WP6 – Policy coherence and co-production of solutions

Deliverable 6.3 Policy solutions for MSP based on the Science-Policy Dialogues

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Abstract	Deliverable 6.3 presents a synthesis of policy-oriented outcomes from the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks conducted under MSP4BIO's Work Package 6. These dialogues, held between May 2023 and May 2025, brought together stakeholders from over eleven EU-funded projects, EU authorities (DG MARE, DG ENV) and planning experts to discuss and exchange on policy coherence and integrating biodiversity into Maritime Spatial Planning

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	(MSP). Through these structured exchanges, the Think Tanks facilitated coordination and knowledge sharing, addressing barriers and recommendations for biodiversity mainstreaming in MSP frameworks. The report highlights the synergies between participating projects and initiatives, outlines actionable policy recommendations and reflects stakeholder feedback on proposed policy solutions. Overall, the deliverable demonstrates the value of collaborative policy dialogue in advancing biodiversity mainstreaming and coherence across MSP frameworks in the EU.
Keywords	Maritime Spatial Planning, Biodiversity integration, Policy coherence, Policy alignment, Tools and Outcomes, Science-Policy Dialogues
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Acronyms

CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity
CFP – Common Fisheries Policy
CIA – Cumulative Impacts Assessment
CoP – Community of Practices
DG – Directorate General
DST(s) – Decision Support Tool(s)
EBA – Ecosystem-based Approach
EBSA – Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas
EGD – European Green Deal
ESE Framework – Ecological-Socio-Economic Framework
EUBS2030 – EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030
GES – Good Environmental Status
MaS – Marine Strategies
MPAs – Marine Protected Areas
MS – Member States
MSFD – Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MSP – Marine Spatial Planning
MSPD – Marine Spatial Planning Directive
NGO- Non-Governmental Organization
ORE – Offshore Renewable Energy
PS – Policy Solution
RBMPs – River Basin Management Plans
SEA – Strategic Environmental Assessment
SNA – Social Network Analysis
SPIA – Spatial Pressure and Impact Assessment
SPS – Science-Policy-Society
WFD – Water Framework Directive

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Executive Summary

Deliverable 6.3 – Policy solutions for MSP based on the Science-Policy Dialogues – synthesises the main outputs developed through the four MSP4BIO Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks implemented under Work Package 6. The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the tools, approaches, results, and policy recommendations co-developed and validated through this series of meetings with a diverse range of stakeholders – including the EU-funded project's representatives, the EU authorities (DG MARE and DG Environment) and planning experts. Over the course of four dedicated Think Tank meetings held between May 2023 and May 2025, and with the final cross-project validation session in July 2025, the MSP4BIO WP6 team collaborated with over eleven EU-funded projects and various policy stakeholders to enhance biodiversity mainstreaming and policy coherence within MSP processes.

The Think Tank series served as a collaborative mechanism to share insights, gather feedback and promote joint solutions for integrating biodiversity into MSP. The process facilitated coordination among ongoing and recently finalized initiatives, fostered knowledge exchange, and enabled reflection on shared policy challenges, including fragmented governance, inconsistent data access, limited capacity at local/regional levels, and the need for improved cross-directive alignment – particularly between the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

One of the main outputs of this deliverable is a comprehensive classification and mapping of 56 tools and outcomes developed across sister projects, compiled using Social Network Analysis (SNA). Tools and outcomes were categorised by nature (operative tool or outcome), function (data-driven, policy-focused, or operative tools), and thematic focus (governance and regional experiences; MSP data integration; conservation and ecosystem-based approaches; socioeconomic aspects and stakeholder engagement; and capacity-building). The resulting network graph reveals clear clusters and potential synergies among project outputs, particularly in areas such as policy alignment, ecological prioritisation, and decision-support systems. The mapping exercise was validated through project-level feedback and helped identify synergies across projects and tools. The report also presents a detailed assessment of barriers to effective MSPD/MSFD integration, structured across four categories: institutional, operational and technical. It outlines key constraints – such as lack of binding environmental targets in MSPD, fragmented stakeholder coordination mechanisms, variability in monitoring standards, and data interoperability challenges – and proposes ten actionable recommendations. These include calls for harmonised legal frameworks, stronger regional-level planning, enhanced coordination mechanisms, and better integration of MSFD objectives into MSP processes. Chapter 3 summarises stakeholder feedback collected during the review of the 11 Policy Solutions proposed in MSP4BIO Deliverable 6.2 (Pinarbasi *et al.,* 2025). Feedback from national planners, EU representatives (DG MARE and DG ENV), and experts confirmed the importance of policy coherence, capacity building, and participatory governance. Practical insights emphasised the need for

tailored approaches, strengthened monitoring systems, and clearer operational pathways to translate policy goals into planning measures. A total of 15 potential joint recommendations were ranked and further validated through inter-project surveys, which will be consolidated into a joint Policy Brief[1].

The Think Tank process proved effective in consolidating inter-project knowledge and fostering a shared understanding of how biodiversity can be better integrated into MSP frameworks. The deliverable demonstrates the value of dialogue and coordinated action among several EU-funded initiatives and provides transferable outcomes, a structured classification, and practical policy solutions to inform future planning processes at local, regional, and EU levels.

[1] A joint Policy Brief brings together key policy recommendations for improving the integration of biodiversity into MSP from 7 different projects (MSP4BIO, MPA Europe, CrossGov, MSP Green, REGINA-MSP, MSP-OR, and eMSP NBSR). The outcome will be finalized by the end of the MSP4BIO project.

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Introduction

The Deliverable 6.3 – Policy solutions for MSP based on the Science-Policy Dialogues – presents a synthesis of the key insights and feedback gathered through the series of Think Tank meetings that were organised in the framework of the project. These structured dialogues served as a space for in-depth discussions and exchanges of key policy questions, namely i) biodiversity mainstreaming in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) processes and ii) the enhancement of policy coherence between MSP and other European Union (EU) policy frameworks, including the MSFD, the WFD, the EGD and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.
The report addresses these core topics around three components:

i) an overview and mapping of the main tools and outcomes developed by ongoing and recently concluded EU-funded projects focusing on MSP and biodiversity-related issues that participated to the Think Tank meetings;
ii) an analysis of the key barriers and recommendations for a better integration of the MSPD and the MSFD, which emerged as a central concern across the discussions; and
iii) a synthesis of stakeholder feedback on the policy recommendations formulated in D6.2, including critical reflections and suggestions from relevant projects focusing on the same topics, (including sister projects - i.e., projects, that share common objectives, target audiences, and a thematic focus, aiming to collaborate and share insights, methodologies, and outcomes to maximize their collective impact -), EU representatives and planning experts participating in the Science-Policy Dialogues.

Overall, this report aims to synthetise the main insights gained through the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank meetings, highlighting their added value as a mechanism for fostering cross-project collaboration, knowledge exchange and co-development of solutions.

Overview of the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks
As part of MSP4BIO's WP6, four Science-Policy-Dialogue Think Tanks were organized with the participation of representatives from various MSP-related projects. These Think Tanks aimed at fostering collaboration among different EU-funded MSP- and biodiversity related projects and developing key recommendations for a better integration of biodiversity into MSP. One of the MSP4BIO project's objectives is to strengthen collaboration with projects and initiatives to share scientific and technical outcomes developed by each, enabling the communication of recommendations and results to policymakers in a more concise way and to scrutinize them against policy coherence criteria. These meetings represented an effective way to coordinate among the different projects and to engage with policy stakeholders (Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE), Directorate-General for Environment (DG Environment)), to maximise an effective engagement process. The added value of these Think Tanks also lies in the pooling of results and the analysis of synergies and complementarities between

the various tools and outcomes developed by the different projects. This allowed for an overview of actions carried out at various scales, facilitated the exchange of experiences and valuable practices across different contexts, and leaded to the gathering specific solutions and recommendations for addressing MSP-related issues. A total of 10 projects participated in the Think Tank meetings, where representatives had the opportunity to provide information about their key contents (Table1).

Table 1 Overview of key project components provided by Think Tank participants.

Project	***Key words***	***Policy focus***	***Scale***	***Case studies***
MSP4BIO	MSP MPAs Stakeholder engagement Communities of Practice Co-development and validation	Achieving the European Green Deal (EGD) targets for integrating MPAs in MSP processes Support implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Focus on biodiversity policy coherence	EU sea basins National Transboundary Regional	Six test sites and 1-2 planning solution per sea basin
MPA Europe	MPA Network Europe Blue carbon Biodiversity Smart-adaptive MSP	MSPs to consider MPAs within a changing climate context EGD Biodiversity Strategy and post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework	EU National and regional authorities-decision makers	1 case study per sea basin 3 case studies to be agreed with stakeholders No pilots
eMSP NBSR	MSP Sustainability Energy Biodiversity	Support coherence among MSP plans Cross Learning EGD and impact of climate change	North Sea and Baltic Sea	1-2 case study per learning strand
REGINA MSP	Stakeholder engagement	Innovations in the role of Regions in MSP Contribution of MSP to the EGD progress in MSP at regional and local levels Positive interaction between MSP and the European Cohesion Policy	EU Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea basins	9 case studies
BLUE4ALL	MPA networks Resilient and Efficient MPAs Blueprint platform	Restore EU oceans and waters	EU	25 sites across Mediterranean Sea, Baltic Sea & North-East Atlantic regions
REMAP	MSP Monitoring & Review Data Tools Models	Provide European Union Member States (EU MS) with innovative technical framework for the support	EU	Local Cross-border Sea basin

	Data sharing	of the European MSP process Policy Briefs Co-development of tools with stakeholders		
MSP-GREEN	MSP EGD	Role of MSP plans as enablers of EGD Role of other policies	EU National EU sea basins	New actions across the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea
MARINE PLAN	EB-MSP conservation Ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSA) Stakeholder engagement	Integrate marine conservation into MSP processes in European Sea basins	EU	8 case studies (MSP planning sites)
CROSSGOV	Policy coherence Cross-compliance Biodiversity Climate change Zero pollution	Role of policy coherence to facilitate cross-compliance Biodiversity-related policies, sectoral policies, cross-cutting policies and their implementation	EU Regional seas National Sub-National	8 case studies
BLUECONNECT	Marine conservation Marine restoration Systematic approach MPAs Inclusive approach	Informing on the implementation of EU and international policies Contributing to achieving EU environmental targets (EGD, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, Restoration Law, MSFD, Habitat and Birds Directives)	EU EU sea basins National Local	12 Demonstration sites

Four Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks were organised within the MSP4BIO project:

Table 2 Summary of the Four Science-Policy-Dialogue Think Tanks.

Think Tank	***Date***	***Location***	***Participants***
1st	May 3, 2023	Online	34
2nd	December 5, 2023	Online	20
3rd	October 24, 2024	Marseille, France	26
4th	May 27, 2025	Online	17
Total			97

The Think Tanks were structured as a progressive series of dialogues aimed at fostering the collaboration and knowledge exchange between projects, with a particular focus on

policy alignment and biodiversity mainstreaming. The main objectives of the Think Tanks were:

- **1st Think Tank:** To initiate a collaborative framework among EU-funded projects and initiatives related to MSP and marine biodiversity conservation issues. The objective was to foster a shared understanding of the challenges associated with integrating biodiversity priorities into MSP frameworks. This meeting aimed at laying the groundwork for collaboration and the development of synergies among projects addressing similar policy areas, stakeholders, and thematic concerns.
- **2nd Think Tank:** To strengthen the collaboration established during the first meeting and to engage more directly with policy stakeholders (DG MARE and DG Environment). The focus was placed on identifying key barriers and enablers for the effective integration of biodiversity considerations into MSP processes.
- **3rd Think Tank:** To identify concrete opportunities for policy coherence through the tools and outcomes developed by the projects. This session also aimed to highlight valuable practices and gather feedback on the draft policy solutions compiled in Deliverable D6.2.
- **4th Think Tank:** To collect structured feedback on the tools and outcomes produced by the projects, identify key gaps in mainstreaming biodiversity into MSP, and engage project partners in the co-development of a joint Policy Brief. The overall objective aimed at consolidating inter-project collaboration to produce a common set of policy recommendations supporting the integration of biodiversity into MSP processes.

Main results of the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks

The four Think Tank meetings brought together project representatives, policy makers and experts to explore different frameworks and approaches in MSP processes. These meetings demonstrated the alignment of current EU-funded projects towards EU biodiversity objectives and MSP and confirmed that many initiatives share common goals and policy instruments. This series of meetings has created a solid groundwork for coordinated actions and collaboration, moving from identifying shared targets and key focuses, to formulating concrete recommendations and shared outcomes (e.g., Joint Policy Brief on policy recommendations). It also allowed to identify some key gaps and challenges in the current MSP landscape – such as fragmented governance, lack of inclusive stakeholder engagement or limited long-term vision in planning – and in current EU projects such as NESBp, MEDIGREEN, BLUE4ALL, BLUE CONNECT etc– such as restoration and climate change-related issues.

All Think Tanks summary reports are available in Annex 1.

Table 3 below summarizes the main results of the Think Tanks.

Table 3 Overview of the main results of the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks.

Think Tank	*Main results*
1st Think Tank	Emphasized the value of project collaboration and identified key opportunities for developing shared tools to support Ecosystem-based approach (EBA) in MSP and for improving policy coherence. Identified the main policies targeted by the projects, including MSFD, MSPD, EU Biodiversity Strategy and EU Restoration Law among the most relevant. Set the groundwork for an initial mapping of the projects main tools and outcomes aiming at fostering policy coherence and biodiversity mainstreaming.
2nd Think Tank	Explored policy opportunities and barriers towards policy coherence with a particular focus on MSFD/MSPD integration, and determined next steps for collaborative efforts, including the development of guidance for integrating MSFD thresholds into MSP revisions, and enhancing the transfer of knowledge, data and resources among stakeholders.
3rd Think Tank	Based on the survey results and interactive exercises, the 3rd Think Tank highlighted the need of translating policy recommendations into practice. Some key elements were underlined such as the need for tailored recommendations, improved data accessibility and fostered transparent and adaptive planning. Feedback on the policy solutions (Deliverable 6.2) was gathered and insights on how projects could contribute to the policy solutions were provided.
4th Think Tank	Consolidated the collaboration among projects and initiated a joint effort to develop a common Policy Brief on shared policy recommendations for enhancing the integration of biodiversity into MSP. Informed the classification and clustering of project's main tools and outcomes and identified key thematic gaps within the current landscape of projects, providing valuable insight to inform the development of future projects and help guide emerging research priorities.

