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Background

The German Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) will submit a proposal for a project of the working title ”Coherent Linear Infrastructures in Baltic Maritime Spatial Plans” (Baltic LINes) under the BSR Programme.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the information,
- consider and decide if this initiative can be supported as a flagship project under HA Spatial Planning of the EUSBSR,
- consider to grant sub-group status to this project initiative.

Draft project concept

1. Project idea

1.1. Challenges to be addressed

According to the provisions of the MSP Directive, all coastal EU Member States need to draw up MSPs by 2021 and, thereby, create conditions for Blue Growth. The directive prescribes that "issues of transnational nature" in national MSPs should be "coherent and coordinated across the marine region concerned". In order to fulfil this requirement, as a minimum, topics that are per se transnational need to be coordinated at sea-basin level. Linear infrastructures, i.e. shipping lanes as well as pipelines and sub-sea cables, fall into this category.

If MSPs are not being coordinated, coastal states run the risk that sea space is sub-optimally used and Blue Growth as well as MFSD objectives are not fully reached. This danger is particularly obvious in case of shipping lanes. If routes do not connect across borders, but physical installations (e.g. offshore wind farms) in adjacent areas on the other side of the border even block the way, this situation will linger for the lifetime of the physical infrastructure, i.e. 30-50 years. Although, cables and pipelines require less space and are easier to consolidate with other uses, these infrastructures entail massive investments and require transnational coordination not only from "conflict avoidance" but also "synergy creation" point of view.

The Baltic Sea Region has already gained experience in MSP in general and is among the forerunner regions in creating models for transnational as well as cross-border cooperation and coordination within MSP. This is in particular evidenced by the work of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG as well as the history of a series of transnational MSP projects such as BaltSeaPlan, PlanBothnia and PartiSEApate. This series of interconnected MSP projects is expected to be continued with the new set of MSP projects foreseen to be launched this and in the following year; i.e. the BONUS BaltSpace project, the DG MARE Baltic Scope project and the Central Europe BaltWise project.

The current proposal under the new INTERREG BSR programme "Baltic Lines" builds on the results of the finished projects and interlinks into the parallel project applications. It also interlinks with more "sector" oriented networks and initiatives (see below).

The BaltSeaPlan Vision 2030 (2011), which developed the principles for a coordinated MSP approach within the Baltic Sea Region, stipulates that linear infrastructures should be coordinated at pan-Baltic level and need to form the backbone of national MSPs. Furthermore pilot projects within BaltSeaPlan, PlanBothnia and PartiSEApate already started off processes of cross-border planning. For example, the sea space of the Pomeranian Bight area considered uses in Sweden, Poland and Germany (including shipping lanes as well as cable/pipeline corridors) and on this basis developed a draft joint plan.

However, at the time of these pilot initiatives not all BSR countries had started off their official MSP processes. Thus project results could so far only be integrated into the official MSPs of Germany and/or Lithuania. Given the obligation of member states to develop MSPs by 2021, most EU members in the BSR are by now preparing their national MSP process and will launch the actual planning process in the next 1-2 years. This means that a window of opportunity has opened to ensure that these MSPs designate areas for linear infrastructures in a coordinated manner. Baltic LINes can, thus, provide a frame for coherent MSP development in the future and, thereby, realise the BlueGrowth potential in the BSR. In addition to Baltic LINes, a sister project will be submitted under the North Sea Region Programme, which would even allow a transregional alignment of linear infrastructures.

Also in methodological terms, Baltic LINes will build on foundations of BaltSeaPlan and PartiSEApate. The very idea of MSP is to harmonise different sea uses by involving the respective users. In the past, stakeholder dialogues have been carried through, acquainting sector representatives with the concept of MSP and asking

for their input. As a result, planners received a better view on the expectations, hopes and fears of different sectors. However, a consultation process in a real planning context has so far not been carried out on a comprehensive scale. Although the involvement of sectors sometimes proved to be challenging in the past, contacts from previous consultations can be drawn on. As MSP is no longer a "training" exercise it is expected that sectors will have a stronger incentive to get involved.

