



Document title	Proposal for establishing a subgroup on MSP data to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG
Code	4-1
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	4 - Data needs for MSP
Submission date	20.5.2014
Submitted by	Germany
Reference	Outcome of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 8-2014, paragraphs 2.25 and 3.18-3.19

Background

The need for comprehensive, up-to-date, reliable spatial data for MSP has been recognised in

- the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the European Council establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management, adopted in first reading by the EP on 17th April 2014 (Article 10)¹,
- the Horizontal Action Spatial Planning within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Action Plan,
- the HELCOM-VASAB Baltic Sea Broad-Scale Maritime Spatial Planning Principles (in particular Principle No 6 “High quality data and information basis”)
- the BaltSeaPlan Vision 2030 and the BaltSeaPlan Findings
- the outcome of the Flagship Project PartiSEApate proposing as one of an MSP governance framework, expert groups under the roof of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG on specified topics and with specified objectives,
- the general objective of PartiSEApate to develop an MSP data exchange network, and
- the outcomes of the PartiSEApate Stakeholder Workshop on MSP Data Networks in October 2013.

Also with regard to tasks to be fulfilled by member states within the framework of the new Directive on MSP, as well as contributing to the implementation of measures developed within the framework of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), coastal states have to rely on high quality spatial data for marine areas, and have access to data relevant for trans-boundary and cross-border assessment and consistent planning approaches.

In line with this, Germany proposes the present draft for the setup of a BSR MSP Data expert group under the roof of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, with the main tasks to identify MSP data needs and products, and to develop Terms of Reference for a Regional Spatial Data Infrastructure for MSP.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider the proposed course of action for setting up the data expert group and decide on the way forward.

¹ Procedure 2013/0074(COD), P7_TA-PROV(2014)0449

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Reasoning:

For achieving coherent planning of the marine space of the Baltic Sea, extensive data exchange between the Baltic Sea states planning authorities and institutions is one of the main prerequisites. Within previous as well as on-going planning exercises - both legal and informal / project procedures with cross-border and transnational perspectives or impacts - collecting adequate and high quality data for sound evidence based decision making, has turned out to be one of the most challenging tasks. Several other Interreg as well as FP7 research projects, addressing MSP on several planning levels, have also emphasised the need for up-to-date, consistent, comprehensive and reliable data. European, regional and national initiatives on marine spatial data do not focus sufficiently on the needs of MSP or potential sea basin specific aspects.

Within HELCOM, work has been carried out to develop the HELCOM Map and Data service to serve as regional environmental hub for Baltic Sea datasets and related data services. Further development work is needed to improve data service level as well as accuracy and update frequency of various datasets to better serve high-scale purposes such as MSP. Also, the concept of Shared Environmental Information Systems (SEIS) has been developed by including datasets hosted by other data providers (EEA). Further development is needed to improve the readiness to support decentralised data hosting, which is seen as overall development aim.

There are several activities on European level that can provide input to the Baltic Sea data hub, including EMODnet projects, especially Human activities project, as well as national datasets that are made available within the implementation of the INSPIRE directive. Cataloguing these activities and resulting data products in a regional hub could provide oversight for MSP data availability in the Baltic.

The Baltic Sea features a very fragmented jurisdiction for MSP, thus transparent, comparable and harmonised information and data is of prime significance for transnational and cross-border planning, and for achieving the goal of coherent and consistent MSP for all of the sea area.

The establishment of an expert group under the roof of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group, to be supported by the respective secretariats, is also in line with the PartiSEApate recommendations for an MSP Governance Framework, which proposes to set up expert groups on specific questions on the Pan-Baltic level that arise either from the MSP process or from developments within the planning sectors. Such expert groups shall produce targeted results (e.g. joint positions) within a given time frame. Key to the work is their mandate received from the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. Thus the set-up and the work of the "BSR MSP Data Group" could serve as a test whether the generally proposed structure, role of the groups, membership, working conditions etc. turn out to be adequate, expedient and productive.

