



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES  
BALTIC SEA, NORTH SEA AND LANDLOCKED MEMBER STATES  
**MARITIME POLICY BALTIC AND NORTH SEA**

## NOTE TO THE FILE

**Subject: Meeting Minutes- Maritime Spatial Planning (Working group, ad-hoc meeting of the Member State Expert sub-group on MSP)**

### **I. General**

The Member State Expert Sub-Group on MSP held its first meeting in Brussels on 24 April 2012. A list of participants I attached (Annex 1). The main aim of the first meeting was to have a first discussion on working arrangements, objectives and terms of reference for this working group as well as to have first discussions on some key substantive matters.

The working group is a sub-group of the Member State Expert Group on IMP and aims at gathering those people who deal with MSP in MS. There was also participation by Norway and Croatia.

COM welcomed the considerable number of experts present as that was proof of the great interest in the topic. COM gave a short overview of the EU's previous action on MSP/ICZM and closed by saying that there will be a policy initiative on MSP by COM after the summer, the latter was, however, not supposed to become subject of discussion in the group at this juncture.

MS Experts nevertheless touched onto the topic and COM made clear that although past work on MSP for example the elaboration of key principles in the 2008 - is not necessarily the basis for the EU policy initiative later this year; latest developments will need to be taken into account. Furthermore, just because a COM proposal will be published this year does not mean that it will come into force in the imminent future since it will have to be discussed and adopted in Council and the European Parliament before it enters into force.

### **II. Organizational Items**

A concept paper outlining the working arrangements, objectives and terms of reference of the working group was presented by COM. There was general consent on the outline made by COM. Some MS suggested that developments at national level should be a regular agenda item at each meeting in order to allow MS to update others on developments in their country. This suggestion was generally accepted. COM also undertook to look into the possibility of providing an interactive electronic tool (possibly

through the maritime forum) where each MS could keep others informed of the situation in each MS.

Suggestions as to topics the group should deal with in future meetings were made (see below IV. Content).

### **III. Funding**

COM referred to the two on-going preparatory actions - Plan Bothnia (involving Finland and Sweden) and MASPNOSE (involving the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Belgium). The next step will be the ex-post evaluation of these actions.

The IMP Financial Work Programme for 2012-2013 has been adopted and is the basis for spending €40 million allocated to IMP.

On this issue of maritime governance/stakeholder dialogue – it is proposed to organise one or two stakeholder conferences with the first being held early in 2013.

COM advised that a call for proposals on cross-border MSP projects in the Atlantic/Celtic Sea/Bay of Biscay was issued on 26 March. The projects must be conducted by public bodies from at least two MS. RSCs are also invited to apply. The closing date for receipt of applications is 15 June 2012. There will be an information meeting for applicants to the call for proposals for MSP in the Atlantic on 11 May 2012. It is up to the applicants to decide the areas involved. The objective is to test cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning. A similar call for projects in the Mediterranean Sea or Black Sea will also be launched later in the year.

COM indicated that it is too early to say what will be done under EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2014-2020, in which approximately €60 annually for IMP is foreseen by COM) since this topic is still discussed in Council and Parliament.

The following issues were raised by participants:

- Participants wanted to know what the objective of the stakeholder conferences would be and how to ensure value for money. COM suggested it would be useful to for the group to discuss and prepare this conference in the MSEG to ensure the best use of the funds.
- Participants wondered if it was too late to begin any new projects as those would be too late to feed into the policy initiative of COM. COM pointed out that the added value of such projects is to give support to MS to promote cross-border co-operation where it hasn't been done before. COM emphasised that MSP is a continuous process. Even if there is a policy initiative the projects will feed into the review process.
- COM pointed out that MS who do not have an MSP process may be observers in the projects. However, observer MS won't receive funding.
- The question of whether it was permissible to hire consultants/institutes etc. for such projects was raised. COM stated that if public bodies are receiving co-funding then it is expected that they carry out the work. There is a limit on how much work can be sub-contracted.
- The question was raised as to whether existing cross-border projects would be eligible for funding. COM pointed out that there can be no double-funding.