1. Classifying existing tools and outcomes for a better integration of biodiversity into MSP

1.1. Context

During the Think Tank meetings, one of the key areas of focus was to address the question: **"How to improve the implementation of the MSP Directive to better integrate biodiversity protection?"**. To support this, the Think Tanks compiled and analysed information on the activities and outcomes of participating EU-supported MSP projects (Table 1). Although these projects align on broad themes such as Ecosystem-based Approach (EBA), biodiversity protection and policy coherence, they employ a broad spectrum of methodologies and focus on diverse aspects of MSP. This diversity fosters complementarity among initiatives and encourages collaboration, which, in an

integrated manner, can provide a comprehensive and diverse set of resources to better incorporate biodiversity into MSP processes. This diversity demonstrates the wide scope of issues being tackled in relation to MSP and biodiversity, and the value of consolidating these resources in a structured and visual manner to facilitate access and collaboration.
To better understand and map this rich and varied landscape of tools and outcomes, we applied Social Network Analysis (SNA). SNA is a qualitative methodological approach aiming at understanding and visualizing the relations between entities – such as social groups, organizations, or conceptual frameworks – through graph-based modelling. While initially developed to analyse social relationships, SNA is increasingly used for analysing environmental governance systems (Schwenke & Holzkämper, 2021). In this context, we used SNA to map the different tools and outcomes identified by project representatives during the Think Tank meetings. This analytical exercise served three main purposes: i) to generate a comprehensive visual representation grouping the key tools and outcomes developed by the projects; ii) to identify the relationships, thematic synergies and areas of convergence among these elements; and iii) to provide an accessible tool for policymakers and other relevant stakeholders, enabling direct access to the documented tools and outcomes.
Table 4 summarizes the **56 project's results** identified for this classification, including **18 operative tools** (highlighted in grey) and **38 outcomes** from **10 different projects**, encompassing operative tools, policy briefs, decision-support systems, technical guidance, and monitoring frameworks, among others. The tools and outcomes presented here were identified based on feedback gathered during the four Think Tank meetings, and through a series of bilateral discussions with representatives from the participating projects. It is important to highlight that this does not represent an exhaustive list of all tools and outcomes that were produced by the projects. Instead, it reflects a selection of existing and expected deliverables that were identified by participants as particularly relevant to the Think Tank's focus on biodiversity integration and policy coherence. At the same time, this list brings together the tools and outcomes that were already available at the time of writing this report. Available tools and outcomes can be directly accessed by clicking in its id in Table 4.

This classification was presented during the project's fourth Think Tank meeting, with the objective of validating the initial results and engaging in a collective discussion with representatives from the participating projects. The meeting provided an opportunity to identify additional tools and outcomes that had not been captured during earlier Think Tank sessions or incorporated into the initial classification (see section 1.4). It also highlighted key challenges – most notably, the inherent complexity of aggregating and representing this broad and heterogeneous set of information within a single visualization, without compromising clarity or usability. These discussions underscored the need for iterative refinement and stakeholder input to ensure the coherence, completeness, and accessibility of the network representation.

Table 4 Identified tools and outcomes used for the classification.

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Project	*Tool/Outcome id*	*Tool/Outcome description*
MSP4BIO	ESE Framework and three modules listed below	Ecological and Socio-Economic Framework: online platform providing step-by-step guidance for enhancing protection and restoration of marine ecosystems and biodiversity and integration with MSP.
	ESE 1 – Ecological Toolkit	Ecological toolkit for MPAs prioritization and networking.
	ESE 1 – ABC Planner	DST for prioritisation of areas and optimisation of area-based conservation measures.
	ESE 2 – Socio-economic and governance criteria	Criteria for the representation of the social and economic dimensions of MPAs.
	ESE 3 – Trade-off analysis	Participatory development of integrated trade-off scenarios and strategic and spatial measures for blue economy sectors.
	Policy solutions	Policy solutions for biodiversity conservation in marine and maritime policies
	Policy coherence analysis	State of the art on key barriers and levers for policy coherence.
	Knowledge database	MSP4BIO database and overview of the available datasets and platforms relevant for planning.
MPA Europe	Ecosystems classifications	Marine ecosystems classifications for surface and near seabed waters of Europe.
	Mapping of biogenic habitat distribution	Mappings and models of biogenic habitat distribution in Europe under different climate scenarios.
	Stakeholders case studies	Regional case studies synthetizing stakeholders' views.
	Map platform	Online map platform for species and habitat distribution.
eMSP NBSR	EBA Gap analysis	Gap analysis for international framework application of Ecosystem-based approach in MSP.
	Integrated ocean governance PB	Policy Brief on Addressing the fragmentation of Ocean Governance across borders.
	Sustainable blue economy PB	Policy Brief Towards a sustainable blue economy.
	MSP Data sharing PB	Policy Brief on Strengthening data sharing for informed decision-making in MSP.
	Climate-smart PB	Policy Brief on Climate-smart MSP.
MSP-GREEN	EGD Components of EU MSP Plans	Analysis of the Green Deal components of EU MSP Plans.
	EGD Valuable practices	Compilation of valuable practices for boosting the Green Deal through MSP.
	EGD in MSP Recommendations	Recommendations on making MSP in the EU an enabler of the Green Deal.
BLUE4ALL	MPA practitioners recommendations	Recommendations for MPA practitioners on implementation and management of MPAs – Review of SE framework and methodologies.
	Guidance on regulatory expectations	Report on the available frameworks and tools building constituency and expectations management.
	Blueprint platform	Blueprint platform for MPA practitioners to have access to guidance, recommendations and tools to achieve their objectives.
MARINE PLAN EU	EB-MSP Framework and analysis	Operational Ecosystem-Based MSP framework and guidance for practical implementation.
	Analysis of EBSA metrics	Analysis of Ecologically or Biologically Significant marine areas metrics.
	EB-MSP scenarios	Synthesis of Ecosystem-based MSP scenarios and identification of key action points.
CROSSGOV	SPS interfaces methodology	Methodology to analyse Science-Policy-Society Interfaces and their impact on policy coherence.

	Policy coherence assessment	Analysis of the horizontal coherence in EU law and policy.
	Vertical policy coherence analysis	Analysis of the vertical coherence between national policies and EU frameworks.
	Marine policy roadmaps	Sectoral roadmaps to improve marine policy coherence in the EU.
	Policy coherence PB	Policy Brief on Coherence in Policy landscapes and Design.
	Handbook on policy coherence	Handbook for policy coherence assessments.
	SPS Blueprint	Blueprint to enhance Science-Policy-Society interfaces.
REGINA MSP	Trainer's Manual	Guidance for trainers to perform a more effective REGINA-MSP capacity building process for local and regional staff.
	Ocean Literacy regional plan	MSP-oriented Ocean Literacy regional plan.
	Regional actions for MSP	Identification of new-tailored actions to enhance the contribution of local and regional levels to MSP initiatives.
	Regionally-driven MSP in the EU - PP	Policy Paper on Strengthening EU MSP towards an integrated and regionally driven future.
	Final recommendations PB	Final Policy Brief on the project's results for understanding and strengthening the role of regions in national MSP.
	Compendium of regional experiences	Collection of practices about diverse approaches to MSP adopted by various regions in Europe.
	Stakeholders leaflet	A roadmap for the emerge of a cross-regional Community of Practices (CoP).
	Geoportals inventory	Online inventory of the main regional geoportals within the frame of the project
REMAP	REMAP toolkit and 10 modules below	Compilation of practical modules for interoperability and support of European MSP processes.
	ESA Software	Ecosystem Services Assessment conceptual module/Software tool for implementing Ecosystem Services assessments.
	CIA Module – SPIA Mapping	Cumulative Impacts Assessment conceptual module/ for enhancing the process of SPIA by automating the production of ecosystem components and pressures.
	MSP-MSFD Software	MSP and MSFD relationships conceptual module/Software tool for identifying relationships and statistics between MSFD and MSP datasets.
	MSP-Gov tool	Governance conceptual module/tool for assessing the performance of the governance systems in supporting the implementation of MSP plans.
	MSP-input data Software	MSP input data conceptual module/ Exploratory analysis on data (EDA) Software tool for assessing MSP data collections.
	MSP-output data Software	MSP output data conceptual module/ EDA Software tool for exploring multi-use patterns and making comparative analysis.
	MSP-cons Software	Marine conservation and maritime sectors (in) compatibility conceptual module/Software tool for analysing the (in) compatibility of operative/planned maritime sectors with MPAs.
	NaviSafe Software	Navigation safety conceptual module/Software tool for implementing navigation safety assessments.
	SE-web tool	Socio-economic analytical module/Web tool for quantifying socioeconomic sectors in MSP.
	Land-Sea tool	Web tool for land-sea interactions.
BLUECONNECT	MPA Guidelines	Guidelines for MPAs to access the funds.
	Governance toolbox	Governance toolbox for conservation and restoration measures.
	Stakeholder toolkit	Stakeholder toolkit for active management and long-term ownership.
	Blueprint	Conservation planning and management Blueprint.

Distinction between tools and outcomes

In the framework of this work, a clear distinction has been made between **tools** and **outcomes** derived from the participating projects. **Tools** have been considered as operational and technical instruments designed to support MSP processes in a practical and directly usable manner for final users (Policymakers, Marine Protected Area (MPA) managers, decision-making bodies, etc.). These tools can include online interactive platforms or databases, online softwares, blueprints or toolkits that facilitate spatial analysis (e.g., for priority areas identification), scenario building (e.g., for climate-change related effects) or stakeholder engagement and capacity building. On the other hand, **outcomes** are considered in this report as project's main deliverables and results, intended to be accessible to a broad range of stakeholders. Outcomes can include technical reports, recommendations and guidelines, compilation of data, case studies conclusions (e.g., good practices, shared actions, among others) and thematic assessments that contribute to advancing MSP knowledge and inform decision-making. While these outcomes provide feedback from project's results and valuable insights on different MSP-related topics, they do not necessarily have an immediate operational function nor offer direct practical solutions. Some outcomes might contribute to the development of concrete tools while others may remain as conceptual or strategic guidance documents for MSP.

1.2. Description of the main tools and outcomes

The wide array of tools and outcomes developed across MSP and MPA-related projects reflects both the diversity and complementarity of ongoing efforts in the maritime planning and conservation landscape. This collective work underscores the strong commitment of EU MS to support and contribute to the achievement of EU biodiversity objectives, by producing concrete and valuable outputs that directly serve these goals. The development of these resources demonstrates meaningful progress toward addressing key gaps - particularly in areas such as data availability and accessibility, policy coherence, and the alignment of relevant frameworks, including the MSFD, MSPD, Water Framework Directive (WFD),), the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Habitats and Birds Directives, or the Nature Restoration Law. While many of these tools and outcomes respond to shared challenges, they also display a high level of diversity in scope and format, ranging from fully operational decision-support systems to methodological guidance and policy briefs. Collectively, they provide a practical set of resources and guidances for a wide range of stakeholders involved in MSP and biodiversity conservation and contribute to the ongoing mainstreaming of EBA across EU marine policies.

Each project's specific focus is reflected in the tools and outcomes it develops, as well as in the thematic areas it addresses. Some of them have a strong focus on acquiring ecological data and analysing EBAs to ensure that biodiversity issues are integrated at a strategic level. For instance, MARINE PLAN EU's EB-MSP framework and analysis,

along with the synthesis of EB-MSP scenarios, provide concrete methodologies for incorporating ecological data into spatial planning and provide a long-term vision. Additionally, MPA Europe marine ecosystem classification and mapping of biogenic habitat distribution serve as valuable data sources for integrating ecological information and habitat mapping into planning processes. On a more operational level, REMAP's modules on Cumulative Impact Assessments (CIA) and ecosystem services evaluation provide practical tools to assess environmental pressures and support decision-making. As highlighted during the Think Tank meetings, the lack of ecological data and habitat mapping remains a significant challenge, and the methodologies and tools developed by these projects enhance existing datasets contributing to a better understanding of marine ecosystems.

Furthermore, several tools and outcomes focus on integrating socio-economic dimensions into MSP processes, which is essential for balancing conservation efforts with sustainable blue economy activities. For instance, MSP4BIO's socio-economic and governance criteria (ESE2) define key governance and economic criteria that can be adapted to specific planning sectors, such as MPAs. Additionally, the trade-off analysis (ESE3) provides clear guidelines on balancing competing interests when designing MPAs, including scenario-based evaluations of management measure's impacts on both human activities and marine ecosystems. Other projects, such as REMAP, have also developed practical tools to address socio-economic challenges in planning, including a socio-economic web tool for quantifying the impacts of maritime economic sectors during spatial planning decisions.

Stakeholder engagement and socio-economic approaches emerge as other key areas of focus for some projects, including outputs such as REGINA-MSP's Trainer's manual and Ocean Literacy regional plan, both of which emphasize capacity building and knowledge transfer at the regional scale. BLUECONNECT's guidelines for building MPAs business and financing plans and Toolkit for stakeholder effective engagement will also contribute to strengthening the socio-economic dimension of planning processes and foster stakeholder long-term engagement.

Policy coherence, governance frameworks, and strategic integration at different scales also appear as central topics in many of the tools and outcomes produced by these projects. Through Policy Briefs, recommendations, and methodologies, these initiatives contribute to better aligning governance structures and policies with biodiversity objectives in MSP. For instance, MSP4BIO's policy coherence analysis and CROSSGOV's policy coherence and science-policy-society (SPS) outcomes offer detailed methodologies for harmonizing policies across different governance levels (EU, national, and local). Developing tools for aligning key policies such as MSPD, MSFD, and European Green Deal (EGD) has been a major focus of various project outcomes, aiming at bridging existing gaps and identify needs for coherent regulatory and strategic planning. For instance, MSP-GREEN's EGD components of EU MSP plans provide a detailed nomenclature linking EGD objectives to national planning documents, offering insights on how to integrate these objectives into MSP processes and replicable to other policy frameworks. Additionally, some tools contribute by leveraging lessons learned from case studies and providing valuable practices and concrete examples that could

be replicated in different spatial areas. For instance, MSP-GREEN's EGD best practices in MSP and REGINA-MSP's regional actions for MSP showcase regional approaches to integrating blue economy sectors into planning processes.

Other tools and outcomes can be considered as being more cross-cutting, focusing on data sharing and decision-support for MSP integration. These tools compile relevant data to facilitate MSP implementation and support decision-making for stakeholders such as MPA managers and planners. They include practical, operational tools such as REMAP's toolkit, which offers various web-based and software solutions tailored for end-users, or MSP4BIO's ABC planner, designed to prioritize areas and optimize area-based conservation measures. BLUE4ALL's Blueprint for MPAs also contributes by providing a set of tools and recommendations specifically aimed at MPA practitioners.

1.3. Project's tools and outcomes classification and mapping

1.3.1. Methodology

Categorization of the tools and outcomes

The 56 tools and outcomes from different projects have been categorized according to several factors: i) their **nature**, whether they are considered as operative tools or project outcomes; ii) their **function**, whether they are considered as operative tools aiming for a practical use for end users; data-driven outcomes representing a broad category aiming at acquiring and sharing data on different thematics; or policy-focused outcomes; and iii) their main focus **topic** – Conservation and EBA; Governance, Policy and Regional experiences; Socio-economic aspects and stakeholder engagement; MSP data integration and Capacity-building (see Table 5).

This classification was carried out based on i) available existing data from project's deliverables and outcomes; ii) project's representatives feedback during the Think Tank meetings and iii) bilateral meetings with project's representatives and coordinators. While this categorization provides a structured approach focused on key areas of interest in the related projects, it is important to acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of it and that alternative classifications methods could have been equally valid. Although the current approach reflects on the main topics addressed in the framework of MSP4BIO and the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks, a more harmonized and collaborative effort across all relevant projects would result in a more robust and representative classification.

