood production.

In the North Sea, the GNSBI is regarded as an effective facilitator for the coherent implementation of policies and objectives related to energy, fisheries, the environment, and MSP. For various topics — including the blue circular economy, a fair and just transition in aquaculture and fisheries, and coherence between plans — the local level plays a pivotal role in developing practical solutions, aligned with strategies and frameworks established at higher governance levels.

Baltic Sea

Given the unique ecological conditions and increasing pressures from climate change in the Baltic Sea, MSP should prioritize the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach. Key actions include habitat restoration, the protection of blue carbon sinks, and the establishment of coherent networks of MPAs to support ecosystem resilience.

There is an urgent need to enhance data and knowledge on the impacts of climate change. This requires comprehensive monitoring efforts and collaboration with knowledge holders. Expanding stakeholder engagement, investing in targeted climate modeling, and fully leveraging the long-standing data cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are essential steps. Identifying climate refugia and deepening the understanding of climate change impacts on maritime sectors are critical to building resilience across the region.

Given the considerable uncertainties and knowledge gaps, strengthening the precautionary approach is vital. This will support the strategic ambitions of MSP while ensuring its future adaptability to evolving challenges.

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The expansion of offshore wind farming as a climate change mitigation measure, coupled with the need for a fair and just transition, underscores the importance of stronger stakeholder involvement in MSP. Early engagement, equitable representation, and targeted support for less influential actors are essential to achieving this goal. The BSR's extensive experience in stakeholder engagement should be leveraged to communicate the opportunities that arise from aligning MSP with the EGD.

Transboundary networks, such as the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, should be utilized to create the conditions necessary for effective EGD implementation within MSP. Frameworks like the BSR Regional MSP Roadmap 2021–2030 should serve as foundational tools for aligning the overarching aims and visions of national MSP efforts.

Black Sea

MSP should be rooted in ecosystem- and science-based principles, establishing itself as a cornerstone for climate-smart and EGD-aligned planning and management of the marine environment.

MSP must contribute to maintaining environmental pressures within the carrying capacity of marine ecosystems while safeguarding their natural functions. Achieving these goals requires early and thorough assessments of both individual and cumulative impacts, the development of alternative planning solutions to minimize such impacts, and the identification and implementation of effective mitigation measures.

Strengthening operational integration between MSP and MSFD processes and objectives is essential. This includes leveraging the most recent MSFD assessments when designing MSP plans, ensuring alignment between MSP and MSFD objectives, and achieving coherence between MSP plans and MSFD Programs of Measures.

Mediterranean Sea

MSP in the Mediterranean should take a stronger role in supporting the identification of new areas for nature conservation (MPAs, N2000 sites, OECMs, etc.) and foster their effective design and management. This should be a science-based process, relying on robust and accessible data on marine habitats, species and ecosystem services.

The biodiversity crisis in the basin is perceived as strictly linked to climate change. The availability of actionable knowledge on the effects of climate change should be improved to support the identification of most vulnerable areas and habitats and the development of targeted solutions through MSP. Transboundary MSP initiatives should aim at improving mapping, conservation and restoration of Mediterranean ecosystems, such as seagrass meadows and salt marshes, both playing an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Overall, a strengthened adaptative and forward-looking approach is considered essential to address future uncertainties, including those related to climate change. In terms of climate change mitigation, MSP implementation and adaptation in the Mediterranean provides opportunities for offshore renewable production development and can help reduce the carbon footprint of maritime sectors.
Fishing (in particular small-scale) and aquaculture are important economic activities for several Mediterranean coastal communities. MSP is called to address their needs more directly through the strengthened engagement of operators in co-planning, exploitation of opportunities provided by broader value chains, and support to innovative and more sustainable practices.

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7. Planning our European Seas: regions and countries for a European Green Deal

On the 23rd and 24th of October 2024, the final conference of the project entitled "Planning our European Seas: regions and countries for a European Green Deal" was organized in Marseille, in the context of the European MSP Week, offered by the European Commission to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Directive on MSP. The final conference presented the project results jointly with the ones of REGINA-MSP, a project that worked on improving the participation of regional and local authorities and stakeholders in MSP.
Some important messages of the conference are echoed below as they are complementary to the MSP-GREEN results and bring them forward to implementation.

The role of regions for an EGD-oriented MSP

Coastal regions (NUTS-2 level) are key players in the development and implementation of maritime and coastal policies and can help integrate MS plans into land planning. In several cases, they have competencies in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). They are also responsible for the implementation of the European Cohesion Policy and they are active players in the EGD, managing European funds to achieve several of its policy objectives. However, their role in MSP is not always clearly defined, which may hinder their involvement and, ultimately, the development and implementation of actions. The need to strengthen the involvement of regional authorities in MSP governance and decision-making processes was recommended: being at the interface between the national and the local level where actions are implemented and dealing with key issues at the heart of MSP (e.g. blue economy and sustainable development), regions can contribute to making MSP more coherent, concrete and efficient. A large part of maritime sectors and initiatives are driven and implemented at the regional level, including those related to the green transition of the blue economy. Moreover, the fair and just dimension of MSP regards primarily coastal communities and stakeholders at the regional and local levels.

