

Marine / maritime spatial planning (MSP) is a rapidly developing means of coordinating the growing demands on the sea and delivering more efficient patterns of sea uses. It supports both existing and new maritime economic activities, and helps to improve environmental conditions. MSP is a statutory process in an increasing number of jurisdictions around the world. There are also voluntary and research-led initiatives exploring different ways of putting MSP into practice.

However, MSP is still at a formative stage, and ongoing research is needed to ensure its progression.

*The Marine Spatial Planning Research Network exists to bring together experts in the field and work for the practical advancement of MSP. Below, we set out some of the key research priorities for the next phase of MSP development.*

The *Marine Spatial Planning Research Network* is an informal network of researchers and practitioners who are making a progressive contribution to the development of MSP throughout Europe and beyond. We are interdisciplinary and international in our outlook, and members are engaged in many MSP-related funded projects.

For more information, including a downloadable version of this leaflet, visit us at:

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# RESEARCH NETWORK

## 1. POLICY CONTEXT

MSP does not operate within a vacuum. It is linked to legal and policy frameworks; it contributes to environmental and socio-economic targets and works alongside complex regulations for maritime activities. Ways need to be developed of:

- Integrating MSP to the ecosystem approach, blue growth strategies and risk-based management for the seas
- Strengthening links between organisations with different coastal and marine responsibilities
- Coordinating MSP across sub-national, national, transnational and sea basin scales of governance

## 3. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

New approaches are needed for carrying out MSP. These should draw on established planning practice, but also be adapted to the needs of MSP and the special conditions of the marine environment. Innovative methods are needed, such as for:

- Integrating socio-economic and environmental data via Geographic Information Systems
- Ensuring meaningful citizen and stakeholder participation in MSP processes
- Scenario-building for the future use and character of sea areas

## 5. GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES

MSP is not uniform; different approaches are developing, reflecting environmental, governmental, cultural and economic factors. MSP is also shaped by transnational dynamics. Studies should be carried out for

- Determining the most appropriate forms of MSP for different national and regional settings
- Comparing different forms of MSP to maximise cross-learning between different contexts
- Establishing exchange programs for MSP researchers and practitioners

## 2. GOALS

MSP is not an end in itself, but works towards specific goals. These vary according to social, environmental and economic needs, and also reflect cultural values. These drivers need to be more clearly analysed, with a view to:

- Understanding the underlying interests at work in MSP initiatives
- Ensuring the equitable involvement of participants in achieving agreed goals
- Resolving competing claims on the use of sea space

## 4. RESULTS OF MSP

MSP must deliver worthwhile results for policy-makers, stakeholders and the public. Methods of assessing its outcomes are required, in order to learn lessons from experience and share good practice, focusing on:

- Evaluating the quality and comprehensiveness of plan-making processes
- Measuring the extent to which MSP exercises are achieving their intended goals
- Assessing the improvement in marine conditions and activities brought about by MSP

## 6. AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Wider society has little awareness of the need for MSP and the benefits that it brings. Ways should be developed of increasing public awareness and educating and training people to contribute to MSP in the future. Current priorities are:

- Creating ways of raising public appreciation of the seas and the need for MSP
- Developing methods of getting people involved and making their voice heard in MSP
- Developing a curriculum for MSP higher education and a network of MSP training establishments