

BaltSeaPlan Recommendations

BaltSeaPlan recommendations on the development and implementation of a data exchange network and infrastructure for Maritime Spatial Planning and Management purposes in the Baltic Sea Region

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) has become a widely acknowledged tool for co-ordinating spatial use of the sea in the Baltic Sea Region. MSP is understood as a cooperative practice that involves several spatial and administrative levels. With regard to MSP purposes a stronger than so-far existing cooperation among data providers and the national authorities responsible for data collection is necessary in order to ensure that spatial information is easily accessible for planning purposes (incl. cross-border planning).

The INSPIRE Directive and the EC regulation No 268/2010 on Data and Service Sharing provide a very good basis for such cooperation – although however, many features of INSPIRE have not been implemented yet and marine space and maritime features so far are not adequately represented by INSPIRE data specifications. Numerous data base initiatives such as EMODnet, WISE Marine, European Atlas of the Seas, MyOcean and BOOS, EuroGOOS, ICES and IOC data exchange policies have followed. At the same time, there is no overall operative cooperation structure in the Baltic Sea Region yet, which would meet the specific needs of MSP.

The HELCOM/VASAB Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning, which published Baltic Sea broad-scale MSP principles for achieving better coherence in the development of Maritime Spatial Planning systems in the Baltic Sea Region, emphasises the importance of a high quality data and information basis. Principle 6 states that “Maritime Spatial Planning should be based on best available and up to date comprehensive information of high quality that to the largest extent possible should be shared by all. This calls for close cooperation of relevant GIS and geo-spatial databases, including the HELCOM GIS, monitoring and research in order to facilitate a trans-boundary data exchange process that could lead to a harmonised pan-Baltic data and information base for planning. This base should cover historical baselines, present status as well as projects and future scenarios of both environmental aspects and human activities. It should be as comprehensive, openly accessible and constantly updated as possible and compatibility with European and Global initiatives should be ensured”.

The aim of these recommendations is to establish a pan-Baltic MSP data infrastructure which provides a transnational network for the exchange of MSP Data.

Taking into consideration all of the above, the BaltSeaPlan project partners recommend to commonly agree on a process, minimum requirements and performance criteria, which will be necessary to ensure the technical interoperability, up-to-dateness and completeness of MSP data sets, as well as the long-term availability and financial efficiency of the proposed data exchange structure.

The report outlining and describing an MSP data infrastructure and a respective data model, which has been developed under the BaltSeaPlan project (Report N° 20), may/could serve as reference document for further activities.

Recommendation 1. MSP Data Infrastructure

A pan-Baltic data MSP infrastructure for up-to date, transferable, interoperable MSP relevant data and meta data must be created. Existing networks such as the HELCOM/VASAB WG on MSP should be considered for building up the data exchange network.

Recommendation 2. MSP Data Specifications

The MSP data infrastructure should be based on agreed lay-out and specifications with regard to data issues, data scope, formats and technical requirements etc.. This must be in line with the INSPIRE Directive, which should be amended with regard to marine space and maritime features to cover MSP relevant aspects. The data sets of the MSP data infrastructure should cover all MSP relevant issues. A basic or minimum range of information for MSP purposes must be defined, which should be further developed and extended as needed.

Recommendation 3. MSP Data Exchange Network

The transnational network for MSP data exchange should consist of the following functional levels:

- 1) Pan-Baltic MSP Data Coordinating group - managing the Baltic MSP Infrastructure, making available pan-Baltic MSP relevant data sets, creating harmonised Pan Baltic MSP relevant data sets from national data etc.
- 2) National MSP Data Contact Points – making national MSP relevant data available to MSP Infrastructure
- 3) (for larger countries or federal states) Regional MSP Data Points – making regional MSP relevant data available to MSP infrastructure in cooperation with National Data Contact Points
- 4) MSP Data Providers, offering their data to the regional / national MSP Data Contact Points according to the rules set.

Recommendation 4. Data exchange process

Data exchange should be facilitated via a Baltic Sea MSP data portal, offering OGC compliant map and data services. These could be linked and/or integrated into individual applications.

All registered users of the network should be entitled to unrestricted searching, viewing, downloading and processing of the data.

In turn, they should make available the products the data has been used for and/or provide their data according to

- a) The legal policy as described in Recommendation 6, and
- b) formal requirements like data input format specified in the data specifications referred to in Recommendation 2.

to their respective National/Regional MSP Data Contact Point. National/Regional MSP Contact Points should provide for updated data sets in the data infrastructure in regular 6-month intervals – for issues facing dynamic development and rapid changes. Updating intervals for other issues should be fixed as necessary.

Recommendation 5. Expert / Advisory Group

The Pan-Baltic MSP Data Coordinating Group should consist of representatives from the National MSP Data Contact Points. A permanent MSP Data Expert Group in advisory capacity to the Pan-Baltic Data Coordinating Group should be created of spatial planners and GIS experts from all BSR countries with further experts on relevant issues to be appointed and/or consulted as necessary. Among its tasks should be:

- a) monitoring and proposal of improvements to the content of pan-Baltic data sets and the data exchange system,
- b) providing methodology for MSP in relation to data needs and management, and advice on gaps to be filled,
- c) ensuring the link to the other data networks as mentioned above,
- d) ensuring the link to the Transnational MSP Coordination Secretariat (as suggested in BaltSeaPlan Vision 2030).

Recommendation 6. Legal policy

The pan-Baltic data infrastructure should draw on unrestricted and free of charge data produced e.g. in course of statutory activities of public institutions, or publicly funded projects. Other data on spatially relevant activities and functions should be made available as far as possible. In case of duly restricted/commercial data, only the associated metadata and products will be made available via the network.

Recommendation 7. Resources

Baltic Sea states should grant adequate financial and organisational resources for securing the implementation and maintenance of a sustainable MSP data network and infrastructure.

Definitions

„**MSP**“ is understood in the context of these Recommendations as Maritime Spatial Planning and Management;

„**Data**“ is understood as spatial data relevant for Maritime Spatial Planning purposes;

„**Metadata**“ is understood as "data about data" describing the content, quality, condition, and other characteristics of data;

„**Commercial**“ is understood as conducted for profit, cost-recovery or re-sale;

„**Product**“ is understood as a value-added enhancement of data applied to a particular application;

„**Restricted**“ is understood as only accessible to users who have been given permission, for reasons of (national) security and other, and e.g. marked “confidential”;

„**Unrestricted**“ is understood as non-discriminatory and non-confidential, thus generally accessible;

„**Free of charge**“ is understood as no more than the cost of reproduction and delivery, without charge for the data and products themselves.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) has become a widely acknowledged and necessary tool for co-ordinating spatial use and balancing of interests in the sea. In view of expanding activities such as offshore wind energy parks and growing shipping traffic and at the same time increasing needs to protect the marine environment a systematic, integrative and forward-looking planning is required in order to safeguard the sustainable development of the seas. Currently, however, this tool is far from being established practice.

The 3.7 million € INTERREG IVB project “**BaltSeaPlan**” (2009–2012) has been the largest project in recent years dealing with maritime spatial planning throughout the Baltic Sea Region. Under the lead of the German Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) and covering partners from all Baltic Sea countries (except Finland) the project has not only developed pilots in 8 demonstration areas, but also advanced methods, instruments & tools as well as data exchange necessary for an effective maritime spatial planning.

The results of BaltSeaPlan are published in a series of reports all available for free download under www.baltseaplan.eu.