- There is a need to strengthen the involvement of Regional authorities in MSP governance and decision-making processes
- Regions can contribute to making MSP more coherent, concrete and efficient
- Regions are key players in the green transition of the blue economy, as well as in the fair and just dimension of MSP

The role of maritime sectors towards EGD: MSP as a framework for innovation

MSP can support the green transition of maritime sectors ensuring dialogue and coordination of different needs and interests, as well as finding a balance between economic viability, social sustainability and nature protection. MSP can also help reconcile the EGD's multiple objectives and the different sectors' ones (e.g. displacement of fisheries from some areas can defeat efforts in emission reduction by the fishing fleets).
Innovation in maritime sectors can be supported by MSP, e.g. by identifying dedicated areas for Research and Innovation (R&I) where administrative procedures are easier and shorter for projects aiming to increase the Technology Readiness Level of a given innovation and its scaling up. Innovation can also imply a change of paradigm in governance, organization, and smart use of resources. MSP can support this change by facilitating synergies among sectors (including emerging ones), facilitating multi-use of the sea space, and paving the road for more efficient permitting processes. The concentration of multiple activities in given areas should be pursued only if it guarantees enhanced sustainability and reduced environmental pressures and cumulative impacts.

- Ensuring dialogue and coordination of different needs and interests, as well as finding a balance between economic viability, social sustainability and nature protection
- Bringing sectors to codesign sustainable, climate-smart and biodiversity-inclusive MS plans
- Identifying dedicated areas for R&I where administrative procedures are easier and shorter for projects aiming to increase the Technology Readiness Level of a given innovation and/or its scaling up (including multi-use of the sea)

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Comprehensive, reliable, and accessible ocean data are tremendously valuable for maritime sectors and operators often do not have access to them. MSP can support the green transition of sectors by providing key information for innovation.
Achieving social licencing (e.g. for aquaculture and ORE) with all stakeholders being co-creators of the plan (not only being consulted) and allowing for full integration in the blue economy ecosystem of each sector are other ways for MSP to support a clean and fair transition at sea.
Biodiversity and ecosystem protection and restoration and sustainable management of natural resources in the long term are overarching objectives of MSP. MSP should contribute bringing sectors to co-design sustainable, climate-smart and biodiversity-inclusive MS plans.
MSP can help gather funds for R&I to support EGD-oriented sector developments, including enhancing energy, raw material use and space occupation efficiency, as well as extending infrastructures, machinery and tools lifetime and circularity.
By exploiting LSI, MSP can help sectors organise their activities across the land-sea interface, also by promoting synergies among clusters that bring together land-based and maritime industries of different sizes. This can be used to promote decarbonization, zero pollution and circularity across the entire value chain.
Finally, in order to deal with sectors like shipping that are regulated at the global level, European institutions should be able to negotiate sector innovation and green transition worldwide, also using MSP as one of the possible tools.

- Providing comprehensive, reliable, and accessible ocean data to maritime operators help to achieve social licencing
- Ensuring all stakeholders are co-creators of the plan
- Allowing for full integration into the blue economy ecosystem
- Helping to gather funds for R&I to support EGD-oriented sector development
- Planning across the land-sea interface to promote sector decarbonization, zero pollution and circularity across the entire value chain
- The EU to be able to negotiate sector innovation and green transition worldwide for globally regulated sectors.

The role of Regional Sea Conventions as hubs for a marine EGD

During the final conference representatives from the five EU sea basins discussed the role of Regional Sea Conventions in promoting the implementation of an EGD-aligned MSP approach and facilitating sustainable blue economy developments through MSP.
In the Black Sea, the **Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution** can play a pivotal role in implementing the greening of blue economies, especially by supporting stakeholder engagement. Yet, a common framework of approach, improved cross-border coordination, and related implementation mechanisms remain is needed. The Baltic region is quite advanced in cooperation with the **HELCOM-VASAB** MSP Working Group providing a forum for exchange. Strong points of the Baltic experience are the capacity to share knowledge among several sectors and the availability of a common strategy and action plan. **OSPAR** is a pivotal enabler for the greening of sectors and nature protection at sea. The convention eases the burden of national countries and may simplify bureaucracy. A remarkable example is represented by the Azores, which were able to reach the 30% target of protected areas
In the Mediterranean, the contracting parties of the **Barcelona Convention** approved a conceptual framework for MSP which provides a common reference for MSP implementation to all countries. A dedicated group of national experts was recently established aiming to

- Supporting stakeholder engagement
- Providing implementation mechanisms and cross-border coordination
- Helping build a common strategy and action plan for a for a EGD-aligned MSP MSP
- Establishing dedicated groups of national experts to enhance collaboration towards MSP advancements at the sea basin level
- Helping achieve targets for nature protection and restoration
- Engaging with non-EU countries.

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strengthen exchange on MSP implementation across the sea basin. In the region, there is a need to upscale MSP processes and integrate them within the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) currently under revision. These actions are endorsed also by the numerous non-EU member countries of the Mediterranean region.

8. Ways forward

Dynamics at sea are evolving rapidly, driven by both environmental changes — climate change being a key factor — and transformations in the maritime economy. Since the inception of the MSP-GREEN project, significant developments have occurred within the EGD policy framework, at the legislative level (e.g., the approval of the Nature Restoration Law), and in societal responses. For instance, Europe is decarbonizing at an unprecedented pace, with 74% of its electric power now generated from renewable and low-carbon energy sources, a marked increase from 68% in 2023.

After two years of work, we remain firmly convinced that the path initiated by MSP-GREEN, positioning MSP as a key enabler of the Green Deal, is crucial for achieving sustainable green transitions at sea.

Monitoring and evaluating MS plans, particularly in assessing progress toward EGD objectives, are essential for guiding future adaptations and plan revisions. Strong linkages between marine and coastal planning and the sustainable blue economy are critical to fostering meaningful EGD implementation. The unique characteristics of each sea basin must be considered when applying MSP-GREEN recommendations, and the active engagement of regions and regional stakeholders should be recognized as vital and therefore strengthened. Sea basin cooperation mechanisms and Communities of Practice, both within MSP and in broader contexts, can play a pivotal role in advancing a shared approach to EGD-aligned MSP.