Some of these categories identified in this classification bring together cross-cutting topics that have been grouped based on the shared purpose and focus of the tools and outcomes. The "Governance, Policy and Regional Experiences" category reflects on the interconnection between these dimensions for the implementation of MSP and MPA-related objectives. It includes tools and outcomes that support policy alignment, as well as outputs aiming at informing decision-making processes across multiple governance

level and spatial scales. The “Socio-economic aspects and Stakeholder Engagement” category captures the human dimension of MSP, including tools and outcomes to address stakeholder involvement, sectoral trade-offs and inclusive planning processes. The “Conservation and EBA” category reflects on the ecological perspective and evidence-based approach, encompassing outputs focusing on ecological data acquisition and ecosystem-based management. In contrast, the three remaining categories address either more specific or distinct thematic areas and were not grouped together. “Capacity-building” category is considered to have a more targeted scope, focusing knowledge transfer and exchange. On the other hand, “MSP Data sharing” category is composed by a broader and more technical set of tools and outcomes, focusing on data compilation and the development of decision-support systems to inform evidence-based MSP.

Table 5 Factors for the classification of the tools and outcomes.

Nature	Tool	
	Outcome	
Function	Operative tool	
	Data-driven	
	Policy-focused	
Topic	Conservation / EBA	Tools and/or outcomes that contribute to understanding and protecting marine ecosystems by addressing biodiversity, habitat distribution, EBA and/or ecological assessments. Tools and/or outcomes share focus on maintaining ecological integrity and supporting sustainable MSP.
	Governance / Policy / Regional experiences	Tools and/or outcomes that focus on policy alignment and governance across different levels (EU, national/regional, local), developing policy recommendations and providing lessons learned from regional case studies on MSP practices.
	Socio-economic aspects / Stakeholder engagement	Tools and/or outcomes that focus on socioeconomic aspects and/or aim to enhance stakeholder engagement across different levels.
	MSP Data Integration	Tools and/or outcomes that focus on MSP-related topics data acquisition and integration, including data management, methodologies, scenario analysis and/or decision-support systems.
	Capacity-building	Tools and/or outcomes that contribute to transferring knowledge and developing capacity building across different sectors and scales.

Clusterisation of the tools and outcomes

The graph in Figure 3 illustrates the key relationships and connections between the tools and outcomes produced by the participating projects. As pointed above it was developed using SNA to understand and visualize the relations (referred to as "links") among the different entities (referred to as "nodes"). In this representation, nodes correspond to the

tools and outcomes developed by the projects, while links represent the existing relationships between them. This exercise was conducted to provide a clearer overview of complementarities and synergies among the tools and outcomes, as well as to identify potential gaps and needs in the deliverables produced by the different projects.

Links Between Nodes

The edges in the graph represent the links and connections between the tools and outcomes of the different projects. Links were classified based on three key criteria (refer to Table 5 above), which determine their significance and thickness in the visualization:

- The first criterion considers whether the nodes are sub-tools from other tools or outcomes (e.g., MSP4BIO's ESE Framework including ESE1, ESE2 and ESE3). Links fulfilling this criterion were assigned a **weight of 1.**
- The second criterion considers whether the nodes share the same function. Links fulfilling this criterion were assigned a **weight of 2**.
- The third criterion assesses whether the nodes address the same thematic topic. Links meeting this criterion were assigned a **weight of 3**.

The weight assigned to the links was determined by considering the relative importance of the factors to establish the relationships between the nodes. In this case, tools and outcomes addressing the same topic have been considered more significant than other factors for two main reasons: i) because it directly relates to the core purpose and focus of the outputs and ii) because it provides a stronger indicator of the commonalities and potential synergies across projects. The links are undirected, indicating that the relationships between the tools and outcomes are bidirectional.

Node Distance: Spatialization

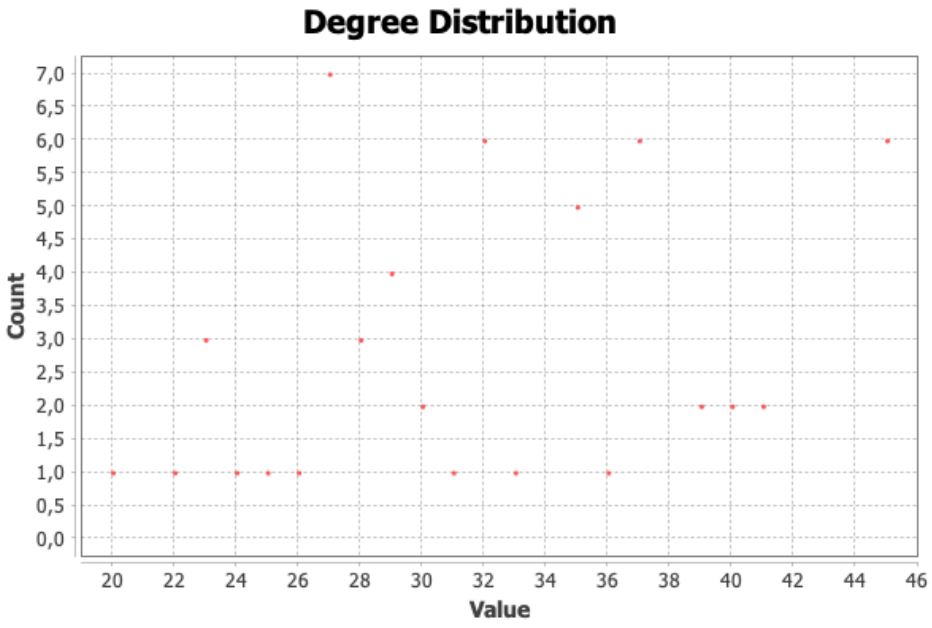
The spatial distribution of nodes in the graph reflects the affinities among the various tools and outcomes. This arrangement was generated using a spatialization algorithm to process the data named "Force-Atlas" algorithm. Force-based algorithms, such as Force-Atlas, operate on a principle of attraction and repulsion between nodes (Boulouard et al., 2017; Jacomy et al., 2014) (see Figure 1). Nodes repel each other like magnets, while the links act as springs connecting them. In this graphical representation, clusters of tools and outcomes sharing a high number of similar links are more closely positioned, while those with more transversal or distinct characteristics are positioned further apart.

Figure 1 Illustration of the functioning of Force-based algorithms.

Nodes Size: Degree Centrality

The size of the nodes in the graph represents the relative importance of each tool and outcome within the visualization. Node size was determined based on degree centrality, which calculates the total number of incoming and outgoing links for each node (Figure 2). This approach allows for an assessment of the average number of connections per node (link/node ratio). In this graph, node size is proportional to the number of relationships a given tool or outcome maintains. Nodes with a higher number of links have a greater degree of centrality and thus appear larger in the graph.

Figure 2 Degree distribution.



Nodes colour and proportion

The colour of each node corresponds to its assigned topic category, with a distinct colour used for each of the five topics classification. This visual distinction facilitates the identification of thematic groupings across the network. Additionally, the relative proportion of each category within the graph is indicated (see Table 6), with percentages calculated based on the number of tools and outcomes assigned to each topic relative to the total number of nodes. This provides a clearer visual representation of the thematic distribution and the relative weight of each category among all project's outputs.

Table 6 Representativity of different categories in the graph.

Topic	***n***	***Proportion (%)***

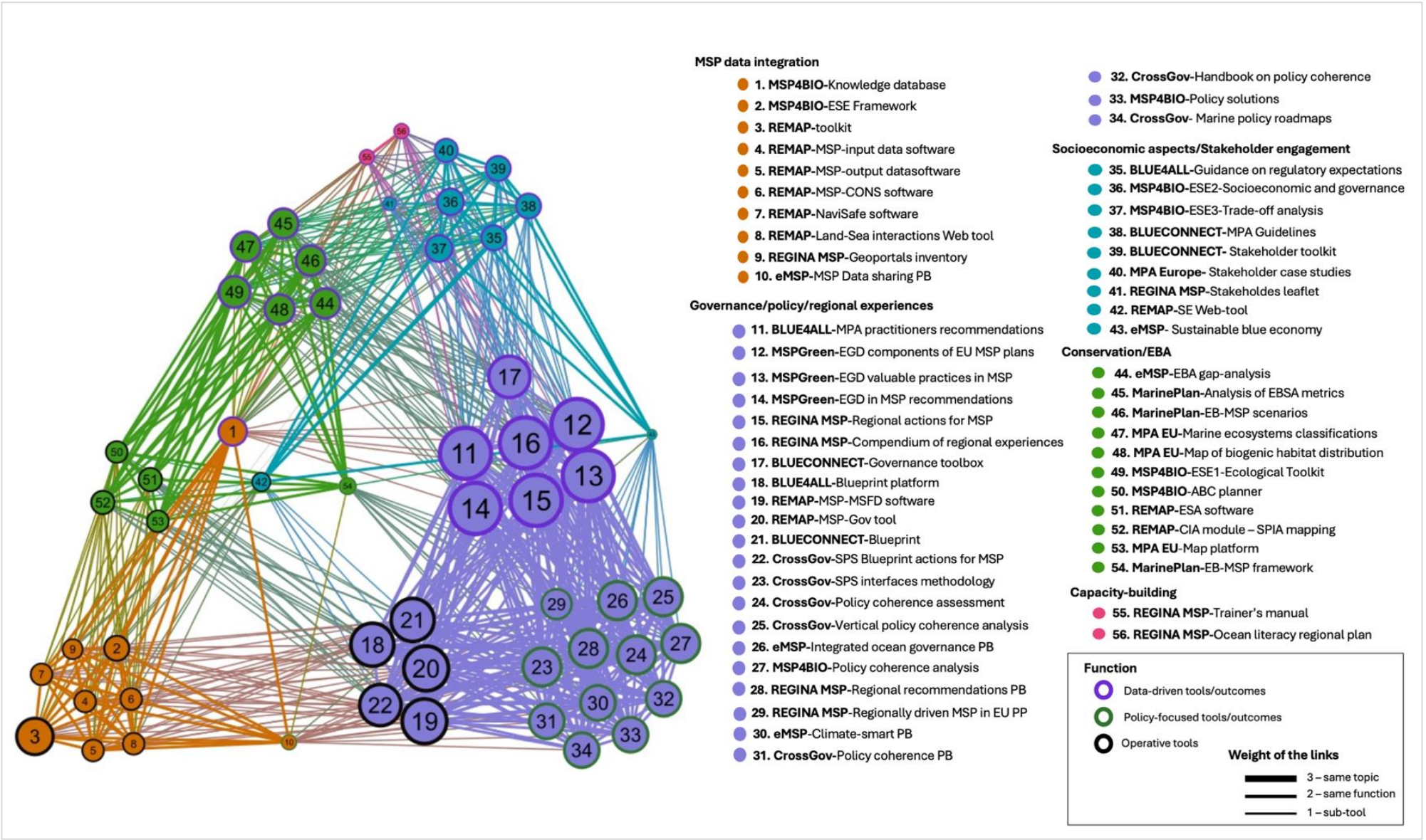
Governance / Policy / Regional experiences	24	42,86
Conservation / EBA	11	19,64
MSP Data integration	10	17,86
Socioeconomic aspects / Stakeholder engagement	9	16,07
Capacity-building	2	3,57
TOTAL	56	100

1.3.2. Mapping of the project's main tools and outcomes

Figure 3 provides a graphical visualisation of the main tools and outcomes identified through MSP4BIO's Think Tanks and exchanges with project's representatives. For clarity and visual readability, each tool has been assigned a numerical label corresponding to the classification list on the right side of the figure. The function of each tool or outcome is indicated using a colour code, as explained in the legend. Additionally, the thickness of the connecting lines reflects the relative weight, as described in Section 2.3.1.

This project has received funding from the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Figure 3 Clusterisation of the project's main tools and outcomes through Social Network Analysis



The mapping provides a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of resources developed within EU-funded initiatives to inform and support MSP and marine conservation. Among the 56 tools and outcomes represented, distinct clusters emerge, highlighting a thematic or functional similarity and the presence of cross-cutting elements. This graphic representation also helps revealing potential synergies and complementarities between different projects and resources, while simultaneously exposing certain disconnected areas where specific tools and outcomes appear isolated from the broader network.

In an initial analysis of the classification of tools and outcomes into thematic categories, we observe some clear focuses within certain projects, which demonstrates the diversity of priorities and approaches adopted across the different initiatives. While the category "Socio-economic aspects and Stakeholder engagement" includes tools and outcomes originating from a wide range of projects – highlighting its transversal relevance – the "MSP Data Integration" category is primarily led by the REMAP project. This is consistent with REMAP's objective to develop data infrastructures and analytical tools aimed at enhancing the use and interpretation of spatial data. MSP4BIO is also represented in this category, notably through its ESE Framework, which incorporates the ABC Planner tool – a spatial prioritisation tool designed to support decision-making in planning processes – and a comprehensive database. The "Governance, Policy and Regional Experiences" category is intentionally broad, as it reflects the interconnections between these three dimensions within MSP processes. Within this category, the REGINA MSP project plays a leading role in the "regional experiences" dimension, particularly through the provision of recommendations and guidance to support the implementation of MSP at regional scales. In parallel, the CROSSGOV project takes the lead on policy-related aspects, which align with its core objective of enhancing policy coherence and improving alignment across EU directives. As illustrated in the graph, this is a broad and integrative category, encompassing key deliverables from numerous projects. The "Conservation and EBA" category is primarily led by MPA Europe and MARINE PLAN projects, both of which are strongly focused on marine protected areas, ecological considerations, and EBA. This category appears spatially close to the "Governance, Policy and Regional experiences" category, highlighting the fact that many of REMAP's operative tools – classified under "MSP Data Integration" - are mainly DSTs intended for policy and decision-makers, thus creating natural thematic linkages with governance-related elements. Furthermore, due to the limited number of identified outputs related to capacity-building, this category includes tools only from the REGINA MSP project, suggesting a potential thematic gap in the current landscape of analysed EU-funded MSP projects with respect to this topic. However, it is once again important to emphasise that the figure does not reflect an exhaustive inventory of all tools and outcomes produced by the projects.
The spatial proximity between categories in the graph also provides insights into the conceptual closeness of certain topics. For instance, the "Socio-economic Aspects and Stakeholder Engagement" and "Conservation and EBA" categories are among the most spatially close, underscoring the strong interdependence between human activities and environmental protection in integrated MSP approaches. Similarly, the "Governance,

Policy and Regional experiences" and "MSP Data Integration" categories are located near each other, likely suggesting that a significant number of DSTs developed under the REMAP project can serve for governance and planning purposes. Finally, the "Capacity-building" category is positioned near tools and outcomes addressing more socially oriented topics, which is consistent with its aim to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and competencies of stakeholders and end users to support more inclusive and informed decision-making processes.

By exploring the tools and outcomes in the graph, we can also identify clear topic-based clusters, along with cross-cutting elements across multiple categories. As previously developed, SNA enables the spatial positioning of the nodes based on the number of shared links – either by topic or function. While most of the identified categories are spatially clustered, the graph also highlights the presence of specific tools or outcomes centrally positioned between different thematic areas or separated from their own cluster. From a technical perspective, these versatile tools share a functional or thematic affinity. Conceptually, their spatial position may also suggest a broader functionality highlighting their potential to act as bridges between different approaches. One such example is MARINE PLAN's EB-MSP Framework (n.54 in the graph), which is positioned close to the "Governance, Policy and Regional experiences" category. This is consistent with its role as a strategic framework and guidance document for incorporating EB principles into MSP processes. Similarly, REMAP's Socioeconomic Web tool (n.42 in the graph) appears spatially distant from its main cluster, and instead located near conservation, EBAs and data-related tools and outcomes. While its primary focus is related to socioeconomic dimensions, this operative tool could offer valuable insights for EB management by evaluating the human impacts of planning measures and enabling the analysis of trade-offs across economic sectors. When used together with ecological tools – such as for trade-off or cumulative impacts assessments – it can provide a significant added value by fostering integrated and evidence-based resources.

