



WHY ONE SIZE WON'T FIT ALL

MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING IN BELGIUM & DORSET

A Summary of Key Messages from the C-SCOPE Project





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INTRODUCTION

Combining Sea and Coastal Planning in Europe (C-SCOPE) is a European collaboration between the Dorset Coast Forum (DCF) and The Coordination Centre on Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Belgium, funded by the EU Interreg IV A 'Two Seas' programme. Its main aim was to achieve an integrated approach to land and sea planning and management. Both partners focused on three activities which link together to provide a comprehensive plan and information resource to underpin sustainable coastal management:

Developing a framework for integrating terrestrial and marine planning;

Tools for achieving sustainable coastal economies and environments; and

Achieving commitment to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) through stakeholder engagement.

This document contains key messages from Activity One of the C-SCOPE project, which focused on the development of coastal and marine plans at different spatial scales. It also includes lessons from the stakeholder participation process which was integral to the delivery of all three elements of the project.

COASTAL AND MARINE PLAN SCALES, BOUNDARIES AND PURPOSE

SCALE AND CONTEXT ARE CRITICAL

The scale of a marine plan is critical and will influence which data is gathered and the resolution of those data; it will determine objective setting, the final marine plan form, appropriate stakeholder participation methods, and the type of spatial analysis conducted.

BOUNDARIES ARE NECESSARY TO DEFINE THE MARINE PLAN AREA, BUT SHOULD NOT BE RIGID

Drawing lines at sea is particularly difficult as unlike on land there are few natural barriers to movement of water, sediments and species. The influence of terrestrial human activity and natural processes on the sea can reach far in-land. Political boundaries may make planning simpler logistically, but taking an ecosystem approach will not fit within these boundaries.

OBJECTIVE SETTING TAKES TIME, BUT IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Clear, transparent objectives, which are endorsed by its stakeholders, are an essential building block for a marine plan. Objectives can be sectoral, cross-cutting or a mixture of both, but should ultimately help to deliver the stated aims. At smaller scales, objectives can become more specific as issues become more tangible.



DATA AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS FOR COASTAL AND MARINE PLANNING

DEVELOP A DATA FRAMEWORK BEFORE YOU BEGIN COLLECTION

The aims, scale and boundaries of a marine plan will determine the type and resolution of data it is necessary to collect; ideally these should all be determined before collection begins. In doing so, a framework can be established identifying the sectoral, environmental and baseline data requirements, which will enable a more efficient process.

GOOD DATA MANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Sourcing and managing data is a difficult issue for many marine planners. Information can be hard to find, and the data that are available are not always up to date. Additionally, data are sometimes incompatible with other data, and metadata can be inconsistent. Data maintenance can be both costly and labour-intensive.



DATA AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS STILL EXIST

Gathering data in the marine environment is difficult and costly, and consequently many gaps still exist. To fully understand the value of the marine environment, correctly identify cumulative effects and to monitor the efficacy of marine plans in the future, more research and new methods are necessary.

SENSITIVITY MAPPING HAS SIGNIFICANT LIMITATIONS

Sensitivity mapping of the marine environment has significant limitations, including confidence in habitat maps (visible differences between resolutions of data, and survey and modelled data) and issues surrounding current sensitivity data. Even high resolution data in complex seabed areas cannot be given total confidence. Ultimately, future developments will still require their own seabed surveys through the EIA process.

COASTAL AND MARINE PLANNING METHODS AND PROCESSES

INTERACTIONS MATRICES ARE A BLUNT TOOL WITHOUT LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Interactions matrices can help to identify areas that might need spatial management and also highlights areas suitable for co-location of activities. They are, however, a relatively blunt tool, and do not necessarily capture the nuances of a particular area. Interviewing sectoral representatives and mapping the results will build up a more complete picture, but care must be taken to avoid sectoral bias distorting the results.

BEST PRACTICE IS THERE TO BE CHALLENGED

Marine planning is continuing to evolve rapidly. Practitioners are looking to earlier examples of marine planning for best practice and also to terrestrial planning systems to see how these might be applied to the marine environment. However, marine planners should be open to new approaches and be prepared to question existing ones.

FORECASTING, PARTICULARLY AT A LOCAL SCALE, IS AN IMPRECISE TECHNIQUE

When planning it is important to remember that forecasting is imprecise and subject to economic fluctuations, unexpected global events, technology developments and political change. It is also one of the primary reasons that marine plans should be regularly reviewed.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS METHODS SHOULD BE ADAPTABLE

Spatial analysis methods should be adapted to suit the individual marine plan area. At a large scale and/or where there are few resources and little competition for space, setting spatial scenarios may not be possible or necessary. Conversely, with intense competition for space and/or at a small scale, spatial scenarios are an important means of delivering marine plans.

CONSTRAINTS MAPPING SHOULD BE INTERPRETED WITH CARE

Although constraints mapping is carried out using sophisticated GIS tools the inputs, particularly hard and soft constraints, contain a degree of subjectivity. Great care should be taken in interpreting constraints mapping, if it is then used to allocate space within the marine plan.

