



Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Common Implementation Strategy

35th meeting of the Marine Strategy Coordination Group (MSCG)

Breydel - Floor 012 Room 157 - Meeting Room 12, Avenue d'Auderghem,
1040 Etterbeek

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1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair introduced the meeting, welcomed Ocean Alliance and Pew Charitable Trusts as new observers and introduced new representatives for some Member States and observers.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the 34th meeting

The minutes of the 34th meeting were adopted.

3. Approval of the agenda

The chair asked for the approval of the agenda for the current meeting, with one Member State asking to have a wrap-up of actionable points for the next MSCG. The agenda was adopted.

4. Implementation of the Directive & the GES Decision

4a. Member State reporting

The Chair informed that three Member States have so far reported on time for their Articles 8-9-10 obligations and three have provided a partial reporting with their text-report. The Chair reminded that reporting on time is key to progress in the implementation of the MSFD and, in this respect, reminded one Member States on the need to submit its programme of measures.

The Chair informed that at the Directors' meeting in Budapest, we will take stock of the Articles 8-9-10 reporting and invite Member States to report before that date. One Member State indicated that their reporting was provided, one Member State confirmed they will try to report before the Directors' meeting, two Member States plan to report before the end of the year and two Member States in the first quarter of 2025.

One Member State indicated that due to the overload of requests, the Helpdesk takes time (1 week) to reply, which is confirmed by another Member State [RO], conversely one Member State [ES] mentioned that the Helpdesk is very supportive. One Member State reported difficulties in relation to the list of species to report. ENV will check these points.

The Chair mentioned that there is a need of simplification of the reporting and invite Member States to contribute to this exercise. One Member State [FI] suggested facilitating the collaboration of the reporters of neighbouring countries in this process. One Member States complemented by highlighting the need to find a good balance between the need of information for the assessment and reporting. ENV and the Chair confirmed that we will have to simplify the reporting and reduce Member States' reporting and discuss how we could facilitate this in the context of the CIS process.

The Chair concluded this point by reminding that Member States should send to the Commission, through the Permanent Representation, a letter with the Eionet confirmation that the reporting is complete.

4b. Programmes of measures and exceptions

The Chair informed MSCG on the timing of the Commission report, which is now going to be published by the new Commission. The Chair also clarified that the JRC report on which Member States were consulted for a fact check is not the official Commission assessment report, but a valuable input to the Commission assessment, which is still due for publication. The Commission then presented some of the findings of the report as well as provided an overview of the EU recommendations that are expected to be made.

Two Member States highlighted that they overall agree with the recommendations presented by the Commission. One Member States also mentioned that the recommendation to improve policy coherence should also be applied at EU level, not only national level.

Three Member States provided comments on the report circulated by the JRC at the last WG POMESA meeting which analyses the Member States' PoMs providing a statistical analysis of the Member States' e-reports. In particular, a better description of the scope of this report, and the difference with the Commission assessment, needs to be included in the introduction of the report and the title could be also revised to avoid confusion. It is also important for the Member States that the Commission assessment of the Member States PoMs does not focus on the quantity of measures but rather on the quality of the measures proposed and that they also consider the context in which measures are taken as described in their text reports. Concerns were also expressed that the JRC did not fully consider the reporting guidance on Article 13 and that some of the statements in the report are based on wrong interpretations of the guidance.

The chair reassured MSCG that the Commission assessment is based on information reported both in the e-reports and the text reports. It also made clear again that the Commission assessment looks at completeness, adequacy and coherence which goes far beyond the statistical analysis provided by the JRC, but that the JRC analysis gives a good overview of the general direction of the Member State PoMs and the coverage of descriptors and pressures, and links to other frameworks, and was used for this by the Commission in their assessment report.

