

Cetacean-Friendly Maritime Spatial Planning: Draft Guidelines

Dr. Cormac Walsh



Bundesamt für
Naturschutz

Maritime Spatial Planning

- A public process of analysing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social objectives that usually have been specified through a political process
- Management of marine resources and protection of marine ecosystems, avoidance / minimisation of conflict

Maritime Spatial Planning

- Area-based
 - Ecosystem-based
 - Forward-looking
 - Science-driven
 - Transparent
 - Participatory and integrated
 - Adaptive
- *Regulatory role:* coordination of use of sea space
 - *Strategic, forward planning role:*
 - setting out a cross-sectoral, integrated future vision
 - driving ecosystem-based marine management

Draft Guidelines

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Current Status and Policy Context
- 1.2 Ecosystem-Based MSP and Cetacean Conservation
- 1.3 Building on Existing Good Practice

2. High-Level Recommendations

3. Threats to Cetaceans and Appropriate MSP Measures

1.1 Existing Commitments

- The parties to ASCOBANS agreed to “to cooperate closely in order to achieve and maintain a **favourable conservation status** for small cetaceans” (ASCOBANS 1992)
- FCS based on Convention on Migratory Species (1979)
- “the general aim should be to minimize (i.e. ultimately to reduce to zero) anthropogenic removals (i.e. mortality), and in the short term, to restore and/or maintain biological or management units to/at 80 per cent or more of the carrying capacity” (ASCOBANS Resolution 8.5, 2020)

1.2 Core Principles

- **Ecosystem-based MSP:** working within carrying capacity of, and ensuring integrity of marine ecosystems
- **Precautionary Principle:** anticipatory and preventive planning, to err on side of caution, missing data / evidence base does not mean potential impacts can be disregarded
- **Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practices:** methods / measures with least adverse impact must be chosen, also when they incur additional costs

2. High Level Recommendations

- **Application of ecosystem-based MSP**
 - Mapping of cetacean distribution and assessment of trends
 - Demonstration of alignment with international commitments
 - Functional understanding of marine ecosystems
 - Assessment of cumulative impacts
 - ...
- **Cetacean conservation areas**
 - Area-based and temporal restrictions
 - Embedded within comprehensive MPA networks
 - ...

2. High Level Recommendations

- **Mitigation, Compensation and Adaptation**
 - Application of mitigation hierarchy
 - Remediation with net benefit for cetacean population
 - Adaptive, dynamic, iterative process
- **Transboundary coordination and cooperation**
 - Assessment of cumulative impacts and carrying capacity at sea basin scale
 - Common assessment methodologies
 - Harmonised monitoring
 - Integration across the land-sea divide

3. Threats to Cetaceans and MSP Measures

- Matrix of threats, geographical distribution, species and sectors (based on ICES 2019)
- **Widespread**: e.g. contaminants, overfishing
- **relatively location specific**: shipping noise, military activity
- **highly location specific**: e.g. pile-driving

Threats	Regional Seas					Species	Sector	Spatial Distribution
	Baltic Sea	Belt Seas / Kattegat	Greater North Sea	Celtic Seas	Bay of Biscay & Iberian Peninsula			
Contaminants	H	H	H	H	H	harbour porpoises, dolphins, toothed whales	Land-sea	Widespread
Habitat degradation	M	L	L	L	L	harbour porpoises	land-sea	Relatively location-specific
Litter (including plastics and discarded fishing gear)	L	L	M	M	M	harbour porpoises, dolphins, whales	Fishing	Widespread
Sonar	H	M	M	H	H	harbour porpoises, whales	Military	Relatively location-specific
Seismic surveys	H		M	H	H	harbour porpoises, dolphins, whales	Oil and gas	Relatively location-specific
Pile-driving	M	M	M	M	0	harbour porpoises, whales, dolphins	Offshore wind	Highly location-specific
Explosions	H	M	M	0	0	harbour porpoises, whales, dolphins	Military / offshore wind	Relatively location-specific
Shipping (noise)	M	M	M	M	M	harbour porpoises, dolphins, whales	Shipping	Relatively location-specific

1.3 / 3. Underwater Noise

- Combination of impulsive and continuous noise (both significant and relevant)
- MSP should ensure critical thresholds are not exceeded (e.g. TG NOISE – EU MSFD)
- Use BAT and BEP: e.g. alternatives to pile-driving in wind turbine installation
- **Relatively Location Specific:** sonar, seismic surveys, underwater explosions, shipping noise,
- **Highly Location Specific:** Pile-driving

Expert Review

- Comments from seven organisations: HELCOM, OSPAR, IWC, Animal Welfare Institute, Finland, Germany, Poland – **THANK YOU!**
- Plus – internal review among guidelines preparation team
- Overall very constructive and helpful
- Specific comments re. assessment methods may be addressed in guidance on cumulative effects assessment