

WORK PACKAGE 4

StoryMaps, policy recommendations & pathways to impact

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Stakeholders and Governance

To identify future pathways for marine governance, it is vital to understand how objectives are prioritised, how stakeholders participate and share knowledge, and how regimes adapt to change. To develop insight on these aspects, the following activities were conducted:



An institutional and policy audit of each study site, enabling an analysis of how marine governance is operationalised;



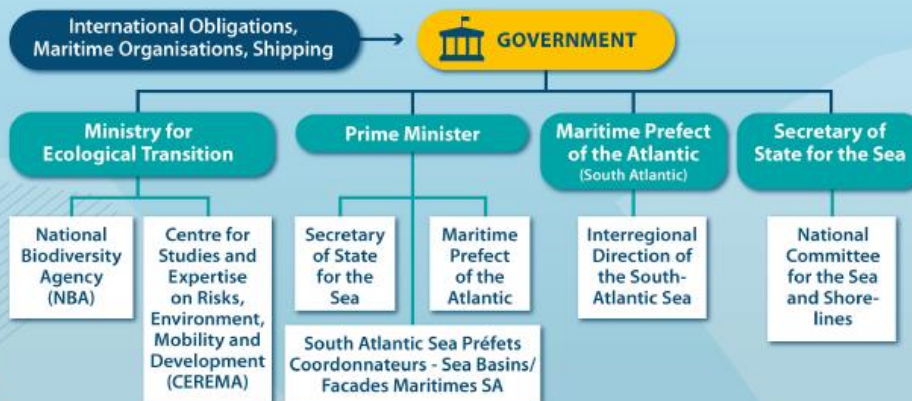
An assessment of the adaptive capacity of governance to identify what impedes and facilitates the implementation of new approaches.



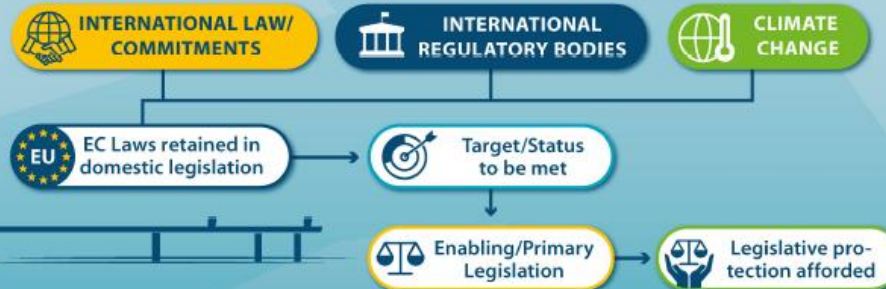
Institutional and legislative audit

Many regions have constructed complex legislative and administrative frameworks, managed by a plethora of organisations and administrations that attempt to respond to international, national and regional policies. This has facilitated ineffective communication, weak coordination and limited integration across governance regimes.

ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORKS (e.g. France)



ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORKS (e.g. Netherlands)



Adaptive capacity

This task involved examining how governance regimes use diverse knowledge on conservation measures and MSP processes. By assessing the factors that influence how learning and change takes place within governance regimes, a range of barriers and enablers of adaptive marine governance were identified:



Barriers to adaptive marine governance

- Hierarchical and top-down policy processes
- Short-term and unstable political frameworks
- Limited stakeholder and sector inclusion in the design, implementation and management of governance activities
- "Silo Thinking"
- Rigid or outdated policy and bureaucratic systems



Enablers to adaptive marine governance


- Clear institutional and legislative frameworks
- Regional-national-international policy integration
- Transboundary cooperation; inter-organisational networks
- Formal partnerships between stakeholders, sectors and government
- Measurable targets and implementable goals
- Available financing for trialling innovative solutions.



STORYMAPS – OBJECTIVE



> This task focused on developing a suite of **policy recommendations** on how to foster **Ecosystem Based-Marine Spatial Planning** (E B-MSP).



