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UPTAKE ARTICLE

ESPON Peer Learning Workshop:

The Role of Marine Spatial Planning in reducing Marine Pollution in the Black Sea

Virtual (MS Teams)

15 December 2020

Objective

The ESPON-TNO program organised on the 15th of December a virtual Peer Learning Workshop with primarily Bulgarian and Romanian stakeholders joined by academics and stakeholders from other European regions. The goal of the event was to explore the potential role of Marine Spatial Planning in reducing Marine Pollution in the Black Sea. Particular attention was put to determine cross-over measures and possible collaboration in MSP-LSI from different institutions and member states. It offered new understandings and perspective on the potentials and shortcomings of MSP-LSI and how ESPON could add new research to answer these shortcomings.

Summary

The event started with an introduction of the ESPON programme and its goals by Michaela Gensheimer Following this, territorial evidences from previous ESPON projects were presented with regard to Marine Pollution and MSP. The first Bulgarian expert to speak was Capt. Prof. Miroslav Tsvetkov of the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy who explained the different tools available to identify Marine Pollution cartographically. Dr. Margarita Stancheva described subsequently the current Bulgarian-Romanian cross-border cooperation in the development of MSP and the process of including LSI into it through the MARSPLAN-BS II program. The workshop finished with reflections from Mariya Georgieva of the General Directorate Strategic Planning and Programs for Regional Development, and Dr. Georgi Parlichev, marine-ecologist member of the CCMS Foundation Council. The reflections focused on the MSP-opportunities and deficiencies to tackle Marine Pollution.

Main discussion

Marine space is going under increasing pressure and in order to manage this space efficiently, MSP is currently under development in many member states. Many sectors are causing marine pollution with each sector generating a specific form of pollution. However, the high variety of sectors influencing marine space and each country's distinct characteristics makes it very complex to identify precisely the sources of type of pollution. The Black Sea is no exception to that. An important challenge in that matter is to convince stakeholders of their potential contribution by adapting their activities.

The regional variety of challenges, activities and potential development contributes in the complexity of developing a clear strategy to tackle marine pollution. On this behalf, experience from the BT2050-project has indicated that the creation of future scenario's for marine space can instigate pro-active planning and cooperation, between stakeholders by presenting opportunities.

At the Bulgarian scale, the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy has developed various methods of monitoring the state of the Black Sea that allow to identify different types of pollution and their flow along the year. While it is now possible to observe that the largest amount of marine pollution comes from the inland, and more specifically from the Danube and the Northern part of the Black Sea, it remains hazardous to locate precisely the source of pollution.

These observations concur with the point of view that land and sea should be regarded has one continuum and that MSP cannot be established without taking into account LSI. In that sense, the "MARSPLAN-BS II, Cross-border Maritime Spatial Planning for Black Sea – Bulgaria and Romania" program investigates how to include LSI in the newly developing MSP. The insights delivered by this program indicates that marine pollution should be addressed at different levels of stakeholders involvement: through engagement, diagnosis of the issue, stimulation of behavioural change, identification of the sources and take action were most needed.

Finally, while MSP-LSI is a valuable strategic document to promote sustainable development and that it allows to manage the variety of sea activities, is remains a management tool. Due to the diversity of marine pollution sources, MSP alone is not enough to tackle the issue. MSP would have a beneficial contribution in the designation of protected areas and establishing specific rules to blue economy activities to prevent pollution.

However, due to the significant influence of land activities on the state of sea, the marine pollution should also be handled through the management of these activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, MSP has a potential role to play in the tackling marine pollution. It was yet commonly agreed upon that MSP cannot be disconnected with LSI due to the vast and continuous interactions between sea and land. Firstly, in order to have a better understanding of the LSI and its influence on marine pollution, more data and better exchange of information is needed. Secondly, enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration is required to deal with marine pollution.

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