When looking at the function of the tools, the graph offers a clearer understanding of the thematic areas addressed by operational tools across the projects. This exercise identified 18 operational tools in total. Among these, 9 are dedicated to MSP data integration, with the majority developed under the REMAP project's toolkit and MSP4BIO's ESE Framework. These tools are designed to support the collection, structuring, and use of spatial and environmental data to inform planning. Four operative tools address marine conservation and EBAs, while three have a main focus on policy-related matters. Only one operational tool focuses specifically on socioeconomic aspects. This distribution highlights the strong emphasis placed on data and ecological considerations in current resources development, while also pointing to a relative underrepresentation of tools that operationalise socioeconomic dimensions or policy implementation.

During MSP4BIO's final conference, held in Venice from 2 to 4 July 2025, a dedicated breakout session was organised to exchange and discuss this classification of tools and outcomes. The session provided an opportunity to collect valuable and targeted feedback

from project representatives, not only regarding the proposed classification system itself, but also on the overarching objectives and potential applications of the mapping exercise. Several key insights were integrated into the final version of the mapping, including the additional tools and outcomes and refinements to the categorisation scheme. Participants also provided a wide range of recommendations for further improving the classification beyond the project's lifetime, particularly with a view of enhancing its relevance, usability, and alignment with existing initiatives.

Among the most pertinent points raised was the potential synergy between this mapping and the BLUE4ALL Blueprint platform, which has similarly developed a structured classification of DSTs based on prioritisation criteria. Participants underscored the importance of exploring the integration or cross-referencing of both initiatives, with a view to advancing a consolidated, user-oriented resource that facilitates the identification and uptake of relevant tools. Another recurring recommendation was the need to design the classification framework with a strong focus on end-user needs and profiles, including spatial planners, policymakers, MPA managers, and other practitioners. Participants highlighted the importance of further targeting the classification according to the *primary function and purpose* of each tool or outcome – whether they are operational, policy-focused, data-driven, communicative, or intended for knowledge exchange, for instance – rather than focusing mainly on the thematic approach. It was suggested that the initial visual presentation of the mapping should prioritise function over topic, to enhance the clarity and relevance of the information for target users. In addition, specific feedback was provided concerning the category "MSP Data Integration", which was deemed too broad and insufficiently precise. It was recommended to revise this category by introducing more refined subcategories, such as those focused on monitoring, assessment, or evaluation, to better reflect the diversity and specificity of tools and their intended applications.

Collectively, this feedback represents a valuable contribution from sister projects and highlights opportunities for continued collaboration and methodological refinement. These suggestions will be further explored during the post-project phase, including through potential joint activities and alignment with complementary initiatives.

Overall, the graph offers a comprehensive overview of the main tools and outcomes developed by the EU projects, mainly focusing on MSP, conservation and MPA-related topics. It is important to reiterate that the mapping through SNA analysis, is based on the node degree to establish the connections, as well as on a subjective exercise of assigning weights to the links between tools. As such, the results must be interpreted with caution and understood as a representation rather than an absolute assessment. Nevertheless, this approach can serve as a useful guide for identifying potential synergies, fostering the integrated use of different tools, and exploring how combinations of tools and outcomes may be effectively applied in real-world planning processes.

1.4. Other relevant tools and outcomes

During the fourth Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank held on May 27th 2025, one of the main objectives was to validate and collect feedback on the initial classification and clustering of project's tools and outcomes. Representatives from eight different projects

– MSP4BIO, MPA Europe, CROSSGOV, BLUECONNECT, MARINE PLAN, eMSP, as well as the recently launched projects MEDIGREEN and NESBp – participated in the meeting and contributed to this validation process. Among the key questions addressed during the session was the identification of additional relevant tools and outcomes that were not included in the initial classification. Based on participants input, a total of **28 tools and outcomes** were identified. Of these, nine were directly incorporated into the updated mapping. The remaining 19 were suggested and categorised by the participants according to the pre-established classification framework. These outputs were not integrated into the final mapping for two main reasons: i) a significant portion consisted of expected deliverables not yet publicly available at the time of writing, and ii) several tools and outcomes, although notably relevant, were not direct outputs of the projects under consideration but originated from other EU programmes or international organisations.

Nonetheless, all tools and outcomes identified by the participants are highly relevant to the themes addressed by the Think Tank process and represent a valuable contribution to the broader ecosystem of knowledge and resources for MSP and conservation. These additional contributions enhance the existing classification and should be recognised as important tools for advancing MSP and conservation objectives. Table 7 provides a summary of the additional tools and outcomes identified during the fourth Think Tank meeting.

Table 7 Overview of additional tools and outcomes identified by projects during the fourth Think Tank meeting.

Project/Initiative	***Topic***	***Outcome description***
UNEP/MAP MSP Platform	Governance, Policy, Regional experiences	Self-assessment checklist for MSP preparation processes.
MSP4BIO		Policy Brief on joint policy recommendations.
IOC-UNESCO		Guide on Climate-Smart MSP (launched at UNOC3).
MEDIGREEN		State of play of sector-related EGD components in MSP plans of EU Med countries.
MEDIGREEN		Assessment frameworks on MSP impacts on EGD objectives regarding maritime economic sectors.
MEDIGREEN		4 technical studies on the role of MSP for sustainable development in the Mediterranean for aquaculture, fisheries, ORE and Nature protection.
MEDIGREEN		4 MED-MSP-CoP Position Papers.
MEDIGREEN		National actions to strenghten EGD components in MSP.
CROSSGOV		Case studies analysis on coherence and cross-compliance of EU Directives at local levels.
CROSSGOV		Case studies analysis on coherence and cross-compliance of sectoral policies at local levels.
CROSSGOV		Policy Briefs on SPS.

MEDIGREEN	MSP Data integration	Recommendations on how to improve data display in the framework of the EGD.
UNEP/MAP-PAP/RAC	Conservation and EBA	Interactive tool for applying EBA in MSP.
UNEP/MAP-PAP/RAC		Interactive tool to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation into MSP.
UNEP/MAP-PAP/RAC		Interactive tool for Land-Sea Interaction and MSP.
IOC-UNESCO		Guide on Biodiversity-inclusive principle (launched at UNOC3).
BLUECONNECT		Framework for definition and prioritization of conservation goals and targets.
BLUE4ALL	Socioeconomic aspects and Stakeholder engagement	Tool for nature conservation justice assessment and deliberation.
MEDIGREEN		Booklet on the non-economic values of MEDIGREEN sectors (aquaculture, fisheries, ORE and Nature protection).
MEDIGREEN	Capacity-building	Guidance on how to communicate EGD-MSP in the Mediterranean.
BLUECONNECT		Ocean Literacy Toolkit

2. Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive integration

One of the central themes explored during the Science-Policy Dialogues concerned the enhancement of policy coherence between MSP and biodiversity-related frameworks. This question was identified as a key challenge by multiple participating projects, which – despite their diversity – shared a common focus on relevant policy instruments, particularly the MSFD and the MSPD**.** Project representatives provided valuable input drawn from their respective experiences, highlighting overlapping policy targets and practical implementation challenges. In parallel, representatives from the EU institutions emphasised the importance of promoting coherence and integration across governance scales, from overarching EU policies down to national strategies and MSP implementation processes. Participants also highlighted the necessity of considering linkages with the broader international policy landscape, as well as with sectoral frameworks such as the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)**,** noting that directives such as the MSFD interact with a wide range of sectoral policies. Achieving alignment across these frameworks is seen as both urgent and necessary to enable ecosystem-based and biodiversity-inclusive MSP. Within the framework of this deliverable and drawing on the insights gathered from Think Tank participants, this chapter presents a synthesis of the main barriers and solutions identified for improving coherence between the MSFD and the MSPD, as well as an example of how the participating projects – through their objectives, tools and outcomes – can contribute to addressing these challenges.

2.1. Introduction

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, 2008/56/EC) and the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive (MSPD, 2014/89/EU) represent two key legislative tools within the EU aiming at ensuring the long-term health of marine and coastal ecosystems and promoting the sustainable use of marine resources. Although both directives are complementary and driven by the shared objective of protecting marine and coastal environments, they each address distinct aspects of marine management and governance.

The MSFD is the main EU legislation for the marine environment. Its main goal is to achieve or preserve Good Environmental Status (GES) of EU waters through 11 key descriptors – ranging from marine biodiversity and eutrophication to underwater noise and marine litter –, in line with the EBA, while ensuring the protection of the marine environment across EU MS. It focuses on the environmental aspect of marine management and governance, emphasizing the "green" dimension by prioritizing biodiversity conservation, the safeguarding and restoring of natural resources, and the overall health of marine ecosystems.

On the other hand, the MSPD adopts a different approach by focusing on the spatial and temporal dimensions of marine governance, dealing with how different marine areas are allocated and used by marine sectors and activities such as fisheries, shipping or renewable energy development. It aims to ensure an effective and sustainable use of space to reduce sectoral conflicts and ensure that maritime activities proceed in a sustainable manner, through the development of maritime spatial plans, thus addressing the "blue" side of marine governance.

While both directives share common objectives, a significant difference lies in their implementation and monitoring. One important characteristic of the MSFD is that it focuses on measurability – incorporating clear descriptors and establishing thresholds, enabling the monitoring of progress and the assessment of the effectiveness of implemented measures. These thresholds enable MS to monitor the effectiveness of their measures and evaluate progress towards achieving GES. Conversely, while the MSPD encourages the rational allocation of space for marine sectors and activities, it does not have a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the planning measures. Unlike the MSFD, the MSPD does not explicitly prescribe nor include specific ecological or environmental indicators to measure the environmental performance of maritime spatial plans. Despite this, the MSPD still considers environmental aspects into spatial planning processes by encouraging MS to integrate ecological criteria in their plans. However, the lack of a clear mechanism for evaluating ecological performance in the MSPD poses a challenge in ensuring that sectoral developments do not conflict with the environmental objectives of the MSFD.

This is where the integration between MSFD and MSPD becomes essential. Both directives are intrinsically connected, as planning measures and decisions made under the MSPD can directly influence the outcomes of the MSFD. For instance, maritime spatial plans that promote the development of offshore renewable energy (ORE) or

maritime infrastructures can have significant effects on the marine environment, potentially undermining the environmental targets of the MSFD. To address both directives in a more integrated manner would help promote synergies between marine conservation and sectoral development. Therefore, achieving an integrated and coherent approach between the two directives is essential to ensure a sustainable use of EU waters and the preservation of marine ecosystems. It is however important to note that there is no legal mandate for EU MS to formally integrate these two directives, even though the European Commission (EC) strongly recommends alignment to improve coherence and effectiveness between the directives[2]. Consequently, the level of integration at national scales between MSFD and MSPD varies across EU MS.

2.2. Key barriers identified for MSFD and MSPD frameworks integration

In the context of enhancing biodiversity integration within EU marine policies and ensuring the effective implementation of existing legislation, it is essential to identify the current barriers and constraints hindering the implementation of the MSPD and the MSFD. Table 8 provides a categorization of these barriers, based on the framework for biodiversity mainstreaming developed in MSP4BIO's Deliverable 6.2. These barriers reflect feedback collected from participants during previous Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank meetings. It is important to note that these barriers do not represent formal conclusions of this report, but rather the insights and perspectives shared by Think Tank participants. This framework outlines four broad categories of barriers: "**Institutional**": refers to stable governance arrangements – such as existing policies, mandates, or responsibilities – that can hinder effective policy implementation; "**Operational/Organizational**": concern the coordination of tasks and responsibilities within or across institutions and stakeholder groups; "**Technical**": relate to the procedures and practices involved in policy development and implementation, including the availability and use of tools, knowledge, and data; and "**Resource-related**": addresses the sufficiency of financial and human resources required to support these processes. Within the framework of this report and based on the feedback collected during the Think Tank meetings, no barriers were identified as feeding directly into this last category. Although the topic remains highly relevant and necessary across all contexts for achieving overall objectives, it was not included in the table due to the absence of directly associated barriers.

Table 8 Key barriers identified during Think Tank meetings for MSPD and MSFD integration.

Category	*MSPD*	*MSFD*
Institutional barriers	• **Operationalization framework**: The MSPD framework aims to operationalize the MSFD to achieve GES, mandating Member States (MS) to incorporate an	• **Directive alignment challenges**: Aligning the criteria of the MSFD with the Birds and Habitats Directives is crucial, yet differences in their approaches

[2] EC- **COM(2013)0133 final:"** The main aim of this proposal is to facilitate the coherent and sustainable implementation of these initiatives through an integrated process or processes."

	Ecosystem Approach (EA)/Ecosystem-Based Approach (EBA) in their MSP plans and to consider protected areas. • **Implementation variability**: The flexibility of the MSP framework leads to variations in its implementation, potentially risking the primary goal of MSP, which is to sustainably manage blue growth. • **Absence of binding targets**: Excluding specific targets included in EIAs and SEAs, the absence of environmental binding targets in the MSPD framework poses a challenge in ensuring effective biodiversity conservation. • **Inclusivity challenges**: No explicit requirement for Member States to include all maritime activities in their MSP plans, which could hinder the comprehensive mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation within the MSP process.	(GES vs. favorable conservation status) make this complicated. • **Marine action plan and biodiversity**: The adoption of the Marine Action Plan to protect and restore marine ecosystems for sustainable and resilient fisheries, and the recommendations for threshold values for seabed integrity, serve as significant levers for biodiversity mainstreaming. This highlights how the institutional framework can either support or obstruct biodiversity mainstreaming.
Operational/ Organizational barriers	• **Interest balancing**: MSP involves balancing various interests, including conservation efforts, which present significant challenges. • **Stakeholder participation gap :** Poor participation of economic actors and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the MSPD expert groups.	• **Stakeholder participation gap**: Poor participation of economic actors and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the MSFD expert groups may have hindered biodiversity protection efforts. • **Ad Hoc expert collaboration**: Collaboration between biodiversity experts under the MSFD and those under the Birds and Habitats directives remains ad hoc, hindering coherence in assessments and methodologies related to both directives.
Technical barriers	• **Definition ambiguity**: A lack of a clear definition for the EBA leads to varied interpretations and applications, complicating	• **Goal ambiguity**: Unrealistic and/or unclear goals for GES are recognized as significant barriers in achieving GES.

	consistent implementation across different regions.	• **Methodological advancements**: The recent requirement to develop quantitative criteria and methodological standards for GES, along with methods for monitoring and assessment, aids in the pursuit of GES. • **Quantitative thresholds and monitoring**: Few MS have set quantitative threshold values for GES, and monitoring programs for GES are often incomplete with variations between MS. • **Increased interest for clarification:** The clarification from the GES descriptors has generated more interest in the MSFD, reflecting the role of knowledge clarity in the implementation.

2.3. Key recommendations for a better MSFD and MSPD integration

A set of suggestions and key recommendations was collected from a broad range of stakeholders, including representatives of MSP-related EU projects, EU representatives (DG Mare, DG Environment), experts and national authorities. These contributions were gathered through the Think Tank meetings, as well as during CROSSGOV and MSP4BIO's Policy event held in Brussels on June 23rd 2025.
Several of the recommendations had already been identified prior to the policy event, while others emerged during the discussions. It was particularly noteworthy that while there was strong alignment on many points, some recommendations generated differing views among participants. Nonetheless, there was unanimous agreement on the need to strengthen the integration between the relevant EU Directives and more broadly, to enhance policy coherence across MSPD and biodiversity-related EU frameworks.