4c. Implementation of GES decision

4c(i) Debrief on the work done by WG GES on implementing Commission Decision 2017/848/EU

The Commission debriefed on WG GES' work to support Member States in their implementation of the GES decision and the development of methodological standards for the assessment of GES, both for those that are being developed at EU and those at (sub)regional levels. The objective of the exercise is to organise the work in the Common Implementation Strategy in order to fill out the gaps that were identified in the Article 8 assessment guidance. This is done first by ensuring an efficient use of the resources already dedicated to the development of some of these methodological standards, including by external organisations such as the Regional Sea Conventions and International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), to avoid double work. Secondly this exercise aims to identify gaps which are not currently tackled and could be closed through specific activities to be taking place in the next 12-18 months. Low hanging fruits will be prioritised but work will also focus on closing some of the most important gaps (e.g. threshold values). This work will be used to update the Article 8 assessment guidance in view of the next Article 8 assessment reporting exercise, due in 2030. WG GES work programme plans the update of the Art 8 guidance by 2027 latest, considering the need for the guidance to be ready in time for the regional assessments.

4c(ii) State of play on development of threshold values for seafloor litter

The chair of WG GES updated MSCG about the latest state-of-play on the development of seafloor litter threshold values. Following discussions in TG Litter, experts sought guidance from WG GES on the need to have more than one threshold value, in particular in order to account for different impacts from litter at different depths. After discussions, WG GES tasked TG Litter to finalise work on a threshold value for seafloor litter in shallow waters (in non-trawled areas) in view of presenting a proposal to WG GES and MSCG in Spring 2025. The proposal should address three main questions: What is the acceptable number of litter items on the seafloor to include in the GES determination (Threshold Value)? What is the maximum depth to which this threshold value applies? And what monitored areas should be used to make this assessment?

One Member State shared doubts regarding the possibility to set a quantified threshold value for seafloor litter considering difficulties in monitoring seafloor litter and collecting data on this, and suggested a focus on measures to reduce the input of litter. They understand however that it is a requirement under the GES Decision and therefore will keep fully engaging in the process. Two Member States shared their appreciation for agreeing to consider a differentiated approach to seafloor litter depending on depth.

The Commission insisted that Member States make sure that their experts attend and actively participate in the TG Litter meetings where the TV will be discussed to ensure an ambitious and acceptable proposal for all Member States.

4d. TG Seabed mandate

The Commission presented the point and explained that this targeted amendment of point 2(h) under TG Seabed's Terms of Reference aimed to update the Terms of reference by referring to the Nature Restoration Regulation that entered into force on 18 August 2024. One Member State explicitly approved the amendment, while there was no further request for the floor. The Chair concluded that MSCG adopted the amendment proposed.

5. Review of the MSFD

The Commission recalled the current political context, and provided the background and political priorities that will guide the MSFD review process. So far the indications point at the Commission

finalising the evaluations that are ongoing (incl. MSFD evaluation). Based on the conclusions of the Evaluation, the Commission will work on future possible revision. Political Guidelines confirmed the main pillars for the next Commission: security, prosperity, and competitiveness, including implementing the European Green Deal (EGD). Focus is now on implementation of the EGD and new legislation that was adopted under the previous mandate. Under the new Commission, ocean and fisheries will be in a different portfolio than environment, however they are connected and need to impact each other (break silos). Strong focus in next mandate will be on the reduction of administrative burden (25% reduction of reporting), and simplification (use of digital tools).

The Commission gave a brief overview of two upcoming initiatives of particular interest:

1. **Water Resilience Initiative (WRI)**: in addition to freshwater, this will take a ‘source to sea’ approach, and will include coastal waters, including by establishing links with the Ocean Pact. The three pillars of water resilience will be addressed: environmental (restoring water ecosystems, ‘source to sea’ approach), economic (water smart economy) and social (access to affordable water, access to sanitation). The WRI will build on existing legislation and look at use of data and alert mechanisms (to support prevention of crises). The Commission also explained the ‘source to sea’ approach.
2. **Ocean Pact**, which includes a focus on healthy and resilient seas. Work has started but it is still unclear when the pact will be presented by the Commission. The **Call for Evidence** will be launched soon, and stakeholders will be consulted for a period of 4 weeks. The plan is to launch the Ocean Pact in mid-May, to be able to present it at the UN Ocean Conference in June 2025. The Commission invited MSCG to come forward with ideas for the pact (and WRS). The Ocean Pact will also likely have 3 pillars: 1. Healthy and resilient seas (clear link to environmental legislation), 2. Sustainable blue economy (reconcile the use of our seas with environmental protection), 3. data knowledge and innovation (digitalisation, and better connect data platforms). The Ocean Pact will also have an international dimension (in particular BBNJ, which is expected to be ratified in time for the UN Ocean Conference). The Commission also reaffirmed its position on deep-sea mining.