With this new initiative, the level of cooperation between planners and sectors (and their respective industry and authority level networks) shall be intensified, which is feasible as the number of sectors is limited to two. Although sector planning is to a certain extent taking place in dedicated fora and working groups also on transnational level (e.g. HELCOM Maritime or the International Hydrographic Commission on for shipping and BASREC for energy), these scenarios have so far not comprehensively taken into account by Maritime Spatial Planning. A close dialogue with these stakeholders should lead to an integration of shipping / energy planning into MSP while considering other sea uses at the same time.

Finally the project contributes to the realisation / implementation of the new governance model for MSP throughout the Baltic Sea region developed in the framework of the PartiSEApate project, which has been taken note of by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. This governance model stipulates that "hot topics" for pan-Baltic MSP cooperation shall be developed within sub-groups and brought for decision-making then to Member States represented within the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. Whereas the parallel ongoing projects Baltic Scope and BaltWise focus on fostering coordinated cross-border MSP processes of neighbouring countries; the project "Baltic Lines" is designed as to support the pan-Baltic cooperation process.

1.2. Project results

The main target group of this project are authorities responsible for the implementation of Maritime Spatial Planning. Baltic LINes will provide them with an information tool on where shipping lanes and energy transmission corridors should optimally be placed and how MSPs can provide the necessary framework conditions for these uses in the coming years. The capacity of this target group is increased for the medium-term and long-term. The project enables MSP authorities to transpose the coordinated planning solution for shipping and energy transmission into their national MSPs, which will be legally binding for periods of e.g. 10 - 15 years. The effect is even more long-term when considering that planning of incompatible uses in adjacent areas, especially in case of physical infrastructures with a lifetime of several decades, is prevented. Apart from that, MSP authorities will create the necessary process and structure on sharing data on shipping as well as energy transmission at transnational scale, which can also be transferred to data sharing for other sea uses, resp. be included in the framework for a BSR MSP Spatial Data Infrastructure, which shall be worked towards by a future MSP Data Expert Group under the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. Furthermore, the project will develop legal framework conditions, which can be applied in the future for all Blue Growth sectors.

Another target group are the shipping as well as offshore wind energy sectors. MSP is a policy instrument setting the conditions for Blue Growth. By contributing to capacity development among authorities implementing MSP on how to take on board sector considerations, Baltic LINes has a positive impact also on this second target group. Sea use sectors benefit from reduced uncertainty for investments in the coming 20 years, reduced risk of conflicting interests (e.g. permanent infrastructures placed into shipping routes) as well as benefits from identifying and making use of transnational synergies. Moreover, Baltic LINes sets up a dialogue between planners and sector representatives. This dialogue will increase the capacity of the latter target group in how to become an "involved" stakeholder in MSP (awareness raising for operational requirements of other sea use sectors, sharing sector information, formulating opinions on planning scenarios, etc.).

The specific objective 2.4 of the Cooperation programme "aims at building favourable framework conditions and increasing capacity of public authorities and practitioners for developing blue growth solution", inter alia

through developing “capacity of stakeholder to mediate between contradictory interest”. These goals are at the core of MSP. With its pan-Baltic perspective Baltic LINes directly contributes to setting the conditions for blue growth. The more comprehensive the spatial approach, the less incompatibilities across borders and the higher the added value for the BSR as a whole. Apart from shipping, the project focuses on energy transmission infrastructures, which are vital for offshore wind energy. Thus, the project also helps to develop “framework conditions for integrating new uses” into MSP.