Key recommendations

1. Establish a common strategic framework at the regional level
Integration begins with shared vision and objectives. A single strategic framework aligning MSFD and MSPD requirements at the façade or sea-basin level is essential. This approach ensures coherence between marine biodiversity protection goals and economic activities, as recommended in both the MSP4BIO and CrossGov projects. Such alignment fosters consistent environmental performance while addressing spatial planning needs.

2. Harmonize legal requirements and objectives

Although the MSFD is often described as containing binding environmental targets, it's important to clarify that these are not strict, outcome-based targets like emission limits or conservation targets typical of EU law. Instead, the MSFD imposes binding procedural and planning obligations aimed at achieving broad environmental objectives. In contrast, the MSFD offers more flexible guidelines. To close this gap, the MSPD should incorporate substantive legal obligations for marine protection and adopt a "strong sustainability" model. This would also involve improving the alignment of MSFD and WFD objectives on key topics such as biodiversity, eutrophication, and chemical contamination. Part of this integration is already underway – for instance, the Zero Pollution Action Plan defines at least three key environmental thresholds that apply across terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

3. Create a single or coordinated competent authority

Fragmented institutional responsibilities undermine integration. Designating a single competent authority – or significantly strengthening coordination mechanisms across existing institutions – will streamline implementation. For example, combining responsibilities for WFD, MSFD, and MSPD under one agency, as done in some national cases, has improved cross-directive coordination and reduced inefficiencies.

During CROSSGOV and MSP4BIO Policy event (Brussels, June 23rd 2025), some participants expressed disagreement with this recommendation, arguing that the two Directives are significantly different in their objectives, perspectives, and scales of implementation. They highlighted the territorial dimension and the distinct governance approaches associated with each, including regarding the empowerment of competent authorities. Rather than advocating for a single competent authority, these participants emphasised the need for an effective coordination mechanism between the Directives (see Recommendation 4), which they viewed as a more appropriate solution.

4. Institutionalize inter-directive coordination mechanisms

Establishing technical and consultative bodies that bring together representatives across MSFD, MSPD, and related frameworks (such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy, CFP etc.) can foster ongoing dialogue and problem-solving. This also strengthens the ability to respond to emerging challenges and maintain policy coherence over time.

5. Embed MSFD objectives and data into MSP from the start

Early-stage integration of MSFD thresholds, targets, and data into MSP processes helps prevent environmental considerations from becoming an afterthought. It ensures strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is meaningful and aligns marine planning with ecosystem needs. This approach makes use of established environmental knowledge to guide spatial choices more effectively.

6. Ensure legal and policy cross-referencing

Policy instruments such as River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), Marine Strategies (MaS), and MSPs should explicitly reference each other's goals and measures. For

instance, French law mandates coherence between planning instruments under MSFD+MSPD (Façade) and the WFD (SDAGE). These references should be more than symbolic – plans must demonstrate how they contribute to shared environmental and planning outcomes.

7. Improve data interoperability and monitoring synergies

Data collected under MSFD and WFD (such as on biodiversity, nutrient loads, or ecosystem status) should be harmonized and made accessible for MSP use. National-level data synthesis bodies and shared platforms like EMODnet play a critical role. Furthermore, monitoring protocols and reporting cycles should be better coordinated to reduce redundancies and enhance shared learning.

8. Coordinate planning and implementation cycles where feasible

Temporal misalignment between directives – such as the MSFD/WFD's 6-year cycles and the MSPD's 10-year cycle – hampers efficiency. While full alignment may not always be practical, practical interoperability through shared timelines for assessments, reviews, or data updates should be pursued to maximize administrative efficiency and data reuse.

9. Strengthen local capacities and tailor approaches to regional specificities

Local authorities often lack the resources or staff to engage deeply in integrated planning. Stable funding, targeted training, and public-private partnerships can build capacity. Furthermore, national planning frameworks must respect and integrate regional and local priorities – especially in areas with high ecological or socio-economic relevance.

10. Enhance stakeholder engagement across the land-sea continuum

Stakeholder engagement practices should be unified and streamlined across the three directives. Developing integrated engagement processes and fostering stable multi-actor platforms avoids stakeholder fatigue and conflicting signals, while enabling more coherent and inclusive planning outcomes.

2.4. How can EU projects inform and support the MSFD and MSPD integration?

The landscape of EU-funded projects addressing MSP and biodiversity conservation offers a wide range of frameworks, approaches, tools and outcomes that can substantially contribute to inform the integration between MSFD and MSPD. Among the projects analysed and represented in MSP4BIO's Think Tank meetings, several have a specific focus on key topics that are directly relevant to this integration challenge. For instance, CROSSGOV project places strong emphasis on policy coherence and alignment across EU environmental and maritime policies. It provides a set of strategic tools and outputs that are particularly pertinent for enhancing cross-directive integration. MSP4BIO project, while primarily focused on biodiversity mainstreaming and the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches, also engages with policy questions through its WP6. This

makes it a cross-cutting project with relevance for both environmental and spatial planning frameworks. Additionally, REMAP project contributes through the development of data-driven and operational tools designed to support MSP processes. By producing actionable tools, REMAP plays a critical role in enhancing the availability and usability of ecological and spatial datasets, which is essential for the integration of MSFD-relevant data into planning processes. On the other hand, REGINA project addresses MSP at the regional sea-basin level, with a particular emphasis on stakeholder engagement and capacity-building. These elements are key enablers for effective policy alignment, particularly when adapting EU directives to regional specificities and implementation contexts. Leveraging these diverse contributions in an integrated and complementary manner is essential to achieving coherent and effective implementation of both MSFD and MSPD.

Table 9 below provides selected examples of how these project's tools and outcomes can contribute to MSFD/MSPD integration, aligned with the policy recommendations outlined in Section 2.3. It is important to highlight that the tools and outcomes listed below are not limited to addressing a single recommendation. Rather, they offer cross-cutting contributions that may support multiple recommendations simultaneously and advance the overarching objective of enhancing alignment between the two directives and promoting greater policy coherence.

Table 9 Examples of contributions of EU projects to MSFD/MSPD integration.

Recommendation	***Project***	***Examples of useful tools and outcomes***
Establish a common strategic framework at the regional level	REGINA MSP	*Compendium of regional experiences* and *regional actions for MSP* outcomes as examples of regional-level approaches and façade-level coherence.
	CROSSGOV	*Policy coherence methodology* by assessing coherence across different levels for informing regional strategic harmonization.
	eMSP	*Integrated ocean governance Policy Brief* by addressing the fragmentation of ocean governance, which remains a key challenge to the establishment of a shared strategic framework.
Harmonize legal requirements and objectives	CROSSGOV	*Vertical and horizontal Policy coherence assessments* by examining inconsistencies between policies and overarching EU environmental goals, especially relevant for a better understanding of overlaps and gaps among the two policies. *Handbook on Policy coherence* self-assessment tool for understanding the underlying factors affecting coherence.

Embed MSFD objectives and data into MSP from the start	MSP4BIO	*ESE Framework*, by providing a framework and toolkit for incorporating MSFD objectives, thresholds, trade-offs and ecological indicators into MSP.
	REMAP	*MSP and MSFD Software,* by analysing the relations and synergies between MSFD and MSPD data sets.
	MARINE PLAN	*EB-MSP Framework* and analysis of existing policies and institutions on EB-MSP, by providing an operational framework and guidance for practical implementation of the EBA in MSP.
Ensure legal and policy cross-referencing	MSP-GREEN	*EGD components of EU MSP plans* and *EGD Valuable practices*, by providing examples of how different national MSP plans integrate external frameworks and sectoral policies into MSP.
Improve data interoperability and monitoring synergies	REMAP	*REMAP Toolkit*, through a comprehensive toolkit offering practical modules and operative tools, enhancing complementarity and interoperability between datasets.
	MSP4BIO	*Knowledge database*, by providing a centralized repository of social, ecological and economic accessible data for MSP purposes.
	REGINA MSP	*Geoportals Inventory*, by identifying regional and European geoportals through an interactive mapping platform.
Strengthen local capacities and tailor approaches to regional specificities	REGINA MSP	*Trainer's Manual*, by providing context-specific guidelines to empower regional MSP stakeholders on capacity-building processes for regional and local staff; and *Ocean Literacy regional plan*, for enhancing awareness and stakeholder engagement in MSP processes through regional/local-level contributions.
Enhance stakeholder engagement across the land-sea continuum	BLUECONNECT	*Stakeholder's toolkit,* for unifying stakeholder engagement through active management and assuring long-term collaboration.

3. Stakeholder's reflections on policy solutions

Stakeholder engagement was a core pillar in shaping the policy solutions outlined in Deliverable 6.2 of the MSP4BIO project. National and regional dialogues across EU countries, as well as focused consultations with MSP and marine biodiversity stakeholders, provided critical insights into the relevance, feasibility, and potential impact of proposed policy measures. This section synthesizes overarching themes and

takeaways (TT) from stakeholder feedback across the 11 co-developed policy solutions (see Table 10), grouped into institutional, organizational, technical, and resource-related categories.

TT 1. Broad support for policy coherence and coordination frameworks

Across the board, stakeholders emphasized the urgent need for more coherent governance in marine biodiversity and MSP. Policy Solutions 1 and 2—focused on establishing dedicated coordination frameworks and utilizing existing inter-ministerial groups for biodiversity assessment and reporting—were met with strong support. Stakeholders, particularly from countries like France, Belgium, and Finland, noted that cross-sectoral cooperation remains fragmented, and better institutional alignment would reduce duplication of efforts and clarify responsibilities.

However, some respondents also warned of consultation fatigue and the risk of creating new governance structures without adequately resourcing existing ones. The recommendation to leverage already operational regional frameworks (e.g., HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, Barcelona Convention) was seen as practical, especially where regional seas cooperation is already relatively strong.

TT 2. Varied opinions on MSP's role in MPA designation

Policy Solution 3 proposed involving MSP authorities in the formulation and review of MPA objectives. This elicited mixed reactions. Stakeholders broadly agreed that MSP processes should not conflict with conservation goals—but opinions diverged on whether MSP should be involved directly in the design of MPA objectives. Many emphasized the importance of maintaining clear boundaries between planning and regulatory functions, suggesting that MSP should primarily ensure coherence with MPA management plans rather than shape their goals.

There was also recognition that in practice, MSP plans sometimes fail to reflect MPA boundaries and objectives due to timing misalignments or gaps in the approval of management plans. Thus, improved communication and data exchange mechanisms were seen as more feasible than structural integration of MSP authorities into MPA governance.

TT 3. Institutionalizing stakeholder input: promise and practicalities

Policy Solution 4 focused on creating continuous input channels for stakeholders. This was widely supported, especially by participants from academia, NGOs, and local authorities. Stakeholders highlighted the need for predictable and transparent consultation platforms that move beyond one-off events. Examples such as France's Regional Sea Commissions and Belgium's Coordination Committee for International Environmental Policy were praised as good models.

At the same time, several countries raised concerns about the practicality of institutionalizing input mechanisms. The success of such platforms depends on political will, sustained resourcing, and clarity in how stakeholder inputs are used in decision-making. Without those, there's a risk of tokenistic engagement or disengagement from key actors.

TT 4. Clarity and accountability through binding measures

One of the most endorsed ideas was Policy Solution 5, which recommends establishing mandatory, clear measures linking human activities to biodiversity goals. Stakeholders recognized that soft governance tools alone are insufficient to drive meaningful change. Countries like Germany and Finland noted that biodiversity objectives often remain aspirational without legal mandates and enforcement.

Nevertheless, the call for legal bindingness raised legitimate concerns in some contexts. Countries with more advisory-style MSP frameworks (e.g., Estonia) questioned how such binding measures would be operationalized and monitored. The general consensus, however, was that the lack of accountability mechanisms has weakened implementation and that steps toward enforceability are necessary.

TT 5. Capacity building over formal training

Policy Solution 6, which called for strengthening MSP's role in achieving GES through capacity building, technical training, and dialogue, was broadly accepted—but stakeholders preferred more informal and flexible approaches to formal training. Particularly in the Baltic Sea region, stakeholders emphasized the value of continuous dialogue, mutual learning platforms (e.g., Planners' Forum), and peer-to-peer exchanges over structured training modules.

A key message was that biodiversity integration in MSP should be seen as a shared process between conservation experts and planners, not something solved through technical upskilling of MSP practitioners alone.

TT 6. Support for decision support tools, but concern over data gaps

Technical solutions, including investments in decision-support tools (PS11) and guidelines for MPA enforcement (PS7), were generally well received. Countries such as Finland and Sweden highlighted their experience using tools like Zonation and Symphony, noting their value in informing spatial decisions and biodiversity assessments.

However, stakeholders repeatedly flagged that many of these tools rely on high-quality, spatially explicit data—something that is not equally available across all marine areas. This was particularly evident in the reflections on the SPIA tool, where concerns were raised about applying results with low confidence data, especially in offshore or data-poor areas. Calls were made for more regional guidance on how to apply the precautionary principle in such contexts.

TT 7. Encouragement for climate-smart MSP and data investments

The proposed solutions around climate-smart MSP (PS8) and increased investments in monitoring and research (PS10) were met with enthusiasm, especially from countries already facing the pressures of offshore energy expansion and climate-related coastal change. The need to better integrate climate resilience into MSP frameworks was highlighted as both timely and essential, and many stakeholders saw synergy with national adaptation strategies.

Investments in biodiversity monitoring and research were also supported as foundational for long-term mainstreaming, though concerns about funding continuity and access to shared data infrastructure were also noted.

Table 10 List of 11 Policy solutions designed in D6.2.

Category	Policy solution number	Policy solution
Institutional Policy solutions	PS1	Establish a dedicated coordination framework or bolster existing structures to focus specifically on marine biodiversity, including regular inter-jurisdictional meetings and policy sessions.
	PS2	Utilize existing groups like the maritime economy group to establish compulsory assessments and reporting mechanisms that include biodiversity considerations.
	PS3	Revise MPA objectives to be specific and measurable, aligned with each area's ecological needs, and involve MSP authorities in a consultative capacity.
Organizational Policy solutions	PS4	Create continuous input channels for stakeholders, ensuring research institutes and others contribute regularly and influentially to policymaking.
	PS5	Create mandatory, clear measures connecting human activities with biodiversity goals, including specific targets for success.
Technical Policy solutions	PS6	Strengthen MSP's role in achieving GES through capacity building, technical training, and dialogue across governance levels.
	PS7	Develop comprehensive guidelines and enforcement mechanisms, including adequate training, resources, and designated MPA managers for effective reserve management.
	PS8	Climate-smart MSP in EU countries (an additional overall policy solution as part of EUBS2030)
Resource-related policy solutions	PS9	Allocate a portion of maritime-related tax revenue to directly fund National Biodiversity Strategy projects and bolster its operational effectiveness.
	PS10	Increase investment in biodiversity research and monitoring to build a comprehensive knowledge base for improved policy evaluation.
	PS11	Invest in data collection, develop more accessible decision support tools, and provide guidelines for their use in planning, monitoring, and adaptation processes.

