

Title



MSP and ICM should guide human use of the sea and coasts, in order to achieve long-term sustainable development at the same time as minimising conflict and ensuring that marine ecosystems are protected.

The European Commission released a proposal for a Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Directive in March 2013, under its Integrated Maritime Policy. One year later (March 2014), the three institutions, European Commission, European Parliament, and the European Fisheries Council, agreed to a MSP Directive, unfortunately missing the opportunity to have an EU wide directive for planning of our marine areas that would also encompass coastal areas.

The new Directive will require Member States to establish and implement Maritime Spatial Plans for their marine areas, according to a set of minimum common requirements. Member States are expected to establish plans “*as soon as possible*” and by 2021 at the latest. As a framework Directive, the MSP Directive only establishes procedural obligations. Member States retain the power to define the structure, content and detail of these plans.

BirdLife's ongoing support for MSP and ICM has been to ensure that they are used as tools to ensure that marine ecosystems, and their component habitats and species, are fully considered in decisions that affect the use of coastal and marine space. This would be a considerable improvement on the traditional ad-hoc and unsustainable sectoral approach to marine management, which has led to over-exploitation of marine resources and significant environmental decline. The health of the marine environment must be a fundamental consideration for all decision-making,

and planning must be coordinated and coherent across boundaries.

However, planning must not encourage development at any costs. The new Directive ensures that any planning needs to take into account the ecosystem-based approach, as means of ensuring proper management of human activities at sea, taking into account economic, social, and environmental criterias. As part of this, a requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is particularly crucial, to ensure that environmental impacts, in particular “cumulative” or “in-combination” impacts are assessed.

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