Environment questionnaire

Introduction

The environment is one of the most important elements affecting the maritime spatial planning process by setting conditions to the sea uses as well as providing benefits and opportunities through supply of marine ecosystem services. At the same time MSP is an important tool, providing spatial measures for environmental protection and management. Nevertheless MSP cannot be regarded as the main instrument for improving the status of marine environment (the main pressures comes from inland areas), but it helps to avoid increasing pressure to marine environment from sea use activities. The ecosystem based approach shall be applied as the core concept for MSP when defining the extent and directions of sea-use development. It provides a holistic systems perspective on marine ecosystem and its interaction with human activities, adoption of the precautionary approach and adaptive management.

Requirements of the sector	**The main environmental protection measures related to MSP**
▪ Achievement of good environmental status (GES) of marine waters; ▪ Maintenance of resilient marine ecosystem and services it provides.	▪ Establishment of coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs) ▪ Implementation of spatial measures according to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) for achievement of good environmental status (GES) ▪ Application of ecosystem based approach in MSP ▪ Implementation of SEA and EIA procurers for plans and projects in marine territories.
Regulations	**Potential conflicts**
▪ EU Directives: Habitats and Birds, WFD, MSFD, Nitrate. ▪ EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020. ▪ Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention 1992); ▪ International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78); ▪ Convention "On fishing and conservation of living resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts" (Gdansk Convention, 1973); ▪ Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo, 1991) - the 'Espoo (EIA) Convention'; ▪ Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, and Protocol (London Convention, 1972); ▪ International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention, 2004);	*Identified at Central Baltic case workshop:* ▪ Fisheries: by catch of seals, harbour porpoise, birds and damage to fishing gears by seals; impacts of demersal trawling to benthic habitats ▪ Energy installation: impacts to benthic habitats, creating favourable conditions for migration of the invasive species , possible negative impact to coastal landscape ▪ Shipping: intensively used shipping routes can have negative impacts (disturbance, oil spills etc.) on areas of high ecological value *Also:* ▪ Cumulative impacts of different sea uses

Potential synergies	
▪ Fisheries: Maintenance of fish habitats is important for marine environment (ensuring of GES) as well as for fishery sector to ensure viable fish stocks. Possibility for directing of fishing activities on catch of invasive species ▪ Energy: OWP contributing to the goals of increase the share of RES in the total gross energy consumption; OWP can function as sanctuaries for fish populations or artificial reefs, thus creating habitat for benthic communities ▪ Shipping: measures for improving shipping safety are essential for avoiding damage to marine ecosystem, caused by the shipping accidents and oil spills	

Challenging Questions

- **The proper functioning of marine ecosystem depends on its viability and ecological coherence**. It is essential to preserve the ability of individual elements of biota (living organisms) to access important areas for their development cycle – dedicated to breeding, resting and feeding as well as to ensure the minimum distance between habitats necessary for spreading of species. MPAs network is commonly used core mechanisms for protection of marine biodiversity, however the connectivity and ecological coherence of the MPA network across the borders is still a challenging issue to be considered also during trans-national coordination of MSP.
    - *What are possible criteria for assessing the coherence and connectivity of MPA network at national and Baltic scale?*
    - *How MSP solutions can support connectivity and coherence of MPA network, forming of "blue corridors" and preserving of areas significant for provision of ecosystem services?*

2. **A common Baltic approach for assessing and mapping of areas of high ecological value** provide essential information basis/planning evidence for improving coherence of MPA network as well as planning and cross-border co-ordination of the sea use developments:
    - *What are possibilities for development of common Baltic standardised map of ecologically valuable/sensitive areas?*
    - *How to use the mapping of high ecological vales for planning and co-ordination of the sea use developments, e.g. planning/redirection of the shipping routes in order to minimising disturbance or possible impacts caused by shipping accidents and oil spills to sensitive elements of marine ecosystem, allocation of sites for offshore wind farms, in order to avoid negative impact to bird migration, etc.?*

3. **Application of precautionary principle**: For example, reefs, which are essential habitats and food bases for many species, are considered as very sensitive to mechanical destruction, e.g. construction of wind parks (precautionary principle requires to avoid these areas). However the significance of the potential impacts would have to be assessed based on particular technologies of construction.
    - What could be criteria for applying precautionary principle and setting limitations/restrictions to sea use activities within the MSP
4. **Taking into account the rapid sea use developments in the Baltic Sea, a common challenge is assessment of the collective pressure** of all human activities on marine environment at local, national as well as transboundary level.
    - *What are available methods for assessment of cumulative pressures?*
    - *How can the cumulative effects be addressed in the transboundary context of Maritime Spatial Planning?*