

NSAC Workshop on Marine Spatial Planning and Stakeholder Engagement

3 May 2023

Guiding paper for breakout session and brainstorming

Background

Maritime spatial planning (MSP) is a management tool for the allocation of marine space in the seas and oceans coherently and to ensure that human activities take place in an efficient, safe and sustainable way. Many activities take place in Europe's seas. At any given time, fishing, aquaculture, shipping, renewable energy, nature conservation and other uses compete for maritime space. To this end, the EU has adopted legislation on maritime spatial planning in 2014 and the Member States were to establish their MSP plans by 2021, the objective of which is to¹:

- minimize conflicts and create synergies between different activities,
- encourage investment through predictability, transparency and legal certainty,
- increase cross-border cooperation between EU countries to develop renewable energy, allocate shipping lanes, lay pipelines and submarine cables etc.,
- protect the environment by assigning protected areas, calculating impacts on ecosystems and identifying opportunities for multiple uses of space.

At least every ten years the EU countries must review their maritime spatial plans. The objective of this workshop is to explore the state of play of Marine Spatial Planning in view of the so-called spatial squeeze in the North Sea, and the role the NSAC can play in these processes through stakeholder engagement. If the NSAC can fulfill its mission and present itself as a forum for wider stakeholder engagement in fisheries and ecosystem management, this could result in management measures that are co-created by the stakeholders and therefore rendered more legitimate. Other topics explored will be transboundary cooperation, research priorities, multiuse and co-existence concepts, cumulative effects etc.

Relevant NSAC advice:

- On MPAs: https://www.nsrac.org/latest-advice/?advice_search=MPA&date=
- On wind parks: https://www.nsrac.org/latest-advice/?advice_search=wind&date=
- On Dogger bank process: https://www.nsrac.org/latest-advice/?advice_search=dogger+bank&date=

¹ <https://bit.ly/3Affhoj>

Breakout sessions

General Questions

1. What are the major drivers for marine spatial planning in the EU?
2. Do you consider the North Sea as relevant for biodiversity conservation, energy security and food security?
3. What are the major challenges in EU MSP?
4. What is your take on solutions/best practices that may contribute to better design and implementation of the MS plans, considering conservation and restoration objectives and a thriving blue economy?
5. Are the current EU/national governance structures adequate for efficient and effective MSP processes? Where do you see potential shortcomings?
6. According to you, what are the key regulations and initiatives impacting MSP processes and how?

Questions on integration of energy security

1. Russia's aggression in Ukraine exposed EU's energy vulnerabilities that are now being mitigated by plans of vast expansion of windfarms in the North Sea and elsewhere. What do you currently see as the most problematic aspect of allocation of windfarm licences to operators?
2. How can we assure that processes are robust even in tight timelines and times of urgency?
3. Is there sufficient consideration of other marine actors when decisions on energy security are taken?
4. Is co-existence a solution and in which cases is it viable?
5. How can energy security measures be relevant for conservation and seafood production?

Questions on integration of environmental conservation/restoration

1. Are current MSP plans sufficiently taking into account preservation and restoration of marine ecosystems?
2. How can blue sectors contribute to area-based conservation tools (MPA, OECMs, etc...)?

3. Can conservation/restoration be compatible with blue sectors in any way? How can this be achieved?
4. Can you provide one positive example of how a blue sector has meaningfully contributed to biodiversity objectives? Please also provide reasons why this was not greenwashing.

Questions on integration of food security/fisheries

1. Are fisheries as legitimate providers of low-carbon food and traditional users of space sufficiently included and considered in MSP processes?
2. Do fisheries having access to foreign waters have a say on and are included and considered in national MSP processes of third countries? If not, how can this be improved?
3. Is the fear of fishers being driven out of their traditional fishing grounds legitimate? What constitutes a legitimate claim in marine space and how is this taken into account when allocating space for societal benefits?

Questions on stakeholder platforms and the role of NSAC

1. Within the current CFP, has the NSAC fulfilled its role as stakeholder representation body in MSP and how could this role be strengthened?
2. Are there other organisations/bodies the NSAC could liaise with in order to strengthen its contribution to MSP?
3. Is there space in the NSAC for additional marine actors and will they want to join the quest for an equitable sharing of the North Sea?