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Background

Planning authorities need to tackle the challenge of scarce space available and competing interests of the different sectors active in and around the Baltic Sea. Finding the balance between economic development and space needed for environmental protection or recreational uses, is even further complicated by the requirement to plan coherently across borders.

Building on recommendations developed under previous projects, the EU Interreg BSR project Baltic LINes (2016-2019) focussed on the enhancement of transnational coherence of shipping routes and energy infrastructure corridors in maritime spatial plans. Within Baltic LINes, representatives from all nine countries around the Baltic Sea examined the current status of these sectors as well as possible future scenarios. The project identified planning issues and developed practical guides as planning solutions. Taking such a pan-Baltic perspective has already shown to be of great benefit for the national authorities in developing MSP solutions. As an important third pillar of the project, Baltic LINes partners have developed the first ever overarching Baltic Sea wide decentralized MSP data infrastructure (BASEMAPS).

Work package 5 concentrated on “Governance for the coordination of linear infrastructures”, particularly under WP 5.4 project recommendations have been developed based on all project activities, including

- analysis of sectoral trends and their spatial dimension
- analysis of experience gained with MSP data infrastructure
- discussion of pan-Baltic planning issues and criteria identified
- development of planning solutions
- documentation of lessons learnt from working with innovative planning tools and methods.

The final versions of the deliverables are available on www.balticlines.eu.

The recommendations derived from Baltic LINes have been presented to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG for information by Germany at the 18th meeting in Hamburg (cf. document 4-1 Recommendations to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group on future actions deriving from findings from the Baltic LINes project).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to

- take note of the information and give feedback on the suggested actions and
- decide which recommendations should be developed further and consider implementation by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

Project Recommendations of Baltic LINES

Based on findings and reports produced under Baltic LINES, the project partnership has elaborated the following recommendations to be taken on board by the Baltic Sea Region MSP authorities organised within the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group. This document focusses on the main governance-related recommendations assigned to the three project topics offshore energy, shipping and data as well as specific recommendations for the planning process.

Both for offshore energy and shipping the project identified an essential need for a better integration of sector representatives in the coordination process of linear infrastructure already at superordinate levels like the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. Therefore the following actions are recommended:

Offshore Energy recommendation

Context: The Interreg Baltic Sea Region has set a focus on the energy sector. Currently there is no intergovernmental energy working group in the Baltic (either under the MSP workgroup, as in the case of the data subgroup, or separate, like HELCOM Maritime).

Therefore the project proposes to integrate energy topics and energy planning into the MSP processes and as a result in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group. It is recommended to take into account and build on the good practice established by the North Sea Energy Initiative. Further discussions about offshore wind developments and energy grids are required.

Baltic LINES suggests the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG should deal with offshore energy topics more often and **invite and involve the energy sector in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.**

At least once a year, dedicated energy sessions and/or workshops should be organised together with the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. For this purpose, energy stakeholders such as TSOs, Offshore Wind developers or authorities responsible for renewable energy policy and (sectoral) planning should be invited.

Discussion topics could encompass:

- Review and update national and pan-Baltic energy scenarios (using Baltic LINES templates).
- Coordination for linear infrastructure in MSP (power lines, data cables, pipelines); definition of strategic corridors and possible establishment of gates.
- The interplay between terrestrial and offshore grids.
- Results and recommendations of other dedicated energy projects (e.g. Baltic InteGrid).

MSP Data recommendation

Context: A crucial and fundamental prerequisite for transnationally coherent planning is access to data as well as the availability of datasets. However, maritime spatial planners lack up-to-date and relevant data from neighbouring countries. To cope with that issue, Baltic LINES developed a prototype of a web application to provide decentralised access to data and metadata stored in national Marine Spatial Data Infrastructures (MSDI) across the countries around the Baltic Sea.

The application's demo BASEMAPS offers an open interactive map of the Baltic Sea region in which, for example, information on the telecommunications and data cables published by one country is readily available to its neighbours. In this way, the application can be used for harmonisation purposes.

In this context the Baltic LINES partnership recommends to **update the terms of reference of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Data Expert Sub-group** (BSR MSP Data ESG) under the HELCOM VASAB MSP Working Group considering the following requirements:

- The BSR MSP Data ESG should work to support the data availability in the newly created tool to access BASEMAPS and make sure that their national data is included.
- The status of the data availability should be followed up at each group meeting of the BSR MSP data ESG. The data ESG should inform the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG on the status of BASEMAPS' completion.
- BASEMAPS should be the focal point for getting an overview on MSP related spatial data stemming from national MSDIs. Therefore, BASEMAPS could be the starting point for cataloguing relevant data to be used by MSP related spatial decision support tools.
- BASEMAPS should be continuously fed and its data layers extended to other sectors such as aquaculture, underwater cultural heritage, etc.
- The BSR MSP Data ESG should encourage MSP data providers to establish English as an additional language to provide MSP transboundary data.
- BSR MSP Data ESG should work to support a common symbology for MSP data and establishment of common term vocabulary to achieve semantic interoperability.