Conclusion

Deliverable 6.3 – Policy solutions for MSP based on the Science-Policy Dialogues – consolidates the key results of MSP4BIO's Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank process and outlines the main findings for biodiversity mainstreaming into MSP, through coordinated dialogue, policy alignment and shared technical resources. The report illustrates how cross-project collaboration, iterative exchanges with stakeholders and inter-institutional engagement can generate targeted recommendations and practical tools that respond to complex governance challenges and accelerate biodiversity integration into MSP processes at different levels.

Over the course of two years, the Think Tank meetings provided an arena of discussion to facilitate knowledge-sharing between several EU-funded initiatives, including projects such as MPA Europe, MARINE PLAN, CROSSGOV, BLUE4ALL, MSP-GREEN, REGINA MSP, MEDIGREEN, NESBp, BLUECONNECT, REMAP, and eMSP NBSR. These sessions brought together project's representatives, planners, experts, EU institutional representatives (DG MARE, DG ENV), regional bodies (HELCOM, PAP/RAC), and national authorities to explore pathways for biodiversity integration, identify systemic barriers, and propose solutions in the context of MSP and related EU frameworks.

One of the central contributions of this report is the comprehensive mapping and classification of 56 tools and outcomes developed across participating initiatives. By applying Social Network Analysis (SNA) methodologies, the project developed a visual and functional classification of available resources, highlighting thematic clusters (e.g. ecosystem-based approaches, policy coherence, stakeholder engagement, MSP data integration), functional relations and synergies among outputs. This mapping exercise not only identifies opportunities for combined use and co-application of tools but also reveals gaps in areas such as capacity-building, offering potential directions for future project development and funding programmes.

The report also presents a detailed analysis of the systemic barriers impeding MSPD and MSFD alignment, as identified through dialogue with stakeholders. These range from institutional fragmentation, uneven legal requirements and lack of quantitative thresholds (in MSPD) to technical limitations related to data access, assessment methodologies, and evaluation mechanisms. In response, a set of ten cross-cutting recommendations was elaborated and validated, offering strategic entry points for improving coherence across planning instruments, fostering multi-level governance coordination, long-term stakeholder engagement and ensuring the early and effective incorporation of environmental priorities into MSP planning cycles. The deliverable also includes feedback gathered on the 11 co-developed policy solutions presented in D6.2. Stakeholder reflections consistently highlighted the need to move from conceptual frameworks to operational guidance, with a strong focus on feasibility, accountability, and implementation support. The Think Tank process enabled the refinement of these proposals, especially regarding MPA governance, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, legally binding conservation targets and the development of climate-smart planning

approaches. Finally, the fourth and final Think Tank meeting laid the foundation for a Joint Policy Brief, intended as a shared output across sister projects. The Brief will compile recommendations reflecting shared priorities and insights, extending the impact of the Think Tank dialogue beyond the MSP4BIO project. This collaborative effort demonstrates the value of coordinated policy communication and sets a precedent for future engagement between scientific, policy, and practitioner communities.

In conclusion, the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank series has served as a powerful mechanism to mobilise inter-project collaboration, validate tools and approaches, and co-design policy solutions informed by real-world planning needs. Deliverable 6.3 demonstrates that addressing biodiversity integration in MSP cannot be achieved through isolated efforts; rather, it requires a continuous and inclusive dialogue between sectors, institutions, and knowledge systems.

On June 4th 2025, the European Commission announced its decision to kick-start the revision process for the MSFD through the Water Resilience Strategy. On June 5th 2025, in the Ocean Pact, it also announced its intention to revise the MSPD following the publication of the second implementation report, expected in March 2026. The parallel negotiations, expected to take place in 2027, provide a valuable opportunity to address the problems identified above. Building on the MSPD revision, the Commission also announced the forthcoming publication of an Ocean Act, which will address climate adaptation and mitigation issues not currently covered in either Directive. It is important to note that neither Directive regulates sectoral policies, so the implementation of biodiversity and climate-smart maritime spatial plans will require additional efforts to ensure that the cumulative impacts of human activities are fully accounted for and that sectoral policies are implemented in ways that support the productivity and resilience of the marine environment. As EU Member States move forward with revising and implementing MSP plans, and ahead of the next revision of the MSFD, the outputs and reflections compiled in this report can offer concrete support for embedding biodiversity priorities into coherent, data-informed, and participatory MSP frameworks.

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Annex I – Think Tanks summary reports

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MSP4BIO

Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks

1st meeting (online)

May 2023

Summary report

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY DIALOGUE THINK TANKS

The main objective of the Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks is to co-develop key recommendations in collaboration with linked projects and achieve validation through the engagement with policy actors. The MSP4BIO project in fact aims at collaborating with sister projects to jointly communicate scientific outputs to policy makers in a simple form and to scrutinize them against policy coherence criteria. The Think Tank meetings have initially involved relevant experts and scientists and in a second stage they will also include policy stakeholders at the EU and regional seas level. The Think Tanks also represent an effective way to coordinate among different projects on the engagement with key policy stakeholders, in order to maximise effective engagement processes and to reduce “stakeholder fatigue”.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE 1st THINK TANK MEETING

The specific objectives of the 1st Think Tank meeting are to:

- Initiate a coordination process among current relevant MSP-related projects and initiatives
- Share information about the policy components (goals, objectives, targets and priorities) from current MSP related projects
- Preliminary identification of the priority policy topics and targets to focus on collectively

PARTICIPANTS

The first Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank involved the following stakeholders:

- MSP4BIO project partners
- Scientific representatives from sister projects and other relevant initiatives (See ANNEX II for the full list of participants)

PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

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Each sister project was given the opportunity to present the main goals and policy objectives. The presentations have been collected and can be accessed HERE.

Furthermore, all participating projects and initiatives had the opportunity to provide information about the key contents of the project in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Project information

	KEY WORDS	POLICY FOCUS	SCALE	CASE STUDIES/ PILOT SITES	IN HOUSE EVENTS
MSP4BIO	MSP MPAs Stakeholder Engagement	Achieving the Green Deal Integrating MPAs in MSP processes support implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy and CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Focus on biodiveristy policy coherence	EU sea basins National, transboundary and regional level	One case study per sea basin	-Think tanks -Community of Practice Meetings -Project meetings -Trainings
MPA Europe	MPA Network Europe Blue carbon Biodiversity Smart (adaptive) MSP	MSPs to consider MPAs within a changing climate context European Green Deal Biodiversity Strategy and post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework	EU Stakeholder engagement per sea basin (national and regional authorities - decision makers))	One case study per sea Basin • 3 case studies to be agreed with stakeholders • no pilots	In person workshop: policy brief on project outcomes and case study development. (Discussion with the stakeholders will lead to a policy brief + recommendations)
eMSP NBSR	MSP Sustainability Energy Biodiversity	Support coherence among MSP plans Cross Learning Green deal and impact of climate change	North Sea and Baltic Sea	Each learning strand has either 1 or 2 study cases. (Learning strands: Ocean Governance, MSP data, Monitoring & Evaluation, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Blue Economy)	-Community of Practice events per LS -Project meetings -Final conference -High level conference (TBD)
REGINA-MSP	Stakeholder engagement	innovations in the role of Regions in MSP contribution of MSP to the European Green Deal progress in MSP at regional and local levels positive interaction between MSP and the European Cohesion Policy	Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea Basins and EU Broadly	Murcia Galicia Sardinia Pays de la Loire Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Crete North Aegean Sea County Mayo CPMR Members	-Training of MSP Authorities -Ocean Literacy Workshop -Communities of practice meetings -Case studies workshops with regional/local stakeholders

	KEY WORDS	POLICY FOCUS	SCALE	CASE STUDIES/ PILOT SITES	IN HOUSE EVENTS
BLUE4ALL (www.blue4all.eu)	MPA networks Resilient and Efficient MPAs Blueprint platform	Restore EU oceans and waters	EU	25 sites across Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North-East Atlantic regions	-policy analysis -questionaires -tests
REMAP	MSP Monitoring & Review Data Tools Models Data sharing	provide EU Member States with innovative technical framework for the support of the European MSP process Policy Briefs + co-development of tools with stakeholders	EU	Local - Galicia (Spain) Cross Border - Western Mediterranean Sea basin - Baltic	Beta-test of tools Galicia (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Helsinki Final Conference October 2025 Helsinki
PLASMAR+	Progress of MSP CIA development EIA Supporting methods Ecosystem Services	Macaronesia regional collaboration developing tools, products and methodologies for operative MSP	Sea-basin scale, the European Macaronesia	Azores Madeira Canary Islands	• End of project Conference • Capacity Buildings • Stakeholder's engagement initiatives
Shetland marine plan	Marine Development Framework	sustainable development	Local scale - Shetland		Workshops
MSPGREEN	MSP EGD	Role of MSP plans as enablers of EGD Role of other policies (e.g. fisheries, nature conservation)	National level (analysis, actions) EU level (recommendations) EU sea basins (link with Sustainable Blue Economy)		Workshops
MarinePlan (marineplan.eu)	EB-MSP conservation EBSA Stakeholder engagement	integrate marine conservation into MSP processes in European Seas	EU	Azores Celtic Sea Western Baltic Sea Western Mediterranean Campania (Italy) Greek Aegean Bay of Biscay	• high level steakholder workshops (EU level) • planning site Stakeholder workshops • project meetings (Barcelona, Azores, etc.) • end of project conference

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Summary notes

What was highlighted in the Priority Topics for Cooperation section was the cooperation and alignment on stakeholder engagement, to optimise processes, avoid overlapping, as well as to align approaches and exchange findings from the policy coherence analysis (or at least to make them complementary). Finally many participants agreed that joint policy recommendations should also be pushed forward.

The number of events considered really relevant for the projects to target policy actors is limited, however many identified European Maritime Day and the MSP Conference as the most relevant ones. It could be beneficial to start discussing possibilities of organizing events specifically dedicated to projects' alignment and ensuring synergies.

The need to involve additional projects (e.g., PERMAGOV) was mentioned during the breakout session and they will be involved in the next meetings.

Most projects target the same key priority policies, particularly the MSPD, EU Green Deal and EU Biodiversity Strategy, as shown below in the outcomes of the exercise. Sister projects included a number of priority policy activities, which suggests that the different projects complement each other and this could be used as a tool, if well-coordinated, to not double efforts across projects working on similar topics.

As additional topics of discussion and collaboration, various groups highlighted policy coherence analysis, as well as stakeholder engagement optimisation so to avoid stakeholder fatigue. Finally many highlighted the importance of cooperation among projects in the development of tools to support integrated policy implementation and planning.

Key results from the MIRO exercise (combined)

What are the key policies that your project relates to?

Top priorities identified include the following:

- MSP Directive
- EU Green Deal
- EU Biodiversity Strategy
- EU Restoration Law
- Repower EU

What are the main policy related activities of your project?

The key policy related activities identified include the following:

- Policy Brief on MSP and climate adaptive MPAs
- Participatory workshops and training
- Support policy implementation
- Inputs for MSP revision
- Support policy integration in decision making processes across the sectors
- Policy Briefs on MSP and climate adaptive MPAs
- Inputs and recommendations for MSP revision process
- Coordination on stakeholder engagement
- Policy coherence briefing
- Review of MSP data at regional level
- Support policy integration in decision making processes across sectors

What are the main policy events that you have already identified as key to your project?

The priority policy events for most projects are the following:

- European Maritime Day
- MSP Conference
- Group meetings with national/regional authorities
- MSEG

Which policy stakeholders are you targeting within your project?

Most projects are focusing on the following stakeholders:

- Regional Policy Makers (EU, Regional authorities)
- MPA Managers
- Authorities in charge of MSP related issues/MSP Planners
- National Policy Makers

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The first Think Tank workshop confirmed that many of the current projects that are focusing on the integration of conservation priorities into MSP, very much complementary and therefore fostering collaboration opportunities can certainly lead to better synergies and especially, to an increased level of impact. Many participants agreed on the need to collaborate and showed major interest in the initiative.

Among the top 2 collaboration opportunities that have been identified are the following:

- **Coordinate across projects to develop a set of tools and approaches that can improve the integration of the Ecosystem Approach in the implementation of the MSP Directive.**
- **Develop a set of tools, briefings and events to support policy coherence and implementation, particularly focusing on the integration among the MSPD and other EU Environmental Policies such as the MSFD and Habitat Directive (among others) and on the EU Green Deal in general.**

These top collaboration opportunities will be further explored in the next think tank meeting, where policy actors will also be invited to contribute to the discussion. By then, more tool, methodologies and project results will also be available and will be shared during the meeting.

A shared policy Stakeholder engagement approach emerged as another key conclusion from the workshop and this topic will be further explored in the next meeting, that will be organized in the autumn of 2023.

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ANNEX I – AGENDA

TIME	CONTENTS
10:00 – 10:10	Introduction to the Think Tank's objectives + Agenda
10:10 – 11:00	Presentations from all participating projects with a specific focus on the respective policy components and policy tools
11:00 – 11:10	Break
11:10 – 11:45	Breakout groups + facilitated discussion (with MIRO Board) addressing the following questions: • What are the recurring policy priorities that emerge from the projects? • What are the main synergies among all projects? (Key activities/events already identified, opportunities to collaborate on specific topics) • What are the key policy actors to target?
11:45 – 12:15	Groups presentation and Discussion
12:15 – 12:30	Final remarks and conclusions

ANNEX II - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

No	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT
1	UoA	MSP4BIO
2	Climazul	MPA Europe
3	HELCOM	MSP4BIO
4	WWF Adria	Blue4ALL
5	CETMAR	REMAP
6	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
7	UHI SHETLAND	Shetland Marine Plan
8	CCMS	MSP4BIO and MSPGREEN
9	SYKE	MSP4BIO, EMSP
10	NORDREGIO	EMSP
11	CEREMA	mSP4BIO
12	NIVA	CROSSGOV
13	DE BLAUWE CLUSTER	ESMS
14	CLUE CLUSTER	
15	CNR-ISMAR	MSP4BIO
16	BLAUWE ECONOMIE	EMSP
17	SHOM	EMSP and MSP-OR

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18	WWF Adria	Blue4All
19	WWF Adria	Blue4ALL
20	Helcom	EMSP
21	Flanders Marine Inst.	MSP4BIO and BLUE4ALL
22	S-PRO	MSP4BIO
23	WWF	MSP4BIO
24	WWF	MSP4BIO
25	Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	EMFAF-REMAP
26	THUEN	Marine Plan
27	Anthropocene	MSP4BIO Advisory Board
28	Thunen Institute	Marine Plan
29	ISMAR CNR	MSP4BIO
30	S-PRO	MSP4BIO
31	CEREMA	MSP4BIO
32	NAT SCIENCE	BLUE4ALL
33	WWF	BLUE4ALL
34	CONSULTANT CORILA	MSPGREEN

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MSP4BIO
Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks
2nd meeting (online)
December 2023

Summary report

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY DIALOGUE THINK TANKS

The main objective of the Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks is to co-develop key recommendations in collaboration with linked projects and achieve validation through the engagement with policy actors. The MSP4BIO project in fact aims at collaborating with sister projects to jointly communicate scientific outputs to policy makers in a simple form and to scrutinise them against policy coherence criteria. Think Tank meetings have initially involved relevant experts and scientists and in a second stage they will also include policy stakeholders at the EU and regional seas level. Think Tanks also represent an effective way to coordinate among different projects on the engagement with key policy stakeholders, in order to maximise effective engagement processes and to reduce "stakeholder fatigue".