1.3. Planned project activities and their main outputs

Baltic LINes will consist of the following elements:

1) Spatial Data for Linear Infrastructures and MSP

Any planning of sea space depends on comprehensive, up-to-date and reliable MSP data. Past projects have shown that data is generally sufficiently available, but often does not fit MSP purposes (e.g. too crude, not spatially specific, unclear “bias”). Also in some cases only “information” is provided rather than the data on which this information is based. In order to be able to plan for linear infrastructures, project partners need to take stock of current employment of linear infrastructures (e.g. traffic, cables, grids), natural conditions in the relevant areas as well as economic activities by other sea use sectors. The following activities will be undertaken

1.1 Assess which data are currently available for shipping and linear offshore infrastructure, from databases hosted by HELCOM, ICES and the Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission, other Baltic Sea wide and national sources. Thanks to these BSR-wide datasets, stocktaking can also be done for BSR countries that are not represented in the project at public authority level.

1.2 Define most relevant existing data that are needed for planning of linear infrastructures and cross check their usability for MSP.

1.3 Develop a user-friendly MSP data interface. The usability and the user experience of the HELCOM Map and Data service will be improved, for example, designing a tool to search and download data more efficiently. The development will develop further access via OGC (Open Geospatial Consortium) standards and will make the service accessible from mobile devices. In addition to this, the project will also enhance the quality control of HELCOM data through newly designed data quality procedures.

1.4 Develop solutions for MSP data exchange: planning and executing, technically and administratively, regular reciprocal updates and sharing a subset of the above datasets hosted at different participating institutions.

Activities under No 1 shall be aligned with activities towards a BSR MSP Spatial Data Infrastructure, which shall be initiated by the future BSR MSP Data Expert Group.

Output: Data on Pan-Baltic Spatial for linear infrastructures This output will be highly valuable to all maritime spatial planners in the BSR. The identification and collation of existing data will be freely accessible, sea use sectors are also expected to make us of this tool for sector planning. These data will be promoted among users (such as the authorities presented in the HELCOM-VASAB Working Group on MSP) as well as in international seminars related to GIS.

2) Analysis of available data and information

The following activities are preparatory work to come to planning solutions:

2.1 Analysis of relevant national policies. Project partners analyse the policies of the countries they represent (also partners that are no public authorities). If not every country is represented, these are taken up by a project partner, who may outsource this task to a sub-contractor.

2.2 Analysis of existing information on future scenarios in shipping & energy transmission (national & transnational) in close cooperation with sectors. First the general trends of the two sectors are identified in desk research to gain a general understanding. Based on this, sector representatives will be asked to complement the initial findings in consultation meetings and/or in interviews. Possibly experts will be contracted to answer open questions in targeted studies.

2.3 Identify critical planning issues (i.e. mismatches, connection points, transnational use conflicts) within the Baltic Sea and further connections to the North Sea in close cooperation with the respective sector, taking on board results of working groups, initiatives such as the Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission.

2.4 Agree on criteria/technical requirements for designation of shipping routes, transmission infrastructure and pipelines in close cooperation with the respective sector. One project partner will be in charge of developing suggestions of sets of requirements to serve as a discussion basis.

3) Planning phase

3.1 Background studies and planners meetings to draft a comprehensive map of the Baltic Sea with corridors suitable for shipping routes and to discuss which / how these shipping routes should be transposed into MSPs and the type of agreement through which the solutions should be endorsed.

Output: plan for transnational shipping routes prepared with a view to be adopted as formal agreement; proposals for planning solutions / area designations and regulations in national MSPs that would support the criteria and objectives agreed on;

The level of ambition for shipping might be higher than for energy infrastructures, because the alignment of shipping lanes (areas to be kept free for shipping/navigation, and not necessarily routes that have to be used by marine traffic, such as IMO TSS) is urgent (due to the particular incompatibility of shipping lanes with physical infrastructures, and e.g. UNCLOS obligations) and more feasible (good data availability).

3.2 Background studies and planners meetings to draft a map with potential/suggested areas for energy infrastructures, with focus on connecting points.

Output: Draft map with areas for potential/suggested infrastructure with focus on connection points / areas (cross-boundary) to be kept open for future planning; proposals for planning solutions / area designations and regulations in national MSPs that would support the criteria and objectives agreed on; decision on how MSP authorities can work towards a comprehensively integrated Baltic Sea energy infrastructure

3.3 Report on lessons learnt from the coordination process, including recommendations for transfer of the planning solution to national MSPs.