The Commission invited MSCG to come forward with ideas for the Ocean Pact and the WRS.

One Member State highlighted the complexity of the framework and the need to bring many services together. It questioned what will technically happen to the MSFD as a result of the review and whether MSCG will know at some time (e.g. next spring) whether the Directive will be opened or not. The Member State remarked that it will need different sets of expertise for a legislative review process at national level and so it needs to know whether it will happen and if so when, while also enquiring whether ad hoc meetings be organised again.

Another Member State expressed its cautious satisfaction at seeing an integrated approach in the WRI and the Ocean Pact. In relation to the social dimension of WRI, the Member State remarked that there are many other social benefits to people from clean water beyond clean sanitation. It also expressed a concern that this integrated approach may lead to reduction in level of protection in water and marine environment, at both EU and international levels. It questioned the interinstitutional arrangements for certain files, citing BBNJ as an example. It also observed need for a regional approach to the application of the ecosystem-based approach in maritime spatial planning, such as is done in the Greater North Sea Basin initiative. Finally, it expressed that following the publication of the Draghi report, the Commission should support the development of a strong regulatory framework on deep-sea mining at the International Seabed Authority.

One observer] asked about the scope of the call for evidence for the initiatives, and the inclusion of stakeholders in the outreach activities, and whether they will be separate for the two initiatives. Another observer recalled its *Blue Manifesto* and questioned the involvement of the Marine Action Plan special group in the outreach process for the initiatives. The Chair clarified again what is expected

in terms of outreach for the Ocean Pact, which will become clearer once the Call for Evidence is published.

In response, the Chair highlighted that there will be separate calls for evidence for the two initiatives. The Chair also highlighted that the Commission services will also organise certain outreach activities for the ocean pact, covering all stakeholders. The Chair explained that the WRS will not only focus on the quantity but also the quality of water. The initiative builds on a solid acquis, some of which has been recently revised (DWD, UWWTD), on new legislation (NRR, water re-use) and the implementation of existing laws, all of which are very important to ensure that we level of ambition remains high.

As for the review the MSFD, the Chair explained that the Commission services will have a clearer idea regarding the MSFD review once the new College of commissioners is in place. The WRI/Ocean Pact strategies are likely to be the place where such a review could be announced. The Commission services are nevertheless working internally on the groundwork for the impact assessment. If a revision were to be pursued, it is unlikely to take place before the beginning of 2026.

On international issues, the Chair invited the Member State that made a point on BBNJ file allocation to raise this point in Council with the Presidency. The Chair finally commented on the EU dynamics at the International Seabed Authority, where Member States are more in the forefront.

6. Common implementation strategy

6a. CIS meetings

The Commission informed MSCG about document MSCG_35-04 which provides an overview of the main outcomes of the CIS meetings that have taken place since the last MSCG.

One Member State asked for an update regarding the proposal from TG Seabed for a threshold value for areas without manageable pressures on the seafloor. At the last MSCG, it was agreed that more time was needed for certain Member States to discuss the proposed TV and the possible socio-economic impacts. The Commission explained that the threshold value is being further discussed in TG Seabed. An update will be provided to MSCG at the next meeting.

6b. Upcoming Water & Marine Directors meetings

The Presidency of the Council, Hungary, presented the programme for the upcoming Water & Marine Directors meeting, which will take place in Budapest on 26-28 November 2024.

The agenda, which is available on CircABC, is structured as follows:

- 26.11
 - o Evening: Reception
- 27.11
 - o Morning: Water Directors' meeting
 - o Afternoon: Joint Water and Marine Directors' meeting
- 28.11
 - o Morning: Marine Directors' meeting

The deadline to register is the 18 November 2024.

Poland announced that the next WMD under its presidency will take place on 25-27 May 2025 in

Warsaw, in the Warsaw citadel in the new museum of the Polish Army.