Shipping recommendation

Context: Maritime spatial planners do not have a relevant platform for discussions with the body providing key requirements in the maritime spatial planning process with the structure of shipping corridors. Additionally innovations in the field of maritime transport may change the sector. Future challenges towards shipping and maritime ports need to be identified and commonly included into the MSP process, especially in the transboundary sections.

IMO requirements are considered as an important element in the MSP process. Nevertheless, they are treated differently by planners from different EU Member States. MSP planners are subject to different national rules/attitudes toward the MSP. Cross-border standardisation and unification of planning criteria are regarded as unfeasible, so a bottom-up approach seems the only solution in the process of improving the coherence between different MSPs.

In this context there needs to be a real impact on the shaping of the structures of shipping corridors at the IMO level in line with the needs of regional areas, such as the Baltic Sea. The project propose an increasing exchange on MSP and shipping issues between the dedicated existing groups (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, HELCOM Safe Nav and HELCOM Maritime).

Baltic LINes recommends to **extend the mandate of an existing group or improve the cooperation between existing groups on MSP issues in relation to shipping, safety and seaport issues**. More specifically, the way HELCOM Safe Nav, HELCOM Maritime and the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group could practically cooperate should be explored.

The following shipping-related topics are proposed to be discussed in this new framework:

- Common positions towards the IMO in view of possible shifting of shipping lanes.
- How to better integrate and align IMO terminology within national MSPs.
- How and whether MSPs can take into account future developments of the shipping sector.
- An agreement establishing that the centre-line should be used as a common starting point for coherent shipping lines defined within national MSPs (already recommended in Baltic SCOPE).
- How potential transnational 'mismatches' between shipping lines of different national MSPs can be dealt with on practical level, when it comes to MSP implementation.
- The results of the few existing tools to assess land-sea interaction effects between shipping, ports development and further on-land transportation of goods. Further explore and define of how such tools should be most effectively developed further.

Practical Recommendations addressed to the planning process

In addition to the governance-related advices the project has identified more practical recommendations related to the planning process. Even though the national MSP approaches differ a lot and it turns out that achieving a fully synchronised planning approach is challenging, the collection of information increases common understanding and aligns methods between countries.

It is suggested to **develop a guideline on transboundary planning of linear infrastructure within the MSP process** based on these horizontal project recommendations. Such a guideline could be based on products elaborated in Work Package 4 of the project and needs to be further developed, if considered useful or reasonable by the members of the MSP WG.

Guideline on transboundary planning of linear infrastructure within the MSP process (1st draft)

In the course of meetings on national approaches to handling shipping and energy in MSP, stakeholder consultations and country representative interviews, the project gathered valuable experts' knowledge. The project identified the most commonly used planning criteria and described factors used by the countries around the Baltic Sea to assess, regulate and select suitable areas for offshore wind farms, cable corridors and shipping corridors. Practical guides recommend on step-wise approaches for the designation of areas for shipping and offshore energy in national MSP and aim to help planners in the MSP draft phase. The suggested guideline could encompass the following aspects:

- **Update and expand planning criteria table:** The planning criteria table developed under the Baltic LINes project for the energy and shipping sector should be reviewed (at least once a year) and updated, where necessary, by the national MSP authorities. Any changes should be reported back and also presented to other (sector) relevant platforms. Also the planning criteria for other sectors and uses should be presented.
- **Make use of step-by-step planning guides** developed under Baltic LINes:
 - A Practical Guide to the Designation of Energy Infrastructure in MSP (<https://vasab.org/document/practical-guide-energy/>)
 - A Practical Guide to the Designation of Ship Corridors in MSP (<https://vasab.org/document/practical-guide-shipping/>)
- **Provide maps for international consultation showing also designations of neighbouring countries.** Countries should use maps showing not only the planned designations of the given MSP being subject to the consultation; but also relevant information including either the given or draft national MSPs of the involved neighbouring countries.
- **Continue and expand efforts to involve a wider range of stakeholders.** Currently already established Baltic Planning Forums and Conferences could be used and extended to include other experts than MSP planners.
- **Increase and continue the efforts to take into account land-sea interaction effects:** The HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group may support the further development of analytical tools based on those already existing from previous projects especially with focus on the transnational dimension of such land-sea interactions.
- **When appropriate use the MSP Challenge Baltic Sea simulation platform for future processes:** To this end the given MSP authorities (or other users) need to closely align with the designers to ensure that the respective session is organised according to its given specific purpose.
- **Moving towards cooperation on MSP implementation:** As shown by BalticLINes it may not always be possible to align the MSPs across border at their design stage. With more and more countries having MSPs in place, concrete steps should be defined by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP working group on how Baltic Sea Region countries may best cooperate in order to achieve coherence during the implementation of the respective MSPs, including voluntary agreements.

The Baltic LINes project proposes to proceed as follows: The MSP WG is invited to discuss the presented recommendations. The meeting is requested to decide which recommendations should be further developed and how this could be implemented.