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6.14 Marine knowledge as a basis for Maritime Spatial Planning: TPEA Project

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Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is coming to prominence as a new approach to the governance of the seas and oceans. It is taking on international importance as maritime nations exert greater control over their territorial waters and, in many cases, over much more extensive exclusive economic zones (Jay, 2010; Schaefer & Barale, 2011). This is in the interests of reversing the environmental degradation of the seas and facilitating the sustainable use of marine resources, both for traditional uses, such as fishing and navigation, and newer uses, such as renewable energy and mariculture (Douvere, 2008). MSP is being encouraged worldwide by inter-governmental bodies, NGOs, stakeholder organisations and marine scientists and managers (Agardy, 2010; De Santo, 2011; HELCOM & OSPAR, 2003), and a growing number of nations are drawing up spatial plans to regulate the use of their marine territories, in a way analogous to land-use planning.

In this context, the Transboundary Planning in the European Atlantic (TPEA) project is developing as response to the European Commission (DG Mare's) call for a *Project on Maritime Spatial Planning in the Atlantic, including Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay*, in order to reflect the aim of the project, which is to deliver a commonly-agreed approach to cross-border MSP in the European Atlantic region. This approach will be trialled in two distinct geographical and political contexts, linked by their shared regional identity, and will provide detailed recommendations and guidelines for the evaluation of cross-border MSP. This project seeks to embrace the diversity of realities across the region, and develop the implementation of transboundary MSP in two distinct, but related contexts: a southern focus (Portugal-Spain), where MSP experience is already gaining ground and a consensus is emerging for cross-border solutions; and a northern focus (Ireland-UK) where more policy-centred traditions of planning are pointing in the direction of broader, and less prescriptive, MSP outcomes. By capturing this range of approaches, the project will articulate the potential for transboundary MSP within the European Atlantic as a whole and demonstrate options for cross-border initiatives elsewhere. One challenge is the need to reflect the nature of maritime space, which is not confined within physical borders, and has a fluid and dynamic nature; the approach needs to be flexible and adaptive, within the context of the geographic unit of the Atlantic Basin.

Moreover, in recognizing the varying stages of implementation of MSP within the region, the project respects the autonomy of member states in conducting MSP for national waters and the non-binding nature of planning outcomes resulting from the project. In the southern context the Gulf of Cadiz is the proposed and analyzed pilot area, from the environmental, economic and social axis, taking into account the geographical characteristics, human pressures, priorities policies and traditions planning uses.

Previous experiences on Transboundary Maritime Spatial Planning agree that it should be conducted on the basis of the best available, high quality and up-to-date information. This information should be harmonized between countries/regions, homogeneously and consistently in scale, coordinate system and attributes, while covering the whole area designed to be planned. The implementation of GIS databases complemented with geo-statistical and/or a law database is a common solution in the framework of Spatial Data Infrastructures compiled for maritime spatial planning processes regarding boundaries, the marine and coastal space and the uses and activities. Based on marine knowledge, the pilot areas were characterized in terms of biophysical features, their continuity/contiguity across borders and existing infrastructures. This allowed a better understanding and description of each area and the identification of key aspects that may influence uses and activities to establish a MSP considering the perspective of the ecosystem approach.

Keywords: Transboundary Maritime Spatial Planning, TPEA Project, Gulf of Cádiz, Geographical Information System

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