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COASTAL AND MARINE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

THE LAND/SEA INTERFACE REMAINS CHALLENGING

Achieving consistency between terrestrial planning and marine planning systems remains a challenge. At present, marine planners are inheriting existing terrestrial plans which have given little thought to the marine environment. Governance makes coordination more difficult as planning regimes differ, and responsibilities lie at different authority levels. Early engagement with terrestrial planners is highly recommended. Meticulous collation and analysis of all relevant terrestrial plans is necessary to ensure marine plan policies are consistent with them.

MARINE PLANS DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE 'ZONED'

'Zoned' marine plans require strong justification and a robust evidence base, which is often not available in temperate waters. They can also create sectoral tensions and offer less flexibility. Plans with multi-level, spatially expressed policies which are linked to a live GIS system offer an alternative approach. Dynamic zoning schemes, as successfully used in fisheries control, could offer a solution as data and knowledge improves.

MARINE PLANS SHOULD BE LINKED TO INTERACTIVE MAPS

Access to the information and data used in the planning process is essential to ensure transparency throughout the marine planning process. GIS tools can compensate for scale and resolution issues which cannot be addressed easily in a static marine plan, and allows it to be more adaptive to changing situations. Interactive maps should therefore be an integral part of any marine plan.

PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

There is no 'one size fits all' solution to marine planning. Whilst there are common elements, each marine plan area will require a different approach tailored to the local situation and scale and this will almost inevitably lead to unexpected consequences.



STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE C-SCOPE PROJECT

LEGAL STATUS MATTERS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Non-statutory plans may not receive the same support as statutory plans and, stakeholders may not engage with the project because they believe it will have no real influence on their activities or on formal procedures. Legal status gives stakeholders more incentive to be involved in the process.

BE CONCISE AND CONSISTENT WITH LANGUAGE

Coastal and marine planning can be confusing to stakeholders and there is often misunderstanding or different interpretations of definitions, wording, or procedures. Words which are open to interpretation must be clearly defined throughout the process and, most importantly, within resulting policies.

BUILDING TRUST IS IMPORTANT, BUT TAKES TIME

Building trust and respect between marine planners and stakeholders, as well as between different stakeholder groups is an important part of the planning process. Members of newly formed groups displayed more self-interest than those which were long-established.

ENGAGING INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES TAKES EFFORT

It can be hard to engage industry and business communities. Generally, unless there was an existing relationship, they did not respond to email communication well, but responded better to phone calls and face-to-face contact. Businesses needed to see the benefits of taking part in the planning process before they would commit time (and therefore money) to it.

INTERVIEWS ARE A VALUABLE TOOL FOR INFORMATION GATHERING, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

Interviews can be an invaluable participatory tool to build new relationships, particularly within the business and industry communities. However conducting face-to-face interviews is very labour intensive and, depending on the scale of the marine plan, can be logistically complicated. If they are to take place, it is important to time-table interviews early-on into the planning process.

WORKING WITH THE 'RIGHT' STAKEHOLDERS IS IMPORTANT

For the effective dissemination of information from Task & Finish Group members to other key members of their organisations, it is important that representatives are able to understand as well communicate the issues being discussed. Equally, one person or organisation can disrupt the planning process quite significantly. Stakeholder group members should therefore be carefully selected.

STAKEHOLDERS ARE SELECTIVE IN THE WAY THEY PARTICIPATE

Stakeholders may 'dip in and out' of participation according to their sectoral interests, time and how much an issue affected them. They will always find a way to engage if they feel their livelihood is threatened.

REACHING CONSENSUS TAKES TIME AND IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE

Reaching consensus takes time and is not always possible. Try to help stakeholders focus on the positive common elements, not the negative ones. If consensus cannot be reached, stakeholders' different points of view and arguments should be clearly documented.

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE C-SCOPE PROJECT

PARTICIPATION IS ABOUT MORE THAN CONSENSUS

Stakeholders are essential to help bridge marine planners' and ICZM practitioners' knowledge and skill gaps. Improved communication between organisations can lead to better collaborative working, which can produce better results at reduced costs.

MEETINGS SHOULD BE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Many stakeholders will find it difficult to attend meetings during conventional office hours and those that are giving up their own time may not want to travel long distances to meetings. It is therefore important to make meetings as geographically and temporally accessible as possible. Rotating the location of meetings can help to keep down travel distances and cost.

VISUAL MEDIA IS AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TOOL

Visual media proved an invaluable communication tool and cut across all sectors. Visualisations help people to gain a deeper understanding of complex marine processes and a simple visual 'build-up' of marine spatial data can show the need for marine planning even to non-experts.

THE MEDIA WILL ONLY BECOME INTERESTED IF THERE IS AN ISSUE THEY CAN FOCUS ON

Issues which directly impact on the environment, livelihoods or recreation, create media interest which can greatly help marine planners to publicise their activities. However, the media can also misinterpret the complexity of the situation, or be exploited by one stakeholder to express their own views. Care should be taken not to use emotive issues just to create media interest.

GOVERNMENT BODIES SHOULD AIM FOR BETTER COORDINATION

At a national level there is a tendency to operate and conduct participatory projects in isolation. Not only is this inefficient, creating extra costs for both policymakers and stakeholders, but it is also leading to stakeholder fatigue. Consequently there is a real risk that certain sectors will not engage, particularly given the current economic climate.

PHOTO CREDITS

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1 Dorset Coast Forum

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For more information and results of the C-SCOPE project, visit www.cscope.eu.

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