The programme of the meeting will be as follows:

- 27.05
 - o Evening: Welcome reception
- 28.05
 - o Morning: Marine Directors' meeting
 - o Afternoon: Joint Marine and Water Directors' meeting
- 29.05
 - o Morning: Water Directors' meeting
 - o Afternoon and evening: Field excursion.

6c. Regional cooperation & coordination

Baltic Sea -

HELCOM's representative informed MSCG of recent developments. First, HELCOM's secretariat assisted the helpdesk in replying to Member States questions on the prefilling process for the Article 8, 9, 10 reporting. HELCOM will review the lessons learnt during this experience, which will help in improving the process for next reporting round. Second, the representative also informed that work towards reviewing the HOLAS 3 to prepare the next quality status report (HOLAS 4) had been concluded, and the so called *RevDev* topical workplans had been adopted by HELCOM Heads of Delegation in June 2024. The secretariat currently examines how this work plan will trickle down in the work of the relevant working groups and expert groups, and HELCOM is exploring how to resource this development work in the next two-year period until the end of 2026. The development tasks in the workplans vary in scope from broad topic of reviewing integration rules, to more specific technical topics such as benthic habitat classification where HELCOM aims to engaged with the EEA and on benthic habitat maps where engagement with EmodNET-seabed has already been commenced to feed into the assessment process. Once the development phase has concluded at the end of 2026, a data collection phase is planned between mid-2027 and mid-2028, after which an assessment phase is foreseen mid-2028 to mid-2029, with anticipation of facilitating pre-filling again from mid-2029.

HELCOM is also starting work on updating monitoring programmes to support Member States reporting for Article 11, including a Data call for monitoring stations.

HELCOM's representative referred to ongoing discussions between the HELCOM's BioDiv and maritime spatial planning groups to develop a common understanding on ecosystem-based management. In addition, they are working on a common understanding of ecosystem-based fisheries management, which will be done collaboratively with BALTFISH and the Baltic Sea advisory council (BSAC). A workshop is planned in March. Finally, technical work is ongoing at HELCOM's level to see how Habitats Directive and MSFD assessments can be better aligned.

The Chair mentioned and praised HELCOM's work on pollution hotspots and encouraged other RSC to engage in similar work. HELCOM stood ready to share the relevant information and noted that a decision on the criteria for deletion and addition of pollution hot spots will be taken at next HELCOM HOD in December. The Chair invited HELCOM to present these updated criteria during next MSCG meeting in May.

North-East Atlantic Sea -

The OSPAR Secretariat informed MSCG about the June 2025 OSPAR Ministerial meeting, a major

deliverable of which is the proposal for the enlargement of the OSPAR maritime area put forward by ES/PT. Other deliverables include a marine litter package and a mid-term review of the OSPAR 2030 Strategy (NEAES). In terms of MSFD-related work, the OSPAR representative referred to the alignment of OSPAR indicators with MSFD GES (gap analysis, identification of GES Decision criteria not yet covered). OSPAR is also examining to which extent its QSR 2023 has been used by the OSPAR countries which are also EU MS in their Art. 8 reporting, so as to better align the next Intermediate Assessment, planned for 2029. A new group on ocean acidification and climate impact has been active since last year, seeking synergies between NEAES and EU policies, including MSFD. Another new (2021) group (ICG-ORED) works on environmental impacts of offshore wind development and has initiated a study on cumulative impacts on marine birds. Upon request of the Commission, that highlighted the commitment on the Arctic from the previous OSPAR ministerial, the OSPAR representative informed that a group was set up (AOWG) and has been working on possible actions for two years. In its last meeting in Greenland, a focus list of actions was agreed (work with Arctic Council, IMO, identification of priority sites including MPAs and OECMs, engagement with indigenous peoples and actions related to shipping and marine litter). While there has been no agreement yet, much progress has been made and the HOD meeting being held the following week will provide steer on how to take them forward, with the aim to deliver by June 2025. The Commission observed that it will be important for OSPAR to show it can deliver, including on MPAs in the Arctic at the June ministerial.