Proposed procedure:

If the establishment of the data expert group is supported by the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and approved by HELCOM HOD and VASAB CSPD/BSR the HELCOM and VASAB secretariats shall be tasked with

1. Suggesting a first set of more detailed terms of reference for the working group, including tasks, timeline, targeted outcomes and results based on expertise from MSP and spatial data infrastructure experts, potential evaluation and performance indicators etc.
2. [Estimating potentially needed funds to facilitate the group and explore funding opportunities, such as the upcoming Interreg BSR Programme, EU programmes on marine knowledge, but also the extension of the VASAB mandate and related budget, or even national funding.]
3. Preparing a list of potential core members of the expert group, based on e.g. suggestions from the WG members, the MSP contact points and their respective national / regional network etc.

Potential candidates shall be asked for their participation, if possible / realistic including a commitment for the intended “life time” of the expert group

4. [Suggesting a person for chair of the group – to be confirmed by the core expert group and formally endorsed by the MSP Working Group]
5. Presenting the results of this preparatory work to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG for endorsement
6. Organising an initial meeting of the group, which should then further elaborate on the terms of reference of the group, incl. tasks and “sub-tasks” and the processes needed to perform them, meeting schedules, naming of additional members to be drawn on for certain assignments of tasks / sub-tasks etc. as considered necessary etc.

General Tasks of a BSR MSP Data Expert Group:

1. To refine and amend the initially endorsed TOR for the group, assign further roles within the group as needed, set up a time schedule for the anticipated period needed to fulfil the tasks assigned, define milestones to be met etc.
2. To prepare and present annual reports to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG on the group work’s progress
3. To identify specific MSP evidence / information / data needs and data products from the planners’ view point - including setting priorities and a potential hierarchy, in particular those supporting transnational and cross-border planning - through close cooperation with MSP experts from all contracting states, taking into account results and insights from completed as well as on-going MSP and sectorial planning processes and projects;
4. To identify relevant data (on human activities, socio-economic and environmental issues) available for MSP from authorities and institutions from member states, regional and European sources, including e.g. HELCOM, ICES databases;
5. To identify gaps in evidence, information and data available, focussing on critical gaps with regard to transnational and cross-border planning;
6. To identify detailed (minimum) requirements / necessities and propose most suitable and useful solutions for - inter alia - data scope, content, attributes, formats - incl. e.g. coordinate system and language issues - of relevant data sets for trans-boundary and cross-border planning, and estimate harmonisation needs as regards existing data sets;
7. To agree on measures to be taken to ensure transparency with regard to quality, reliability, accuracy, but also accessibility etc. The goal shall be to achieve the highest level possible for data and meta data provision, and get best available evidence to produce plans;
8. To identify research priorities and propose initiatives to fill critical evidence gaps (incl. relevant socio-economic and –cultural data etc.);
9. To develop terms of reference for setting up a regional spatial data infrastructure for MSP taking into account existing national and regional development of data infrastructures and processes, aiming at making MSP relevant data easily available on the regional scale, by sharing it via a common hub and working towards implementation of a respective project – funding of which probably has to be sought from EU programmes. The German MDI-DE project* could e.g. serve as a potential role model, which leaves the data with domain experts (decentralised data storage) to maintain highest level of accuracy and reliability.
10. To develop application for funds for external services etc. in case further tasks cannot be performed within the framework of a working group.

Membership / Composition:

The expert group should comprise:

- maritime and marine spatial data experts, all being well integrated into national / regional / sub-regional networks of professionals on marine data in general and MSP in particular (incl. data experts from MSP authorities, but also relevant regional networks such as HELCOM, VASAB, ICES, (sectorial) research institutes etc).
- All in all not more than 15 – 20 persons

In addition the group shall draw on a wider network of experts on spatial data infrastructure, spatial data experts from relevant sectors and data providers etc. who would be asked to feed in their expertise with regard to the group's tasks, be it content-related, organisational, technical aspects, thus only being part of the extended group in the context of certain tasks or "work packages". The composition of the group shall be adapted if needed or reasonable with changing work priorities, tasks fulfilled, etc.

* Marine Data Infrastructure Germany, www.mdi-de.org