

Quality of cross-border collaboration in maritime spatial planning – an evaluation framework

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Coastal states in Europe have recently prepared or are currently preparing maritime spatial plans for their sea areas. While countries plan their own areas there is a need to collaborate with their neighbours to enhance coherence across the sea. Consequently, the cross-border coherence needs a specific attention also in attempts to ensure quality of maritime spatial planning (MSP). This paper presents an evaluation framework that focuses on quality of cross-border collaboration in MSP. The framework presents indicators to scrutinise three consecutive phases of MSP: preparation of the plans, implementation of cross-border agreements, and outcomes. The framework builds on experiences gained in the Baltic Sea region where countries are developing their cross-border spatial planning capacity in a joint project, while the evaluation framework is designed to be applicable for collaboration processes in other sea areas, as well. For this purpose the framework acknowledges that contexts for cross-border collaboration differ in place and time. For instance, countries are proceeding in different timing, they may have different objectives for their maritime spatial plans, legal statuses of maritime spatial plans differ and countries organize their national MSP processes differently. All these factors proved to be specific challenges in the Baltic Sea area, but they are not unique for this sea area only. Empirical evidence suggests thus that MSP evaluation frameworks – and quality management systems - should be flexible enough to properly address the phenomenon that is being evaluated. The same is pointed out in literature on evaluation of policies and spatial planning.

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