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE 2nd THINK TANK MEETING

The specific objectives of the 2nd Think Tank meeting are to:

- Consolidate the coordination process among current relevant MSP-related projects and initiatives
- Identify the main solutions to improve the coherence of MSP and biodiversity related EU policies
- Co-develop with policy actors and showcase the tools and the results produced by the projects, including synergies and complementarities

PARTICIPANTS

The second Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank involved the following stakeholders:

- MSP4BIO project partners

- Scientific representatives from sister projects and other relevant initiatives (BLUE4ALL, CrossGov, eMSP, MSPGREEN, MarinePlan REMAP and MPA Europe)
- Policy actors (DG MARE, DG ENV)
- Regional governance organizations representatives (BARCON, HELCOM)

(See ANNEX II for the full list of participants)

PRESENTATION FROM EU AUTHORITIES

Presentation from Celine Frank, DG MARE (A.2)

The coherence of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in relation to other policies is crucial, with MSP serving as a tool to achieve various policy objectives, such as environmental conservation. This aligns with other directives like the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. With the introduction of new policies like the Green Deal, integration into national plans becomes imperative, prompting Member States to revise their existing plans. The MSP Platform provides guidance and studies, incorporating external analyses like the WWF report focusing on the ecosystem approach in MSPs. Projects funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund also focus on integrating Green Deal objectives into MSP.

Member States have autonomy in prioritising sectors within MSP, although the Commission advocates for alignment with Green Deal objectives. More guidance on integrating these objectives is underway. The Commission acknowledges the growing interest in MSP projects funded by various sources beyond the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. Reflecting on past projects, the Commission plans to convene ongoing MSP projects for analysis and future planning, coinciding with a new call for MSP projects. Member States' good practices include aligning cycles and promoting collaboration between relevant ministries, as well as conducting strategic environmental assessments for MSP revisions. In order to encourage Member States to carry on comprehensive environmental assessments within the MSP framework, the Commission provided some Guidelines for implementing an Ecosystem-based Approach in Maritime Spatial Planning, as well as a toolkit for evaluation and revision of national maritime spatial plans. These tools are publicly available on the European MSP Platform.

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Presentation from Alice Belin, DG ENV (C.2)

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) is a pivotal piece of EU legislation aimed at attaining good environmental status in marine waters, with a focus on safeguarding marine resources crucial for economic and social activities. Unlike conservation directives, such as the Birds and Habitats Directive, the MSFD emphasises sustainable use alongside environmental protection, employing an ecosystem-based approach.

Efforts since its 2008 adoption have centred on defining sustainability in marine waters. In 2017, a decision on good environmental status was adopted to enhance coherence across marine regions, mandating Member States to set quantitative threshold values for quality descriptors. This decision seeks to establish a consistent level of ambition regarding environmental status.

The MSFD operates within a broader policy context, intersecting with various environmental policies and legislation, including biodiversity strategies, pollution action plans, and circular economy initiatives. Implementation is supported by water-related legislation, nature directives, and environmental impact assessment directives. In addition to environmental policies, the MSFD interacts with sectoral policies and legislation, such as the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy, crucial for its implementation. Other sectoral measures address ocean data policies, maritime transport regulations, pollution control, port facilities, and offshore renewable energy development. Agricultural policies also play a significant role, especially in sea basins affected by agricultural pollution.

Global framework connections are vital for the MSFD, linking with international agreements like the global biodiversity framework and decisions within the International Maritime Organization. Recent developments like the treaty on biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions also impact its implementation.

Overall, the MSFD represents a comprehensive approach to marine environmental management, aiming to balance conservation with sustainable use and coordinating efforts across sectors and international frameworks to ensure the health and productivity of EU marine waters.

The directive seeks coherence among various policies, agreements, and legislative measures affecting the marine environment, aiming to unify them under a single framework. A Commission decision reinforces this objective, encouraging the use of measures from other frameworks like the Water Framework Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy.

The MSFD shares a strong link with the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, particularly in adopting an ecosystem-based approach. While the MSFD provides the foundation for this approach, the MSPD facilitates managing collective pressures on human activities, crucial for achieving MSFD objectives.

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Other integrated or influenced frameworks include the Zero Pollution Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, emphasising nature protection, restoration, and sustainable use of marine resources. However, addressing cumulative pressures on marine environments remains a challenge despite existing legal and policy frameworks.

The ongoing review of the MSFD presents an opportunity to enhance coherence and address inefficiencies, integrating new developments like offshore renewable energy and collaborating with the fisheries sector. Stakeholder input is crucial in ensuring the MSFD remains effective in promoting sustainable marine resource management.

PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

Relevant projects have been invited to present the main goals and policy objectives. The presentations have been collected and can be accessed HERE.

Furthermore, all participating projects and initiatives had the opportunity to provide information about the key contents of the project in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Project information

	KEY WORDS	POLICY FOCUS	SCALE	CASE STUDIES/ PILOT SITES	IN HOUSE EVENTS	EXPECTED RESULTS (Tools, Frameworks...)	POLICY COHERENCE	BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION
REMAP	MSP Monitoring & Review Data Tools Models Data sharing	provide EU Member States with innovative technical framework for the support of the European MSP process Policy Briefs + co-development of tools with stakeholders	EU	Local - Galicia (Spain) Cross Border - Western Mediterranean Sea basin - Baltic	Beta-test of tools Galicia (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Helsinki Final Conference October 2025 Helsinki			
PLASMAR+	Progress of MSP CIA development EIA Supporting methods Ecosystem Services	Macaronesia regional collaboration developing tools, products and methodologies for operative MSP	Sea-basin scale, the European Macaronesia	Azores Madeira Canary Islands	• End of project Conference • Capacity Buildings • Stakeholder's engagement initiatives			
Shetland marine plan	Marine Development Framework	sustainable development	Local scale - Shetland		Workshops			
MSPGREEN	MSP EGD	Role of MSP plans as enablers of EGD Role of other policies (e.g. fisheries, nature conservation)	National level (analysis, actions) EU level (recommendations) EU sea basins (link with Sustainable Blue Economy)		Workshops	Operative tool: EGD-MSP nomenclature to support identification of EGD related topics and elements relevant for marine/maritime context. Possible use: MSP implementation, monitoring, revision. Examples of good EGD practices available in MSP plans (and trasferrable to other countries) Reccommendations on how to how to use MSP in fostering the achievement of the EGD goals.		Need to stregthen the link between MSP and MPA designation
MarinePlan (marineplan.eu)	EB-MSP conservation EBSA Stakeholder engagement	integrate marine conservation into MSP processes in European Seas	EU	Azores Celtic Sea Western Baltic Sea Western Mediterranean Campania (Italy) Greek Aegean Bay of Biscay	• high level steakholder workshops (EU level) • planning site Stakeholder workshops • project meetings (Barcelona, Azores, etc.) • end of project conference	eb-MSP framework Analysis of existing policies and insituiuons on eb-MSP Analysis of EBSA metrics Synthesis of eb-MSP scenarios and identification of key action points	Developement of an decision support system to evaluate eb-MSP status and support implementation	Give guidance on EBSA, systematic conservation planning and integrated planning and expanign MPA networks
CrossGov Project	Policy Coherence Cross-compliance biodiversity climate change zero pollution	Role of policy coherence to facilitate cross-compliance (i.e. the delivery of multiple EGD objectives simultanously Biodiversity related policies, sectoral policies, cross-cutting policies and their implementation	EU level Regional seas level (North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea) National and subnational level (case studies)	Finnish Archipelago Oslofjord (Norway) Dutch North Sea (Netherlands, Germany French Med (France) Adriatic sea (Italy) North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea	Policy assessments: • policy design • policy implementation (case studies) Roundtable, spring 2024 Methodologies finetuning Third consortium meeting 2024 Roadmaps for policy makers	-Methodology to analyse policy coherence comprehensively -Methodology to analyse SPS interfaces and their impact on policy coherence -Assessments on the existing barriers and opportunities for policy coherence in design Assessment on how planning practices related to marine strategies (MSFD), programs of measures (WFD) and marine plans (MSPD) can be better aligned. -Assessments on how biodiversity can be more coherently integrated across sectors		

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The Breakout Session focused on 2 main questions:

1. How can the implementation of the MSP Directive be improved to better include biodiversity protection? And
2. What are the main solutions to improve the coherence of biodiversity and MSP policies?

Furthermore, the main tools, frameworks and approaches developed or to be produced by the different projects have been identified. The following emerged as particularly relevant, amongst others:

- MSP4BIO Policy Coherence Analysis,
- Marine Plan EbMSP Framework,
- MSP Green Operative Tool,
- MSP4BIO ESE Framework.

Further information about these tools can be found in the Project Presentations.

1. How can the implementation of the MSP Directive be improved to better include biodiversity protection?

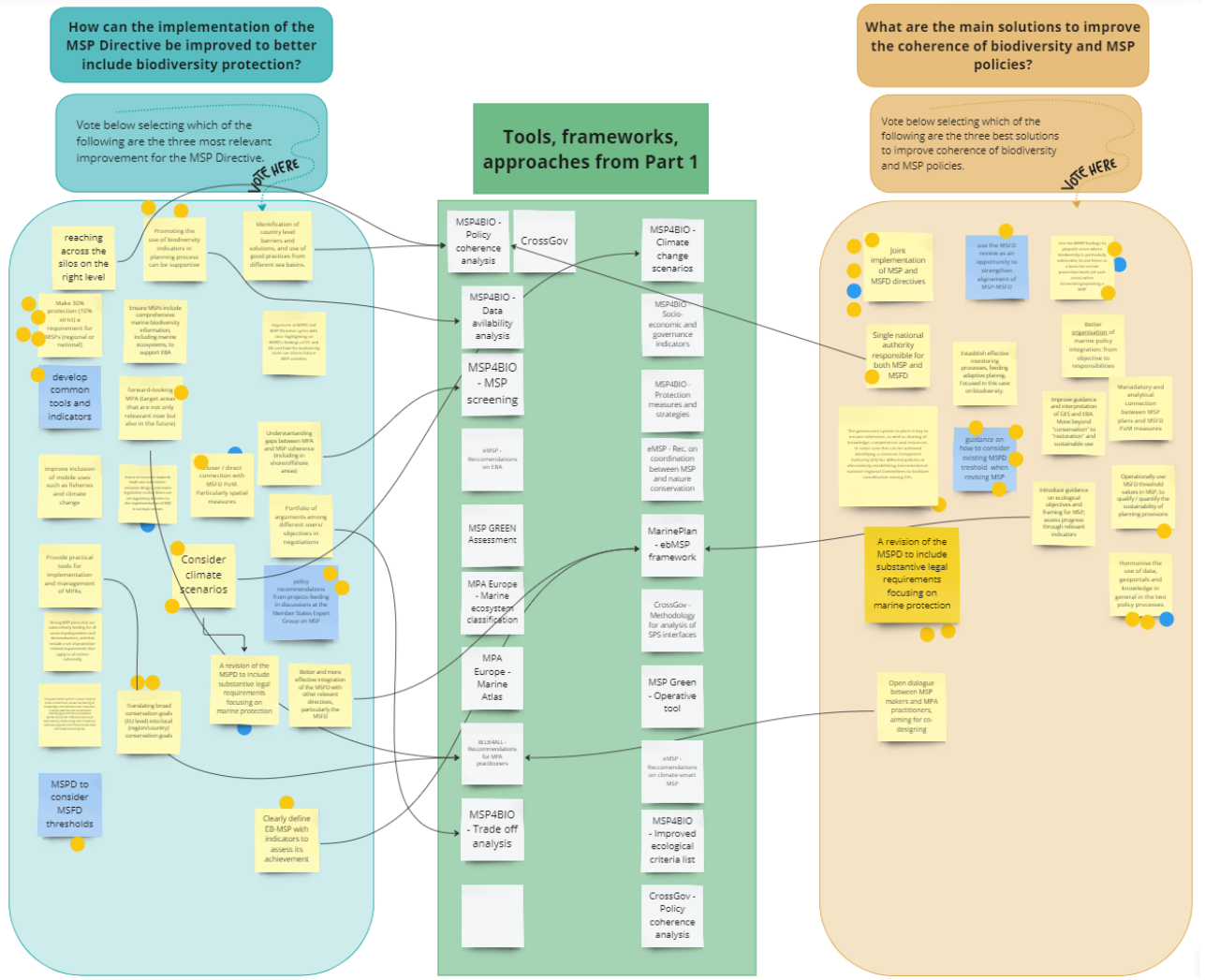
Most participants agreed that making the 30% protection (10% strict) a requirement of MSPs at regional and national level would be an essential approach to foster the inclusion of biodiversity protection into MSP. Furthermore, it was proposed to link/align the implementation of the MSPD with the MSFD and particularly to create a direct connection with the PoM. Further suggestions included to consider climate scenarios and to clearly define EB MSP with indicators to assess its achievement. Some participants suggested the need to translate broad conservation goals (EU Level) into local (Region/country) conservation goals.

2. What are the main solutions to improve the coherence of biodiversity and MSP policies?

Similarly, the main solutions to improve policy coherence included aligning implementation of the MSPD with MSFD and to have a single authority in charge of implementing both MSP and MSFD. Specifically, it was mentioned that “the governance system in place is key to ensure coherence, as well as sharing of knowledge, competences and resources. In some cases this can be achieved by identifying a common Competent Authority (CA) for different policies or alternatively establishing interministerial-national-regional Committees to facilitate coordination among CAs.” Many agreed that there is a need to produce guidance on how to consider existing MSFD thresholds when revising the MSPs. Suggestions included also the revision of the MSPD

to include substantive legal requirements focusing on marine protection. The harmonisation of data geoportals and knowledge in the various policy processes was also suggested.

A snapshot of the MIRO board used for the discussion is displayed below.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The second MSP4BIO Think Tank Workshop confirmed that a large number of relevant planning tools and frameworks are being developed by the different projects and initiatives. The MSP Directive is definitely the main target for many of the projects. A lot of effort is currently directed towards improving policy coherence and in particular the joint implementation of the MSP Directive and the MSFD.

The discussion focused on enhancing the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive by incorporating suggestions to bolster biodiversity protection and coherence between biodiversity and MSP policies. One prominent proposal was to mandate 30% protection and 10% strict protection in marine spatial plans at regional or national levels. Additionally, utilizing biodiversity indicators in planning processes and establishing thresholds for environmental considerations garnered support. Dynamic Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were advocated, adapting to future conditions, along with aligning MSP with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) measures more closely.

There was a call for increased investment in research for multi-use and nature-inclusive design, considering climate change scenarios and integrating climate considerations into the MSP process. Suggestions also included translating broad conservation goals into local objectives and revising the MSP Directive to include substantive legal requirements for marine protection. Recommendations emphasised the need for joint implementation of MSP and MSFD and utilising MSFD findings to identify areas of biodiversity significance for protection in MSP plans.

Furthermore, it was proposed to designate a single national authority responsible for both MSP and MSFD and harmonise data usage and knowledge across policy processes. The revision of the MSP Directive to include legal requirements for marine protection was reiterated as crucial. These suggestions were linked to various project outcomes and tools aimed at achieving policy coherence and supporting MSP practitioners. Participants agreed about the risks associated with reopening the MSPD, so the focus shifted on providing guidance for coherence and utilising the MSFD revision to strengthen links between MSP and biodiversity strategies. OECMS can play a role but we need to come to a shared, clear definition and guidance.

Looking ahead, the second report on MSP Directive implementation in 2026 will assess the progress made by Member States, highlighting areas needing further guidance and integration of new targets from initiatives like the Green Deal and biodiversity strategy. The aim is to utilise scientific evidence from projects to provide effective recommendations and guide Member States in future MSP processes.