One observer asked whether the closure of sandeel fisheries by a third country is being discussed at OSPAR. OSPAR replied that she had no knowledge of any related discussions, with a Member State adding that OSPAR does not have competence in fisheries and that this could be discussed in NEAFC. One observer informed that the scientific aspects are dealt with by ICES.

Mediterranean Sea -

The Chair reminded that in 2025 the Barcelona Convention has its next COP, which will require coordination. She then invited Member States from the region to intervene given the Convention was not present at the meeting, though this was not the case.

Black Sea -

As there was no representative from the Bucharest Convention at the meeting, one Member State from the region informed of its continued bilateral cooperation with its neighbouring EU Member State on the basis of a strategic action plan, and they plan to meet again soon to discuss coordination of threshold values and updated GES definitions. Concerning the Black Sea Commission (BSC), no decision was taken last October on starting again the work of the Advisory Groups. In their absence, Black Sea countries are working independently to nevertheless fulfil their obligations under the Convention. The BSC Permanent Secretariat remains involved in projects and represents the Convention in international organisations.

7. Policy coherence focus

7a. Nature restoration

DG ENV presented the recently adopted the Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR), focussing on those NRR provisions for marine restoration and the links with the MSFD work.

A Member State noted that, for certain Member States, the very large surface area of habitats whose condition needs to be assessed makes it difficult to comply with the timeline set in the NRR. This Member State further noted that the relationships between good condition and GES should be

clarified, to ensure that member States can reuse as much as possible the results of MSFSD assessments for the NRR. Finally, this Member State noted the need to ensure coherence between the measures to be set under the NRR and the TV set under the MSFD for D6C5. In this sense, inviting Member States restoration experts at relevant TG Seabed meetings was welcomed.

A second Member State supported the first speaker on the massive effort required to elucidate habitats condition. It was noted that the survey vessels available in the EU will not suffice to map, by the deadline set in the NRR, the habitats whose condition is unknown. This Member State requested the Commission to develop guidance on the NRR's requirements (on the marine and other themes) and how to implement them. This should help develop a common understanding across Member States. Preparing a Nature restoration plan (NRP) within two years is considered a daunting task and the Commission should clarify if MSFD reporting would be fit for this purpose. In this Member State, coastal waters in the sense of the WFD cover huge areas extending from the baseline and the way these are defined under Art 4 NRR and WFD should be reconciled. Finally, this Member State suggested that the NRR should be set as a standing agenda point at Marine and Water Directors' meetings until 2026.

A third Member State supported the two previous speakers on the consideration of the very large marine areas and habitats to be covered and the huge effort required to define their condition.

A fourth member State supported the previous speakers and suggested setting up a dedicated marine expert group for the NRR. This Member State also noted the need to maximise the synergies between the MSFD and the NRR, as far as reporting is concerned.

A fifth Member State referred to a Commission guidance mentioned at the last WG GES and enquired when this document would be ready. This Member State further mentioned the overlap between Annex I/Annex II of the NRR and the Habitats Directive crosswalk. This causes confusion and the Commission should clarify the delineation.

In its reply, the Commission acknowledged that the NRR targets are ambitious and confirmed that ensuring that the NRR, the MSFD and the Habitats Directive function in synergy is considered high priority. The Commission however noted that seabed mapping obligations are longstanding and already in force since the adoption of the MSFD (2008) and the Habitats Directive (1992). On the correspondence between good condition and GES, the Commission explained that the core of the good condition concept corresponds to the 'structure' and 'function' parameters under the Habitats Directive and noted that the MSFD also refers to these. This is therefore the common element we can build on to create a link between good condition and GES. There are relevant provisions in the NRR to ensure we can achieve this. On a possible dedicated NRR marine expert group dedicated, COM intends to convene joint MEG-TG Seabed meetings to discuss the implementation of the NRR in the marine environment. On habitats classification and delineation, COM referred to the EEA's work on an interpretation manual of habitats (crosswalk with HD) to be published end of 2024 and the EEA noted that they already published material on the delineation between marine and coastal waters. As regards a possible Commission guidance, it clarified that work is in progress on a Q&A. It will help interpret the links between the NRR, Habitats Directive and the MSFD. Finally, the Commission informed the Member States that an ongoing LIFE PLP call (the study will last 2-3 years) will aim to develop a manual indicating how to best map, assess the condition of, and restore each habitat under Annex II NRR.

