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# Summary of questionnaire on conservation/restoration

31.3.2026, Gdańsk

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# The goal



Questionnaire on nature protection and mitigation measures in national MSP

- to collect information on **specific nature conservation and restoration actions** as well as other measures intended to mitigate potential adverse effects of planned human activities, included in national maritime spatial plans beyond recognition of marine protected areas;
- to support the preparation of an overview of actions for enhancement of nature conservation in MSP (Task 3.2.)

Countries covered: Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Finland, France, Latvia, Poland, Estonia, Belgium, the Netherlands

# Does your national MSP include concrete nature conservation actions?

action type	Countries	Number of countries
Designation	SE, DE, FI, FR, LV, PL, NL, BE	8
Conditionality	SE, DE, FR, LV, PL, EE, NL, BE	8
Policy instrument / principle	SE, DE, FI, FR, LV, PL, EE	7
No concrete conservation actions in MSP	DK	1

90% of analysed MSPs include some form of nature conservation provisions, though their legal strength and operational depth differ significantly.

Denmark represents a case where MSP does not establish its own conservation designations, conditions or principles, but rather reflects existing environmental frameworks.

# Does your national MSP include concrete nature conservation actions?

- Designation - identification of areas where nature protection is prioritised or clearly recognised in the plan.
  - Sweden - the MSP designates *N-areas* where nature is the prioritised use, as well as *n-areas* - with particular consideration to high nature values (where other prioritised uses need to adjust to nature conditions), based on different planning evidence indicating high nature values or climate refugia that are not (yet) protected
  - Germany - designation takes a particularly strong form through priority and reservation areas for nature protection, including areas for divers, harbour porpoises and bird migration corridors;
  - Finland - identifies areas *of Significant underwater natural values*, which are not protection proposals as such, but still function as spatially explicit nature-oriented designations
  - Latvia designates *investigation zones of nature values*, which do not create protected areas directly but support future MPA development;
  - Poland - one example is basin POM.92.0, assigned the basic function of environment and nature conservation due to its ecological value for birds:
  - Belgium - designates habitat areas, bird areas, marine reserves and zones for bottom integrity:
  - France - designation is expressed through measures such as completion of Natura 2000 at sea and the strengthening of high protection zones;

# Does your national MSP include concrete nature conservation actions?



- Policy instrument – refers to the normative or legal inclusion of nature protection in MSP through planning principles, strategic objectives, legal mandates or guidance rules.
  - Sweden – planning principles and guidance for co-existence and adjustment possibilities
  - Germany – a wide range of formal principles relating to species protection, cumulative effects, environmental best practice and impact avoidance;
  - Latvia – one of the MSP’s strategic objectives is explicitly framed around preserving the marine ecosystem and averting excessive pressure from economic activities;
  - Poland – the MSP is a legally binding and includes planning principles related to nature protection:
  - France – the integration of environmental actions and management-oriented tools linked to Natura 2000 and species protection:
  - Estonia – the underlying principle that activities harmful to protected areas are not permitted also functions as a policy instrument embedded in the planning logic

action type	Countries
Designation	SE, DE, FI, FR, LV, PL, NL, BE
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No concrete conservation actions in MSP	DK

# Does your national MSP include concrete nature conservation actions?



- Conditions – provisions that limit, exclude or regulate human activities in order to protect nature.
  - Sweden – other uses are expected to adjust to nature conditions in areas with particular consideration to high nature values
  - Germany – conditions are highly developed and include seasonal restrictions related to divers, limitations in bird migration corridors, and noise-related requirements during offshore energy construction;
  - Latvia – conditions are linked to the precautionary principle; for example, fish farming is not allowed in the Gulf of Riga due to eutrophication concerns;
  - Poland – condition takes the form of activity restrictions and spatial limitations in designated basins:
  - Belgium – bottom disturbance is restricted in zones for bottom integrity, and marine reserves limit activities other than fishing:
  - Estonia – the plan sets conditions to ensure that activities take habitats, biota and sensitive fisheries areas into account and avoid adverse impacts
  - France – designation is expressed through measures such as completion of Natura 2000 at sea and the strengthening of high protection zones;

In the Netherlands, closed areas, no-fisheries zones and other activity limitations also reflect this type of conservation action.

