



Planning forum

Planners' dialogue about maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region

2022



This report describes the practice of having Planning forums in the Baltic Sea Region and summarises the Planning forums held within Capacity4MSP. As a contribution to the establishment of a forum acting on a more regular base, the report includes a suggestion for a Terms of Reference for further consideration. This report is aimed mainly at professionals within maritime spatial planning and international cooperation in that field.

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About Capacity4MSP

Project platform *Capacity4MSP: Strengthening the capacity of MSP stakeholders and decision makers* aims to strengthen the capacity of maritime spatial planning (MSP) stakeholders, policy- and decision-makers through intensified dialogue activities and amplifying gained knowledge in MSP. Capacity4MSP builds on the results of the current and recently completed MSP projects and ongoing MSP processes in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).

Capacity4MSP has been granted with the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Flagship status under the Horizontal Action Spatial Planning.

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Lead partner: VASAB Secretariat

Why having a Planning forum?

Coherent planning across borders is needed to ensure efficient and optimal use of the Baltic Sea and to meet economic, social and environmental objectives. The EU MSP Directive and the Espoo Convention provide legal requirements for coordination and consultation that set a minimum standard. The official MSP collaboration between the Baltic Sea countries is organised through the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group. Planners engaged in maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea Region proposed to establish a forum that could complement the already established official cooperation platforms. What the planners requested was an informal forum for in-depth and technical discussions on current cross-border planning issues, planning process related issues and to exchange experience and good practices.

Building upon previous experience

The practice of having a Planning forum has developed throughout several MSP projects. The need was identified in the Baltic SCOPE project, 2015-2017. Pan Baltic Scope developed a format for the forum and performed seven forums during 2018-2019. The practice has continued in the project platform Capacity4MSP performing five forums during 2020-2022.

How the Planning forum works

The Planning Forum has acted as a practical dissemination and collaboration platform, supporting ongoing national and regional MSP processes and implementation of MSP policy. It has provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions and exchanging good practices and experiences in MSP among practitioners. It has complemented current cooperation within the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group with practical and informal working methods, thereby contributing to an efficient, more complete and strengthened MSP network.

The Planning forum participants have been representatives from planning authorities and organisations around the Baltic Sea involved in preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the maritime spatial plans. Participants have also included project partners from the ongoing MSP projects.

The Planning forums have been organised by one moderator or two co-moderators. The agenda of the forum has been open for all participants to influence and the content has consisted of contributions from the participants and from invited guests for specific discussions.

About the Planning forums within Capacity4MSP

European MSP entering a new phase

The year 2021 marks a milestone in European maritime spatial planning history being the year when all member states with a coastline should establish and implement maritime spatial planning. Many countries in the Baltic Sea region has been in the final stages in their national MSP process to complete the first round of plans. Simultaneously the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group has been in a period of renewal prolonging its mandate and adopting a new regional MSP Roadmap.

Shifting to a digital setting

Due to the circumstances of Covid-19, the Planning forum was urged to cancel its first planned event in Warsaw, March 2020, and has adjusted to perform through digital channels throughout the project period. The experience is that the performance of the on beforehand planned agenda activities has functioned well. The fact that the Planning forum acted on already built up social capital and on a common understanding about the informal collaboration, has most probably contributed to this. However, the online setting without informal chats during breaks, seeing each other face to face and the possibility to work more practically in groups, is supposed to have caused less efficiency of the Planning forum meetings. It is supposed to have negative effects on the occurrence of spontaneous yet important discussions, the possibility to handle other common business and the interaction between the participants. The capability of interaction during the online forum has however, increased throughout time.

Updates from the national MSP processes

Updates from the national MSP processes has been an agenda item recurring at all Planning forums. It has normally been organised as a *tour de table* providing approximately 5-10 minutes for each part to present. It has allowed all countries/regions to give an update about the progress of the MSP process, to raise specific issues and to ask the Planning forum for specific input or information. All Planning forum participants have been able to ask questions and discuss the issues.

Examples of topics that have been covered during the forums

MSP revision for the German EEZ

The work with the MSP revision for the German EEZ was presented by the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany as a discussion prior to the later held national and transboundary consultations. Within the revision, three different perspectives had been identified and developed as plan alternatives: traditional maritime uses, climate protection and nature protection. The revision included the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach, consideration of new uses and a comprehensive approach to designations for all relevant uses. The need of cross border cooperation and coherence was highlighted.

Current issues for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group

The HELCOM Secretariat has up-dated the Planning forum on current issues for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group; updates of the work plan, BSR MSP Roadmap and the Baltic Sea Action plan. Furthermore, the checklist for practical assessment of cross-border coherence in MSP was reviewed.