> The findings of each Planning Site – related to institutional landscapes and the opportunities/barriers to achieving governance targets (e.g., 30x30 conservation goal) – were embedded in bespoke **ArcGIS StoryMaps**.

> The StoryMaps – which were translated to local languages – were shared with a **broad range of identified stakeholders** in each Planning Site.

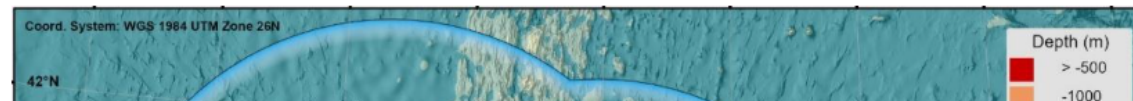


Introduction

[MarinePlan](#) supports the implementation of Ecosystem-Based MSP (EB-MSP) through the development of a Decision Support System (DSS). The DSS offers guidance for an improved alignment of MSP, spatial conservation and restoration measures. This StoryMap presents the project's findings and recommendations for the Azores study site. As a key stakeholder in this area, we would like you to review the research conclusions and recommendations and provide feedback via a short survey.

The Azores demonstration site - illustrated in **Fig. 1** below - encompasses the Portuguese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around the EU Outermost Region of the Azores. The region is characterised by narrow shelves and steep slopes, surrounded by a highly rugged deep seabed hosting numerous distinctive bathymetric features and a large diversity of habitats and ecosystems of high natural value. These are increasingly impacted by bottom hook-and-line fisheries, climate change and, in the future, deep-seabed mining.

This StoryMap contains the MarinePlan view of the Azores governance system and presents our findings on the barriers to achieving the region's management targets and objectives. Recommendations to overcome each barrier are proposed, which we ask you to provide feedback on by completing a short survey.



Existing governance regime

Greece has established a comprehensive legal framework – covering local, national and international levels – for managing maritime activities. Organizational figures, known as ‘organograms’, have been designed to demonstrate the country’s administrative landscape (see **Fig. 2**, **Fig. 3** and **Fig. 4** below). Both the development of MSP and MPA policies are led by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy in collaboration with other national authorities. Apart from the Ministry of the Environment and Energy, key departments include the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy and the Ministry of Rural Development and Food. Although other Ministries and bodies have some overlapping responsibilities, their cooperation is often limited to specific issues. This has led to doubts regarding the practical implementation of cross-departmental collaboration and the extent of substantial co-formation in management policies and implementation strategies.

Objectives and targets

A National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) was approved in 2021. It is complemented by the Maritime Area Planning (MAP) Act of 2021, designed to provide the legal basis for the implementation and enforcement of the NMPF. The key objectives and targets that have been prioritised by the Irish government for the Celtic Sea area are:

To protect at least 30% of the marine environment by 2030

A key driving force for the development of MPAs in the Celtic Sea is the necessity to safeguard marine environmental resources before the installation of ORE infrastructure. Although not yet progressed into law, the creation of a national MPA Bill is intended to support the 30% protection by 2030 target. To ensure effective implementation, it is vital that the MPA Bill is harmonized with the NMPF 2021 and the MAP Act 2021.

	<u>Barrier 1</u>	<u>Barrier 2</u>	<u>Barrier 3</u>	<u>Barrier 4</u>
<u>Azores</u>	Regional and national complexity	Key scientific knowledge gaps	Insufficient monitoring mechanisms	Insufficient enforcement mechanisms
<u>Bay of Biscay</u>	Limited cross-border cooperation	Ineffective management measures	Impaired interaction between sectors	Emergence of the offshore energy sector
<u>Campania</u>	Ineffective consultation activity	Lack of ecological connectivity among MPAs	Lack of stability in MPA management and monitoring	Lack of political will
<u>Celtic Sea</u>	Lack of capacity	Fragmented governance and data	Competing objectives	Ineffectiveness of legislation