The response is rooted in a broader North Sea governance framework

# Does your national MSP include concrete nature conservation actions?

## TYPOLOGY OF “CONSERVATION APPROACHES” IN MSP

### MSP as spatial reflection of environmental law (Denmark)

- MSP does not establish its own conservation designations, conditions or policy instruments beyond reflecting existing environmental frameworks.
- Nature protection is regulated primarily through Natura 2000, the MSFD and national environmental legislation.
- MSP does not function as an autonomous conservation instrument, but rather as a spatial framework aligned with existing environmental law

### MSP as strategic organiser of conservation knowledge and precautionary spatial guidance (Finland, Latvia, partly: Sweden, Estonia, Poland)

- MSP uses nature-oriented designations, ecological value areas or investigation zones to guide planning, permitting and future protection, without necessarily conferring formal protected-area status.
- Conservation is supported through a combination of spatial guidance, planning principles and, in some cases, precautionary conditions rather than through fully binding conservation regulation.
- These systems rely strongly on scientific datasets, ecological assessments, vulnerability evidence and, in some cases, precautionary planning logic

### MSP as conservation instrument (Germany, France, Poland, Belgium) with different levels of operational strength, strongest in DE/FR

- MSP uses spatially explicit conservation areas, zones or designations to prioritise or protect nature interests.
- Conservation is further operationalised through conditions, restrictions or exclusions affecting other uses
- In some cases, species-specific, seasonal or sector-specific measures are also embedded in the plan.

# Does your national MSP include any restoration-oriented actions and/or passive restoration measures?

Category	Number of countries	Countries
No restoration actions in MSP	4	Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Estonia
Passive restoration measures included	3	Sweden, Germany, Poland
Active and passive restoration measures included	3	France, Netherlands, Belgium

A majority of the analysed MSP systems (60%) include some form of restoration-oriented or passive restoration measure, but their scope and intensity differ significantly. In most cases, MSP supports restoration indirectly through pressure reduction, spatial safeguarding or procedural linkages.

Passive restoration remains the most common form of restoration-related action in MSP, while active restoration is limited to a smaller number of cases and is often embedded in broader planning or policy frameworks.

# Does your national MSP include any restoration-oriented actions and/or passive restoration measures?

- Passive restoration through pressure reduction
  - Sweden - pressures are allocated to less sensitive areas and management measures are guided through designations of areas with particular consideration to high nature values
  - Germany - large-scale priority and reservation areas for nature protection, decommissioning of fixed installations at the end of their use, and indirect fisheries exclusion in offshore wind-related contexts;
  - Poland - prohibitions and limitations on the use of sea areas, environmental conditions attached to designated zones, and the use of spatial reservations aimed at preventing deterioration of ecological conditions:

Category	Countries
No restoration actions in MSP	Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Estonia
Passive restoration measures included	Sweden, Germany, Poland
Active and passive restoration measures included	France, Netherlands, Belgium

# Does your national MSP include any restoration-oriented actions and/or passive restoration measures?

- Spatial and procedural enabling of recovery
  - Germany - decommissioning and structural restrictions may support long-term ecological recovery;
  - Poland - environmental impact assessment-related recommendations create procedural pathways for accounting for impacts on birds, habitats and fish resources:
  - Belgium, restoration actions are given priority in marine reserves before other uses
  - Latvia, although restoration is not included in MSP itself, the investigation zones of nature values and their connection to LIFE REEF and future MPA management planning create an indirect pathway towards restoration-oriented follow-up outside the plan

Category	Countries
No restoration actions in MSP	Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Estonia
Passive restoration measures included	Sweden, Germany, Poland
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# Does your national MSP include any restoration-oriented actions and/or passive restoration measures?

- Active restoration examples

- France - restoration of salt meadows, intertidal habitats, elasmobranch populations and seabird habitats, as well as pilot sites for ecological restoration;
- the Netherlands - restoration is linked to nature-inclusive construction, flat oyster introduction, biogenic reef recovery and species protection planning;
- Belgium - the plan specifies that restoration actions take precedence in marine reserves and directly mentions research into oyster and reef restoration as part of MSP implementation

Category	Countries
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# Does your national MSP include any restoration-oriented actions and/or passive restoration measures?

## TYPOLOGY OF “RESTORATION APPROACHES” IN MSP

### No-Restoration Model (Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Estonia)

- MSP does not include restoration-oriented actions as such.
- Restoration remains outside the scope of the plan or is addressed through other environmental, sectoral or future management instruments.
- Denmark is the clearest example, as restoration activities at sea are explicitly stated not to be part of the Danish MSP

### Passive Restoration through Spatial Pressure Management (Sweden, Germany, Poland)

- restoration is understood primarily as reduction, redistribution or prevention of pressures rather than direct ecological intervention.
- MSP contributes to ecological recovery by limiting harmful uses, protecting ecologically sensitive areas, or maintaining conditions that support long-term ecosystem resilience

### Active restoration embedded in broader MSP-related planning frameworks (France, Netherlands, Belgium)

- restoration is articulated more explicitly through habitat or species recovery actions, nature-inclusive construction or implementation-oriented restoration pathways.
- France represents the strongest case, while the Netherlands and Belgium also indicate more active restoration ambitions, though with different degrees of direct embedding in MSP.