Estonian MSP updates and upcoming transboundary consultations

The Estonian MSP updates were presented and discussed by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Estonia prior to the transboundary consultations that they held later. The focus of the plan is strategic spatial development at state level, based on environmental issues and best available knowledge, covering a wide set of marine uses. Two pilot plans have already been adopted, and will continue to be so as the new national plan is implemented. Hence, they are somewhat different in character from the national marine spatial plan.

Identified support mechanisms for implementation of MSP

The SUBMARINER Network for Blue Growth has presented and discussed the topic how to support the implementation of MSP in the BSR at several Planning forums. It was also an activity in the project. The activity identifies potential support mechanisms for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the maritime spatial plans after their adoption. Support mechanisms make sure that plans are in place and being applied. Analytical frameworks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation and accounting for external factors have been elaborated. The report is mainly based on a review of MSP documents, country fiches and detailed interviews with country representatives, directives and guidelines on implementation of MSP. BSR Planners agreed that this report should be published externally with a broad target group. The Forum also raised the need to include SEA-related aspects in the report.

Integrating an ecosystem-based approach into MSP

The study contracted by the European Commission/DG MARE & EASME on Integrating an ecosystem-based approach into MSP and the case study on the Baltic Sea that examines methods on green infrastructure, were discussed. The ecological value and the ecosystem service supply generates a green infrastructure. Data availability and connectivity analysis is a

major focus for the further development of green infrastructure methodology. It was agreed that green infrastructure is an added value, a contribution to good environmental status. Regulating and serving ecosystem services are important to bring up.

MSP Roadmap for Russia

The Capacity4MSP project partners from Russia – Scientific and Research Institute of MSP Ermak NorthWest and Russian State Hydrometeorological University have discussed the efforts done to develop the MSP Roadmap for Russia at several Planning forums. The purpose is to ensure the MSP improvement and implementation in the Russian Federation. The efforts to achieve a Russian MSP is complex due to the large and diverse areas the plans must include, encompassing 13 seas, 11 catchment areas and 23 coastal constituent entities. The project MSP Roadmap for Russia has enhanced the Russian MSP framework through analysis of processes and cooperation with stakeholders. Furthermore, the regional specifics of marine spatial planning and the management system of Russia have been analysed and detailed. Methodological approaches to the establishment of regulations for the use of aquatorial zones of the maritime spatial plans in Russia as well as tools for the implementation of the ecosystem-based approach into MSP of Russian coastal waters of the Baltic Sea have also been discussed.

Baltic Sea Offshore Wind Declaration

The topic about Baltic Sea Offshore Wind Declaration was brought up. It is a political declaration with an aim to work towards increased offshore wind electricity supplies and better transmission infrastructure. It was by then recently signed within the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP). An offshore working group was about to start and a work program was to be adopted in spring 2021. There is a wish for a sustained dialogue with the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group. During the Planning forum, a discussion arose what in this declaration is important for MSP.

MSP Global thematic expert group on capacity building in MSP

The BSR planners had a chance to discuss the recommendations drafted by the MSP Global thematic expert group on capacity building in MSP. One aim is to link national MSP work to a global MSP context. Transnational capacity building can contribute to a better compatibility and harmonization of planning across countries and easier identification of issues and objectives of joint interest. It was agreed that it is important to pay attention to financial and human resources and to try to keep the knowledge in the institutions as well as that language is an issue in transnational capacity building, which has to be taken into consideration.

Institutionalized tool to follow-up on regional MSP commitments

Discussions have been held about the proposal on the institutionalized tool to follow-up on regional MSP commitments. The follow-up mechanism would be a "package" of the follow-up measures to be used regularly in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group. Components for the follow-up system derive from the follow-up of the Baltic Sea Action Plan, the MSP Roadmap with its list of milestones and outputs, the checklist on cross-border coherence and the

applications of guidelines for ecosystem-based approach, transboundary consultation and transboundary MSP output data.

Marine cultural heritage memorandum on cooperation with MSP processes

The BalticRIM project presented the memorandum on cooperation with MSP processes. Some of the main recommendations are for cultural heritage authorities to compile a Marine Cultural Heritage (MCH) knowledge base for planners to develop processes to enhance sustainable use of MCH and to facilitate research. A purpose is to stimulate education, information and interactions through institutions discussing comprehensive ways to recognize MCH under MSP.

MSP stakeholder involvement and engagement

The preliminary assessment findings from the draft Integrated report on MSP stakeholder involvement and engagement developed within the Capacity4MSP project platform by VASAB Secretariat and Baltic Environment Forum-Latvia has been presented and discussed. From the analysis and findings, a number of recommendations on stakeholder involvement by transnational/cross-border and research project, as well as on communication approaches have been proposed.