	<u>Barrier 1</u>	<u>Barrier 2</u>	<u>Barrier 3</u>	<u>Barrier 4</u>
<u>Greek Aegean and Ionian Seas</u>	Delay in policy implementation	Weak communication between government departments	Lack of key personnel in governance	Science-policy disconnect
<u>Southern North Sea</u>	Policy complexity and fragmentation	Limited harmonization of conflicting priorities	Uneven stakeholder involvement in MSP	Inconsistent monitoring of MPA effectiveness
<u>Western Baltic Sea</u>	Key scientific knowledge gaps	Weak monitoring mechanisms to evaluate MPA effectiveness	Impaired interaction between sectors	Limited cross-border cooperation in identifying priorities
<u>Western Mediterranean Sea</u>	Disconnect between MSP and MPA processes	Limited cross-border cooperation in identifying priorities	Uneven stakeholder involvement in MSP	Stakeholder fatigue caused by heightened expectations



Barrier #1 - Delay of policy implementation & lack of political will

The government's failure to fulfill its obligations regarding MSP and MPAs has been a major impediment to delaying the actual implementation of conservation measures and the effective management of human activities at sea. A significant policy reform is now underway, relating to the definition of terms of protection within MPAs as well as developing a national framework for MSP. Although the country has finally taken long-overdue steps towards reforming its conservation policy framework, due to the delayed implementation, efforts are currently focused on fulfilling basic responsibilities, leaving little room for more ambitious or forward-thinking initiatives. Without the government's political commitment to initiate action, introducing new management frameworks would probably have limited potential to fuel adaptive governance.

GREEK AEGEAN & IONIAN SEAS

Barrier #3 - 'Silo' thinking

Communication between government departments responsible for marine management is consistently reported as extremely limited. While several departments have overlapping or complementary jurisdictions and even when cooperation is formally required for specific issues, there are doubts about the practical implementation of this collaboration and the extent of substantial co-formation in policies and implementation of strategies.

Barrier #4 - Lack of key personnel

Lack of key personnel is a key factor limiting the operational and adaptive capacity of government and management bodies. Staff shortages are observed across various institutions, leaving both governmental departments and management agencies essentially operating reactively rather than proactively in many cases. This undermines strategic governance, limits capacity for reflective actions and adaptive policy, while also creating practical complications for monitoring, control and enforcement of protection measures.

GREEK AEGEAN & IONIAN SEAS

Stakeholder feedback - survey

The following survey asks you to provide your feedback on our governance recommendations. A set of statements are listed. We ask you to indicate your agreement or disagreement with these. There is also the option to add any further comment or suggestion regarding each statement.

Azores - stakeholder feedback



<https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/news/marineplan-survey-governance-ecosystem-based-marine-spatial-planning>

	<u>Rec. 1</u>	<u>Rec. 2</u>	<u>Rec. 3</u>	<u>Rec. 4</u>
<u>Azores</u>	Strengthened intergovernmental dialogue & a revision of competencies	Expand research initiatives and emerging technologies	Establish clear evaluation protocols based on SMART indicators	Integrate remote surveillance & inter-departmental data-sharing
<u>Bay of Biscay</u>	A transboundary MSP cooperation framework in the context of the already existing initiatives	Review French and Spanish marine governance & develop a harmonization roadmap	Develop joint, low-risk projects between maritime sectors	Analyse the cumulative impacts of designating areas for renewable energy facilities
<u>Campania</u>	Legislation to make public consultations a mandatory component of MPAs	Scientific assessment to identify key ecological corridors that link different MPAs	Hire qualified personnel at all levels & simplify bureaucratic procedures for management agencies	Identify political figures who can act as champions for the marine environment
<u>Celtic Sea</u>	Assess what type of resources are required & delegate tasks to address issues	Enhance cross-departmental working groups & designate integration champions	Build on Project Ireland Marine by aligning marine policies and investment	Establish clear evaluation protocols based on SMART indicators