Output: Recommendations on future coordination of linear infrastructures and for transfer of planning solutions to national MSP

This output will be disseminated among the members of the HELCOM-VASAB Working Group as they form the primary target group. Apart from that the Baltic LINes experiences will be presented to MSP actors of other EU sea basins in European MSP conferences.

4) Cross-cutting: Pro-active involvement of relevant sector representatives and national authorities.

Three groups of stakeholders need to be involved that are part of the target group, but NOT project partners at the same time.

4.1. National authorities responsible for maritime transport and offshore energy: MSP authorities will request information for elements 1) and 2) from the relevant agencies in their own country and ask them to provide their opinion for 3). Furthermore they will work with the respective transnational cooperation / coordination groups in which these national authorities are organised already.

4.2. Representatives of the shipping and energy sector: Apart from governmental stakeholders for the respective sector, private actors will be involved as appropriate. However, it needs to be ensured that their views feature some degree of representativeness for the BSR (as opposed to nationally biased perspectives). Apart from business associations, these may include projects, networks and initiatives on shipping and energy. The Polish Offshore Wind Energy Society will act as a facilitator for conducting the energy stakeholder dialogue. A shipping representative will idealy join the partnership and occupy this position. The facilitators will request information / coordinate interviews for elements 1) and 2). Preferably, stakeholder meetings will be organised to give this target group a chance to contribute in the pre-planning and planning process.

4.3. MSP authorities (currently DK, EE, LV and LT): MSP authorities of EE, LV and LT will be invited to semi-annual coordination meetings to take place in the Baltic States. BSH, EM-MV and SwAM will organise meetings with colleagues in DK. The respective organisations will be asked for input as well as their opinion on planning solutions. It is the aim of the project to integrate their views into the maps and respective solutions proposed and, thus, encourage them to take up these solutions into their national MSPs. Cooperation structures to be established in the scope of the two cases of the Baltic Scope project, which involves all relevant MSP authorities, can be drawn on. Coordination will also be sought with the case work of the BaltWise and BaltSpace projects.

2. State of project development

The project concept is currently being developed. Feedback on the draft project idea was given by the JTS of the BSR Programme on 6 January. The project concept is amended accordingly. It needs to be submitted by 2 February 2015 (first stage of the decision process). In case the project concept is admitted to the second stage, a full proposal needs to be prepared by July 2015. Flagship status under the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a competitive advantage for submitted project proposals.

Currently, the following countries / organisations have confirmed their participation in the project as full partners:

- Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH)
- Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and State Development Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- Swedish Marine and Water Agency (SwAM)
- VASAB Secretariat
- HELCOM Secretariat
- Poland (organisation – tbd)

Participation is furthermore considered by

- Denmark
- Finland
- Lithuania

From the private sector, the Polish Offshore Wind Energy Society will join the partnership as full member. For shipping, the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) confirmed its interest in the project and intends to follow the project as an observer.

3. Sub-group status of the Baltic LINes project

The MSP Governance Framework developed in the scope of the PartiSEApate project recommends that expert groups should be set up on topics requiring action from MS-side. These working groups should provide an interface between MSP policy, sectors and MSP practitioners and deliver input to HELCOM-VASAB Working Group. The Baltic LINes project could act as such an expert group. It will be equipped with its own budget and pursues the clear objective to coordinate planning for linear infrastructures at pan-Baltic level, which is necessary to fulfil the requirements of the EU MSP directive. The maps to be produced would serve as recommendations to the members of the Working Group. Even though not all countries will be represented in the project at authority level, it will still be possible to develop suggestions for planning solutions at pan-Baltic scale. Due to regular reporting of the project to the HELCOM-VASAB as well as the project's approach of involving of target group members that are not project partners, feedback can be integrated from these countries.