ICES took the floor to explain that they are working on preparing contributions to a guidance document and informed the group that an ICES workshop will take place in the first week of March on active/passive restoration, criteria for successful restoration, and recovery rates for specific species. More information will be shared at a later stage. An observer also informed that it recently published

an extensive guide on habitat mapping¹ and stands ready to assist the Member States.

The Chair concluded this point and noted that, while the requirements are not fully aligned between the NRR, the MSFD and the Habitats Directive, the Commission is working on support material to help MS in implementing this Regulation and ensure that the burden is reduced as much as possible through ensuring maximum synergies between these pieces of law. The Chair informed the group that there will be a NRR agenda item at the next Directors meeting.

7b. Offshore renewable energy

7b(i) Balancing the EU's marine commitments: harnessing offshore wind while preserving the seas

The EEA delivered a presentation on an upcoming briefing exploring the balance between offshore wind development and environmental protection, entitled "Harnessing offshore wind while preserving the seas". The briefing will be published on 15 November 2024.

The four key messages of the briefing are:

- 1) Europe seeks to increase offshore wind energy production by more than 16 times by 2050. Increasing the production of renewable energy is indeed critical to decarbonise Europe's economy.
- 2) At the same time, Europe also aims to increase the surface of marine protected areas (MPAs) to cover 30% of the seas by 2030. In this context, the location of offshore wind turbines is a sensitive matter, and the briefing identifies that there are currently considerable knowledge gaps on the cumulative impacts of offshore wind installations on marine ecosystems, which is a challenge to address.
- 3) The deployment of offshore renewables can be combined with other measures benefitting the environment (e.g. sustainable agriculture).
- 4) Considering trade-offs and implementing maritime spatial planning are crucial to align offshore renewable energy growth with marine environment protection. Maritime spatial planning can deliver a co-existence between different usages and activities

The briefing identifies the different pressures affecting coastal areas and an ecological sensitivity index was produced as a tool for prioritising areas in need of protection. Importantly, these pressures are combined with climate change impacts.

Overall, a key conclusion of the briefing is that maritime spatial planning is a critical tool to consider the cumulative impacts and trade-offs involved in the development of offshore renewables, and ultimately to achieve a balanced use of Europe's seas across all sectors.

In addition to the briefing and as complementary effort, EEA has been working since the summer on a project aimed at mapping and addressing knowledge gaps related to the impacts of offshore renewables on the marine environment. The results of this work, which is scheduled to finish in February 2025, will be used for balancing the goals of environmental protection and offshore energy development. This work will cover the following areas: policy and monitoring practices; environmental impacts and risks; trade-offs; emerging technologies; country examples; data and knowledge gaps; and outlook to 2030 and 2050.

¹ <https://www.marineboard.eu/publications/marine-habitat-mapping>

The Member States took the floor and thanked EEA for this presentation.

One Member State warned against one size fits all approach and on environment being mentioned as a “sector”. The Member State representative drew attention to the fact that there are no regional maritime spatial plans, though there is need of a regional decision to include the cumulative impacts. Thus mandatory decision making at the sea basin level is an issue, also noting that those working on maritime spatial planning are planners. They may not have a full grasp of the complexity of the marine environment. The Member concluded with a word of caution about how solutions are articulated.

Another Member State asked if the report provided guidance on the type of environmental data to collect. This MS also mentioned the impact on land and asked if the impact of the cable on land are detailed.

The EEA clarified that they are releasing a briefing and not a detailed report.

ICES informed that it has groups related to the effects of ORE (around 10-15), also working on the cumulative impacts.

The EEA mentioned that it is in contact with several of experts working on this, including an academic institution that leads a consortium. It clarified that the project on knowledge gaps started in June and will end in February. On the issue of cables, EEA has not been requested by Member States or the Commission for guidance. It is for the time being up to Member States to consider the trade-offs involved.