# Does your MSP refer to specific legal or policy frameworks supporting nature conservation/restoration ?

Legal/policy frameworks	Number of countries	Countries
MSP explicitly refers to multiple EU and national frameworks	10	DK, SE, DE, FI, FR, LV, PL, EE, NL, BE
MSP refers to MSFD explicitly	9	DK, SE, DE, FI, FR, PL, EE, NL, BE
MSP refers to EU Biodiversity Strategy / 30% target	6	DK, SE, FI, LV, NL, BE
MSP refers to Natura 2000 / MPAs	8	DK, SE, DE, FI, LV, PL, NL, BE
MSP refers to global frameworks (CBD, EBSA, Ramsar)	5	SE, FI, LV, EE, NL

All analysed MSP systems refer to broader legal and policy frameworks relevant to nature conservation and restoration, although the way these frameworks are integrated into MSP differs significantly.

In some cases, they function mainly as legal context or strategic guidance; in others, they are translated more directly into spatial planning provisions, environmental goals or implementation-oriented measures.

# Does your MSP refer to specific legal or policy frameworks supporting nature conservation/restoration ?

## TYPOLOGY OF “policy Integration”

### Reflective Integration (Denmark)

MSP reflects existing legal and policy frameworks without establishing its own autonomous conservation or restoration logic.

### Guiding Integration – policies as strategic guidance (Finland, Latvia, Estonia)

MSP refers to a broad set of conservation-related frameworks, which guide planning choices, ecological designations or future protection pathways, but are not fully operationalised through the plan itself

### Multi-Objective Integration – policies as part of planning objectives and process (Sweden))

a more process-oriented and multi-objective model of integration, where the achievement of good environmental status under the MSFD is described as one of the main objectives of MSP, while the ecosystem-based approach is applied in the planning process itself.

### Operationalised integration (Germany, France, Poland, Belgium)

external frameworks are translated more directly into spatial designations, environmental goals, restrictions, conditions or implementation-oriented provisions.

# What approaches or methods were used to identify nature conservation/restoration needs in MSP??

Approach / method	Number of countries	Countries
Use of existing environmental authority data	9	DK, SE, DE, FI, FR, LV, PL, EE, NL
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	6	DK, SE, PL, EE, NL, BE
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	1	DE
Habitat / biotope mapping	4	SE, FI, LV, PL
Stakeholder / expert input	5	DE, PL, EE, NL, BE
MSP-driven new analyses / datasets	3	SE, LV, EE

Across the analysed MSP systems, conservation and restoration needs are identified through a combination of existing environmental authority data, formal environmental assessments, habitat-related mapping, stakeholder input and, in a smaller number of cases, MSP-related analytical work.

The responses suggest that MSP more often acts as a knowledge integrator and translator than as a primary producer of ecological evidence.

# What were the main challenges (gaps, obstacles) in integrating nature conservation/restoration actions and mitigation measures into MSP?

Challenge category	Number of countries	Countries
Limited MSP mandate / competences	3	DK, DE, FI
Data gaps and lack of knowledge, Cumulative impacts & uncertainty	4	DE, FR, LV, PL
Weak effectiveness / monitoring mechanisms	3	SE, FR, DE
Institutional / sectoral coordination issues	2	FI, PL
political challenges - Political arbitration, legitimacy issues, Political will, multi-level competence split	4	SE, DE, FR, PL
No major challenges reported	2	SE, FR
No response / insufficient capacity to respond	1	BE
	1	EE
	1	NL

the responses suggest that the main obstacles to integrating conservation and restoration into MSP lie less in planning techniques themselves and more in the wider governance setting: legal mandates, institutional coordination, available knowledge and the ability to monitor real effects over time.

# What are the main recommendations to enhance the role of MSP in supporting marine conservation and restoration in your country?

Across the responses, six recurring recommendation themes can be identified:

1. improving data, knowledge and monitoring;
2. strengthening integration between MSP and environmental policy;
3. making conservation and restoration measures more operational;
4. strengthening the legal or practical role of MSP;
5. reinforcing ecosystem-based and cumulative impact approaches;
6. and improving coordination across sectors and governance levels.



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# THANK YOU!



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