#### **IV. Substantive discussions on MSP**

COM summarized that initiating discussion on a variety of important topics had taken place during the last two meetings of the Member State Expert Group of the Integrated Maritime Policy. This meeting was a first stocktaking of future points of discussion and all of those touched upon will have to be revisited in depth in future meetings.

Topics under discussion were the following:

- Experts showed a great interest in information on experiences concerning MSP in other MS. Some experts provided short information right away. COM proposed to provide a shared document online where each expert will be able to fill in information on their country.
- Experts from MS who already have MSP processed in place reiterated that a future COM proposal should not jeopardize legislation already in place and/or under development.
- It was further noted that teaming up with the Expert Group on ICZM will be useful and a common meeting was proposed for fall 2012. Given that implementation of MSP is more common in the Northern MS while implementation of ICZM is more common in the Mediterranean MS, coordination and comparison between the two policies is needed in order to identify commonalities and differences. In connection therewith, experts saw in particular a need to discuss the character of ICZM (formal/informal tool), the land-sea-interface, as where land planning stops and possible MSP starts, differs in MS.
- Experts also showed an interest in discussing the role of Regional Sea Conventions (RSC). There was a consensus that there will be presentations in future meetings of what RSC do that is of interest for MSP and ICZM respectively. COM pointed out that the four RSCs are very different in character and approach. In general, it was felt that the utility of carrying out MSP discussions in RSC vary from one organisation to the next, depending on their willingness to broaden the discussion not only to environmental aspects, but also social and economic issues.
- There was discussion about the sector-neutral nature of MSP. While there was a general understanding that MSP follows an integrated and cross-sectoral approach, aims at sustainable development and that environmental, social and economic (i.e. such as wind farms and oil/gas drilling) aspects needed to be taken into account during the MSP process, some experts argued that the underlying environmental component and political prioritizing by MS makes MSP precisely not sector-neutral. It was suggested by the COM that a useful distinction could be made on the one hand between the MSP process tool as such – a sector neutral tool for allocating space – and each MS's national targets that give priority to certain sectors during the planning process, on the other. It was generally understood that different MS will have different priorities and that the challenge of cross-border co-operation will be to ensure that these priorities can coexist. As for MSP and the ecosystem approach, COM stated that the ecosystem-based approach is an underlying principle, not an objective.
- Several experts raised the relationship between MSP and fisheries. Although fisheries is mainly dealt with at EU level through the CFP it was understood that fisheries need to be taken into account during the MSP process. COM indicated

that specific discussions on this issue are needed and perhaps a need for specific pilot projects. COM also pointed out that a similar situation exists with maritime transport – how is the IMO component included in the MSP process.

- Experts further debated on the relationship between MSFD and MSP. It was in general understood MSFD as the environmental pillar of the Integrated Maritime Policy has a very specific goal (to obtain GES), whereas MSP's aims are broader (i.e. to contribute to sustainable development and ensure integration between economic, social and environmental considerations as well as sustainable development, allocation of space, solving of spatial conflicts). It does so by helping to clarify marine objectives, priorities for the future, and direct decision-makers and users towards more efficient, sustainable use of marine resources. Nevertheless, MSP is a process tool that can support and complement MSFD.
- Another point discussed was stakeholder involvement. It was identified that stakeholders do neither talk to each other nor to MS on occasion. Furthermore, there was an interest in sharing information about future plans of the different sectors that can be taken into account in planning.
- The point was raised that the economic benefits of MSP should be discussed. COM advised that a study was done to show the economic benefits of MSP and that this could be dealt with at the next meeting.
- Data Management and the role of EMODNET: Participants felt that it would be useful to have a discussion on data.

## **V. Next meeting**

The organization of future meetings of the group was discussed. The initial idea of having the next meeting at European Maritime Day in Gothenburg was abandoned. The second meeting will be held in Rotterdam. The date envisaged is 13/14 June 2012, but still has to be confirmed. Experts were in favour of having a two day meeting to have more time for formal as well as informal discussion.

The third meeting was roughly planned for mid-September in conjunction with the Member State Expert Group on Integrated Coastal Zone Management which will be organised by the European Environment Agency in Copenhagen the week starting 10 September 2012.