7b(i) Offshore renewables deployment and impacts on achieving GES

Eclipse, which was contracted by the Commission, explained the scope of their work i.e. to investigate the cumulative impacts of offshore wind farms in connection to each of the 11 MSFD Descriptors and GES achievement and analyse knowledge gaps and mitigation strategies through literature review, expert consultation and participatory workshop. They also mentioned interactions with key stakeholders (e.g. EEA) as well as the specificity of their work (focus on MSFD GES). The scoping review has now been completed, with a focus at this stage on D6, D10, D11 and on how the respective threshold values (TVs) are affected. Preliminary results indicate that impacts on seabed might be short-lived, except for soft bottom habitats. Some positive effects and several trade-offs were identified. There are no links with D6 TV that can be documented, and Eclipse highlighted the need for long term data. The effects of offshore wind farms on marine litter seem insignificant, but there is no evidence to link with beach litter TV. As to underwater noise also more data are needed but impacts, albeit short lived, seem significant and some recommendations for measures have been formulated. The cumulative impacts from other sound sources (e.g. shipping, explosion of munitions) need to be further investigated, in particular at species’ population level. Key takeaways for each descriptor were also presented.

Eclipse then outlined the next steps of the work they are carrying out:

- Expand the extraction to full text articles to write the short science summaries;
- Expand to all MSFD descriptors;
- Complement results by the participatory workshop in 2025 to confirm findings and gaps.

One Member State asked that MSCG is more directly involved and pointed out that seabirds fall under D1. Another Member State asked about the geographical scope of the literature review. Eclipse confirmed that the literature review covers all EU waters, focusing on the North Sea (also due to the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative) and that MSCG, through DG ENV, could be involved in the

forthcoming workshop. The Commission reminded that the Eklipse call for evidence had been shared with MS at the time and agreed to take all necessary steps for Member States to be properly involved.

8. AOB

There were no AOBs raised.

The next MCSG meeting will be held in spring 2025.

Summary of the action points:

- Next MSCG meeting, HELCOM should present their work on hotspots and an update of the work of TG Seabed on the seabed integrity TV
- Invite stakeholders to the Eklipse workshop
- For Member States, to report their article 17 updates

List of participants

Member State		Organisation / Ministry
BE	Belgium	Belgian Federal Public Service Agency
BG	Bulgaria	Ministry of Environment and water
CY	Cyprus	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
DK	Denmark	Ministry of Environment
FI	Finland	Ministry of Environment
FR	France	Ministère de la Transition écologique, de l'énergie, du climat et de la prévention des risques
HR	Croatia	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
DE	Germany	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
EL	Greece	Ministry of Environment and Energy (YPEN)
FR	France	Ministère de la transition écologique
IE	Ireland	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)
IT	Italy	Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security
LT	Lithuania	Ministry of Environment
LV	Latvia	Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology
		Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
MT	Malta	Environment & Resources Authority
NL	Netherlands	Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat
PL	Poland	Ministry of Infrastructure (MI)
PT	Portugal	Direcção-Geral de Recursos Naturais, Segurança e Serviços Marítimos (DGRM)
RO	Romania	Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests
ES	Spain	Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge
SI	Slovenia	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
SE	Sweden	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM)
Observers		Entity
-	OSPAR	OSPAR Convention Secretariat
	HELCOM	Helsinki Convention (HELCOM) Secretariat

-	Birdlife	Birdlife Europe & Central Asia
-	CCB	Coalition Clean Baltic
-	OA Alliance	International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification
-	ICES	International Council for Exploration of the Sea
-	NS RAC	North Sea Advisory Council
-	NWWAC	North Western Waters Advisory Council
-	NAVI	Marine Strategy Navigation Group representative (Central Dredging Association - CEDA)
-	SAR	Seas At Risk
-	EMB	European Marine Board
-	EAPO	European Association of fish Producers Organisations
-	MedPAN	Mediterranean Protected Area Network
European Commission and European agencies		
-	ENV.C.2	European Commission, DG Environment, Unit C.2 "Marine Environment and Clean Water Services"
	ENV.D3	European Commission, DG Environment, Unit.D.3 "Nature Conservation »
	EEA	European Environment Agency
Others		
	Eclipse	