	<u>Rec. 1</u>	<u>Rec. 2</u>	<u>Rec. 3</u>	<u>Rec. 4</u>
<u>Greek Aegean and Ionian Seas</u>	Develop an actionable plan on how to achieve MSP and MPA targets	Regulatory framework on how cross-departmental cooperation can be operationalised	Hire qualified personnel at all levels & simplify bureaucratic procedures for management agencies	Develop clear procedures for receiving, evaluating, and incorporating scientific advice into policy
<u>Southern North Sea</u>	Establish cross-border planning mechanisms and strengthen institutional collaboration	Create formalised steering committees that link to cross-border dialogue	Build on the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative to strengthen cooperation on MSP	Establish clear evaluation protocols based on SMART indicators
<u>Western Baltic Sea</u>	More standardized, long-term, and spatially comprehensive monitoring efforts	Establish clear evaluation protocols based on SMART indicators	Develop joint, low-risk projects between maritime sectors	A transboundary MSP cooperation framework in the context of the already existing initiatives
<u>Western Mediterranean Sea</u>	Develop MSP and MPA roadmaps to guide alignment between the processes	A transboundary MSP cooperation framework in the context of the already existing initiatives	Formalised steering committees that include sectoral representatives and facilitators to work with less experienced stakeholders	Reinforce eNGO collaborations by fostering strategic coalitions that share responsibilities and resources

Barriers to achieving targets and recommendations



Barrier #1 – Political complexity between national and regional government is hindering the coherence and connectivity of MSP

Recommendation – Promote legal harmonisation through strengthened intergovernmental dialogue, a clarification of competencies, and a greater focus on participation. This will help to minimise complexity. To empower the regional plan, the Azores should be granted a more active role in the definition of marine policies, such as MSP, to ensure that governance arrangements adequately fit local issues.



Barrier #3 – MPA designation did not include the most recent research knowledge on biodiversity, ecosystem services and the impacts of climate change

Recommendation – Regular re-assessment of sites, based on the most up-to-date knowledge, is key. MPA management must become more flexible, particularly in regard to the process of designating and implementing sites. Expand research initiatives to ensure that data will enhance adaptive management and inform policy adjustments. This should include acquiring data on the economic impacts of MPAs.



Barrier #4 – Monitoring mechanisms have been insufficient in evaluating MPA effectiveness. Robust, science-based tracking of key indicators is needed

Recommendation – Establish clear evaluation protocols based on SMART indicators to demonstrate MPA performance against design objectives. This should be supported by the creation of specific funding mechanisms for continuous MPA monitoring. Incentives to participate in the monitoring should be provided to economic actors, for example by swiftly reflecting monitoring results in fishing quotas.

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Azores



Bay of Biscay



Campania



Celtic Sea



Greek Seas



Southern
North Sea



Western
Baltic Sea



Western
Mediterranean Sea

PATHWAYS TO IMPACT



> The dissemination of StoryMaps and policy briefs constitutes one element of the MarinePlan objective of **generating policy impact** in relation to EB-MSP.

> Beyond WP4, a range of other **best practice guidance** has been created. These are similarly aimed at enhancing the design & effectiveness of **spatial conservation & restoration measures**.

> Results are communicated to decision-makers at **horizontal** (between sectors) and **vertical** (from local to European) levels, enabling the transfer of knowledge to areas in **differing socio-ecological settings**.

GREEK AEGEAN & IONIAN SEAS



- > The **Ionian National Marine Park** is a newly planned marine protected area in Greece, announced in 2025, that will cover over 14,000 square kilometres.
- > It is being established as part of Greece's commitment to the global "**30x30**" target.
- > Use of the MarinePlan tools **prior3D** and **priorCON** has been key to designing the Marine Park.