Synthesis report

Discussions on the draft Synthesis report developed within the Capacity4MSP project platform by Gdynia Maritime University have been held in the Planning forum. The synthesis report gathers good practices in the BSR - achievements from projects and national and macro-regional MSP initiatives and identifies additional focus areas for regional collaboration and cooperation for the future MSP cooperation agenda after 2020, as well as indicates possible MSP cooperation project themes for the next EU financial perspective 2021-2027. The Synthesis report additionally includes a policy brief for further macro-regional MSP policy development.

EU MSP Assistance mechanism

Recent activities of the Assistance mechanism as well as its potential for current and future activities have been discussed at the forum.

Exchanging MSP experiences with the Black Sea

One important feature and potential of the Planning forum is to exchange experience and knowledge with planners and experts from other sea basins. Focus for one of the Planning forums was the Black Sea. The project results from the MARSPLAN-BS II project were discussed as well as the general development of the Romanian MSP process. Experience was also exchanged regarding ecosystem-based planning in both the Baltic and the Black Seas.

Theme: Planning for offshore wind

The ambition with the theme was to have a practical and planning orientated focus to the discussion. We did get an overview about how offshore wind is included in the different MSP:s around the Baltic Sea and discussed several common issues. The Green Deal, the proposed update of the Renewable Energy Directive, REPowering EU as well as other EU initiatives were picked up on to set the scene for the theme.

Several perspectives were presented and discussed: *Approach for designating offshore wind farm zones in national MSP of Latvia, In-depth study on balancing coastal tourism and use of off-shore wind energy in Southwestern Kurzeme (approach and recommendations), Approaches to offshore wind in German MSP and Renewable Energy in the Danish MSP.* Regional perspectives were given about *Draft OSPAR ToR on Offshore Renewable Energy Development* as well as the Baltic Sea Action Plan, Regional MSP Roadmap and other Baltic initiatives.

One part of the forum was dedicated to an interactive *tour de table* discussion. Topics covered were for example *state of play for offshore wind in MSP in the countries around the BSR, cross border issues & cumulative impacts and multi-use & co-existence.*

Suggestions for a lasting Planners' forum concept

About the work

To suggest a lasting Planners' forum concept has been one of the activities within Capacity4MSP. The aim was to establish a long-lasting mechanism for a Planners' forum within the Baltic Sea Region. A dedicated work group was formed with representatives from:

- Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, Germany
- Gdynia Maritime University, Poland
- HELCOM Secretariat
- Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Latvia
- Ministry of the Environment, Finland
- Ministry of Finance, Estonia
- Scientific and Research Institute of Maritime Spatial Planning Ermak NorthWest, Russia
- Submariner Network for Blue Growth
- Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Sweden
- VASAB Secretariat

The work group agreed to draft a Terms of Reference, ToR, for a Planners' forum clarifying its aim and how it would function. The work group has had several online meetings and drafting rounds throughout the project period. The work and the ToR draft have also been discussed and reviewed by the Planning forum at several occasions.

The progress of the work and ToR drafts have been discussed at the 85th VASAB Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) meeting 6 May 2021 as well as the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting 22-2021,

20-21 April 2021 and the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group meeting 23-2021, 16-17 November 2021.

The work group representatives agreed on the proposed ToR. The ToR is additionally supported by the Planning forum within the Capacity4MSP.

Planning forum or Planners' forum

There has been discussions within the work group as well as in the Planning forum about which name is more suitable for the forum. The main stakes in the debate state that Planning forum can be mistaken to be a forum for stakeholders whereas Planners' forum can seem excluding to non-planners. Alternatives to forum has also been brought up. After debates and voting the work group favors Planners' forum for future use.

Organisational matters

One substantial discussion throughout the work has been which organizational structure the forum should have. Already in the preceding Pan Baltic Scope project, it was recommended that the forum should complement the work of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group. The draft ToR suggests that the Planners' forum is organized as an expert sub-group to the MSP Working Group. The argumentation for this includes benefiting from the already established and well-functioning collaboration platform for MSP in the Baltic Sea Region in means of participation, communication structure and legitimacy. Issues challenging this standpoint includes the importance of the forum to independently set the focus for its discussions and work and being able to adjust it depending on occurring needs and requirements by its participants. The forum participants puts great value in the informal cooperation and does not want to be burdened by excessive administration.

Further actions

The annex includes a proposal for a Terms of Reference, ToR, for a Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planners' Forum, in line with the project activity in the Capacity4MSP to suggest a Planners' forum concept. The discussions, agreements and decisions needed to establish the Planners' forum is suggested to take place under the frames of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group.