The MSPD is quite early in its implementation, MS are now revising the first plans and this is an opportunity to provide more guidance rather than reopen the Directive itself. There was agreement on the use of the MSFD revision to include these links. Guidance needs to come from good scientific evidence from projects.

NEXT STEPS

The two top collaboration opportunities identified in the first Think Tank Meeting are substantially confirmed after the exchange with the authorities and they are the following:

- Coordinate across projects to propose a set of tools and approaches that can improve the integration of the Ecosystem Approach in the implementation of the MSP Directive.
- Develop a set of tools, briefings and events to support policy coherence and implementation, particularly focusing on the integration among the MSPD and other EU Environmental Policies such as the MSFD and Habitat Directive (among others) and on the EU Green Deal in general.

In the following months we will seek further opportunities to collaborate towards the development of joint activities to turn these opportunities into action.

Many of the participants agreed to share a joint calendar of activities/events to facilitate joint initiatives and synergies. The MSP4BIO team will take the lead on this.

The results of the Think Tank will be presented and further discussed in a series of upcoming events/workshops (UN Ocean Decade Conference, Blue Mission BANOS), and further explored in the next Think Tank meeting which is scheduled to occur in the fall of 2024.

ANNEX I – AGENDA

TIME	CONTENTS
10:00 - 10:105	Introduction to the Think Tank's objectives + Agenda and summary of the previous Think Tank event
10:05 - 11:20	PPT from authorities
10:10 - 11:00	Presentations from selected projects with a focus on the preliminary results and policy components updates
11:00 - 11:10	Break
11:10 - 11:45	Breakout groups + facilitated discussion focusing on the following topics (with MIRO/MURAL Board) addressing the following questions (Indicative): ● How can the implementation of the MSP Directive be improved to better include biodiversity protection? ● What are the main solutions to improve the coherence of biodiversity and maritime spatial planning policies? ● How can the results and tools produced by MSP4BIO and sister projects contribute to

	improve policy coherence and biodiversity integration into MSP?
11:50 – 12:15	Groups presentation and Discussion
12:15 – 12:30	Final remarks and conclusions

ANNEX II - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

No	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT
1	UoA	MSP4BIO
2	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
3	HELCOM	MSP4BIO
4	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
5	UHI SHETLAND	Shetland Marine Plan
6	CCMS	MSP4BIO and MSPGREEN
7	SYKE	MSP4BIO, EMSP
8	NIVA	CROSSGOV
9	CNR-ISMAR	MSP4BIO
10	BLAUWE ECONOMIE	EMSP
11	WWF	MSP4BIO
12	WWF	MSP4BIO
13	Thuenen Institute	Marine Plan
14	DG ENV	
15	NAT SCIENCE (BE)	BLUE4ALL
16	NAT SCIENCE (BE)	BLUE4ALL
17	DG MARE	
18	S-Pro	MSP4BIO
19	WWF EPO	MSP4BIO
20	CONSULTANT CORILA	MSPGREEN

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Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks

3rd meeting

October 24th 2024 – Palais du Pharo, Marseille

(in person)

Summary report

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY DIALOGUE THINK TANKS

The main objective of the Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks is to co-develop key recommendations in collaboration with linked projects and achieve validation through the engagement with policy actors. The MSP4BIO project in fact aims at collaborating with sister projects to jointly communicate scientific outputs to policy makers in a simple form and to scrutinise them against policy coherence criteria. Think Tank meetings have initially involved relevant experts and scientists and in a second stage they also included policy stakeholders at the EU and regional seas level.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE 3rd THINK TANK MEETING

The specific objectives of the 3rd Think Tank meeting were to:

- Identify concrete opportunities to influence **policy alignment and implementation** through the tools and solutions developed by MSP4BIO and sister projects.
- **Identify good practices** to present and discuss with policy actors.
- Further consolidate the **coordination among sister projects and initiatives**.
- Collect **stakeholder feedback** on the developed policy solutions.

PARTICIPANTS

The 3rd Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank involved the following stakeholders:

- MSP4BIO project partners
- Scientific representatives from sister projects and other relevant initiatives (MPA Europe, eMSP NBSR, MSP-GREEN, BLUE4ALL, Blue Cluster)
- *Relevant national authorities*
- *EU representatives*

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(See Annex II for full list of participants)

PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

Relevant projects have been invited to present the main goals and policy objectives. The presentations have been collected and can be accessed HERE.

Furthermore, all participating projects and initiatives had the opportunity to provide information about the key contents of the project in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Project information

	KEY WORDS	POLICY FOCUS	SCALE	CASE STUDIES/ PILOT SITES	IN HOUSE EVENTS	EXPECTED RESULTS (Tools, Frameworks...)	POLICY COHERENCE	BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION
MSP4BIO	MSP MPAs Stakeholder Engagement	Achieving the Green Deal Integrating MPAs in MSP processes support implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy and CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Focus on biodiversity policy coherence	EU sea basins National, transboundary and regional level	2-4 case study per sea basin	-Think tanks -Community of Practice Meetings -Project meetings -Trainings	Data availability analysis Protection measures and strategies Climate change scenarios for test sites Improved ecological criteria list Improvement of DSTs and provision of an ecological toolkit Trade-off analysis using participatory mapping tool MSP screening and analysis Socio-economic and governance indicators Policy coherence analysis ESE framework (broad framework)	Policy barriers and levers will be identified. Policy solutions and recommendations will be produced. Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks will be utilized to discuss proposed solutions. Good practices will be identified based on the proposed and prioritized solutions.	MSP screening and analysis Improved ecological criteria list Protection measures and strategies Policy coherence analysis for mainstreaming biodiversity in MSP processes Trade-off analysis using ecosystem services and participatory mapping tool
MPA Europe	MPA Network Europe Blue carbon Biodiversity Smart (adaptive) MSP	MSPs to consider MPAs within a changing climate context European Green Deal Biodiversity Strategy and post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework	EU Stakeholder engagement per sea basin (national and regional authorities - decision makers))	One case study per sea Basin • 3 case studies to be agreed with stakeholders • no pilots	In person workshop: policy brief on project outcomes and case study development. (Discussion with the stakeholders will lead to a policy brief + recommendations)	Marine ecosystem classifications for surface and near seabed waters Atlas of maps of marine biodiversity richness and blue carbon stores, scored by significance, under different climate scenarios		Provides new marine ecosystem, species and blue carbon seabed data for informing MSP decision-making
eMSP NBSR	MSP Sustainability Energy Biodiversity	Support coherence among MSP plans Cross Learning Green deal and impact of climate change	North Sea and Baltic Sea	Each learning strand has either 1 or 2 study cases. (Learning strands: Ocean Governance, MSP data, Monitoring & Evaluation, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Blue Economy)	-Community of Practice events per LS -Project meetings -Final conference -High level conference (TBD)	Recommendation on: • EBA • integrated ocean governance • sustainable blue economy • coordination between MSP and nature conservation • MSP data • climate-smart MSP	Practical insights on policy coherence (not a research project)	coordination between MSP and nature conservation and EBA are the relevant ones
REGINA-MSP	Stakeholder engagement	innovations in the role of Regions in MSP contribution of MSP to the European Green Deal progress in MSP at regional and local levels positive interaction between MSP and the European Cohesion Policy	Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea Basins and EU Broadly	Murcia Galicia Sardinia Pays de la Loire Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Crete North Aegean Sea County Mayo CPMR Members	-Training of MSP Authorities -Ocean Literacy Workshop -Communities of practice meetings -Case studies workshops with regional/local stakeholders			
BLUE4ALL (www.blue4all.eu)	MPA networks Resilient and Efficient MPAs Blueprint platform	Restore EU oceans and waters	EU	25 sites across Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North-East Atlantic regions	-policy analysis -questionaires -tests	Recommendations for MPA practitioners on implementation and management of MPAs, for achieving their environmental, social and economic objectives. Guidance for aligning bottom-up expectations with top-down regulatory expectations. A Blueprint platform for MPA practitioners to have access to this guidance, recommendations and tools to achieve their objectives.	Alignment of bottom-up societal expectations about the kind of ecosystem services an MPA should provide with top-down regulatory expectations. Facilitation of MPA implementation and management.	Tools, guidance and recommendations to achieve efficient biodiversity conservation in MPAs, alongside achieving socio-economic benefits (in a sustainable way).

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REMAP	MSP Monitoring & Review Data Tools Models Data sharing	provide EU Member States with innovative technical framework for the support of the European MSP process Policy Briefs + co-development of tools with stakeholders	EU	Local - Galicia (Spain) Cross Border - Western Mediterranean Sea basin - Baltic	Beta-test of tools Galicia (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Helsinki Final Conference October 2025 Helsinki			
PLASMAR+	Progress of MSP CIA development EIA Supporting methods Ecosystem Services	Macaronesia regional collaboration developing tools, products and methodologies for operative MSP	Sea-basin scale, the European Macaronesia	Azores Madeira Canary Islands	• End of project Conference • Capacity Buildings • Stakeholder's engagement initiatives			
Shetland marine plan	Marine Development Framework	sustainable development	Local scale - Shetland		Workshops			
MSPGREEN	MSP EGD	Role of MSP plans as enablers of EGD Role of other policies (e.g. fisheries, nature conservation)	National level (analysis, actions) EU level (recommendations) EU sea basins (link with Sustainable Blue Economy)		Workshops	Operative tool: EGD-MSP nomenclature to support identification of EGD related topics and elements relevant for marine/maritime context. Possible use: MSP implementation, monitoring, revision. Examples of good EGD practices available in MSP plans (and trasferrable to other countries) Reccommendations on how to how to use MSP in fostering the achievement of the EGD goals.		Need to stregthen the link between MSP and MPA designation
MarinePlan (marineplan.eu)	EB-MSP conservation EBSA Stakeholder engagement	integrate marine conservation into MSP processes in European Seas	EU	Azores Celtic Sea Western Baltic Sea Western Mediterranean Campania (Italy) Greek Aegean Bay of Biscay	• high level steakholder workshops (EU level) • planning site Stakeholder workshops • project meetings (Barcelona, Azores, etc.) • end of project conference	eb-MSP framework Analysis of existing policies and insitutuions on eb-MSP Analysis of EBSA metrics Synthesis of eb-MSP scenarios and identification of key action points	Developement of an decision support system to evaluate eb-MSP status and support implementation	Give guidance on EBSA, systematic conservation planning and integrated planning and expanign MPA networks
CrossGov Project	Policy Coherence Cross-compliance biodiversity climate change zero pollution	Role of policy coherence to facilitate cross-compliance (i.e. the delivery of multiple EGD objectives simultanously Biodiversity related policies, sectoral policies, cross-cutting policies and their implementation	EU level Regional seas level (North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea) National and subnational level (case studies)	Finnish Archipelago Oslofjord (Norway) Dutch North Sea (Netherlands, Germany French Med (France) Adriatic sea (Italy) North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea	Policy assessments: • policy design • policy implementation (case studies) Roundtable, spring 2024 Methodologies finetuning Third consortium meeting 2024 Roadmaps for policy makers	-Methodology to analyse policy coherence comprehensively -Methodology to analyse SPS interfaces and their impact on policy coherence -Assessments on the existing barriers and opportunities for policy coherence in design Assessment on how planning practices related to marine strategies (MSFD), programs of measures (WFD) and marine plans (MSPD) can be better aligned. -Assessments on how biodiversity can be more coherently integrated across sectors		

PLENARY SESSION

Presentation of the survey results

Prior to the 3rd Think Tank meeting, a survey was conducted among representatives of various projects, and a total of 9 responses were received. The survey compiled the 15 recommendations (Annex III) developed under MSP4BIO WP6 (Policy coherence and co-production of solutions) and asked respondents to indicate whether their projects contributed to these solutions. They were also asked to rate each recommendation on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the highest and 5 the lowest score) in terms of feasibility and importance. Additionally, the survey also focused on the specific contributions and synergies of the projects and initiatives supporting previously shortlisted MSP and biodiversity-related policies.

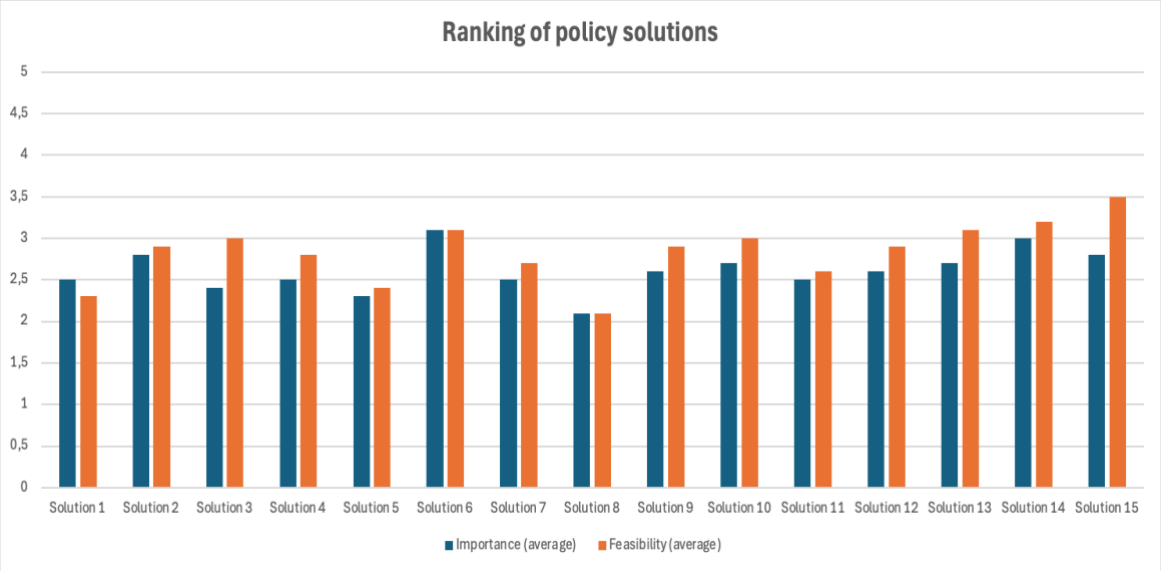
Specifically, the main objectives of the survey were to:

- Review the policy recommendations developed under WP6.
- Assess the specific contributions and synergies from projects and initiatives in support of current policies.
- Address the gaps in the integration of biodiversity into MSP processes.

Some of the main results of the survey conducted:

Part 1- Policy recommendations

Please refer to the solutions in Annex III.



Contributions to policy solutions:

Project	Contribution	Solution
eMSP	Strengthens MSP's role in achieving GES and enhances data and stakeholder channels.	5 - 8 - 10
NESBp	Supports coordination frameworks and data tools.	1 - 10
Sweden C2B2	Advances coordination frameworks and aligns MSP with the EU Biodiversity Strategy.	1 - 10 - 12
MSP4BIO	Aligns MSP with EU policies, revises MPA objectives, and supports staff training.	3 - 4 - 5 - 13
MPA Europe	Revises MPA objectives, strengthens MSP for GES, and aligns MSP with EU biodiversity goal.	4 - 5 - 12
MSP-GREEN	Integrates fisheries into MSP and strengthens MPA management for biodiversity.	3 - 4 - 5
Blue4ALL	Revises MPA objectives, boosts biodiversity research, and supports staff training.	4 - 7 - 13

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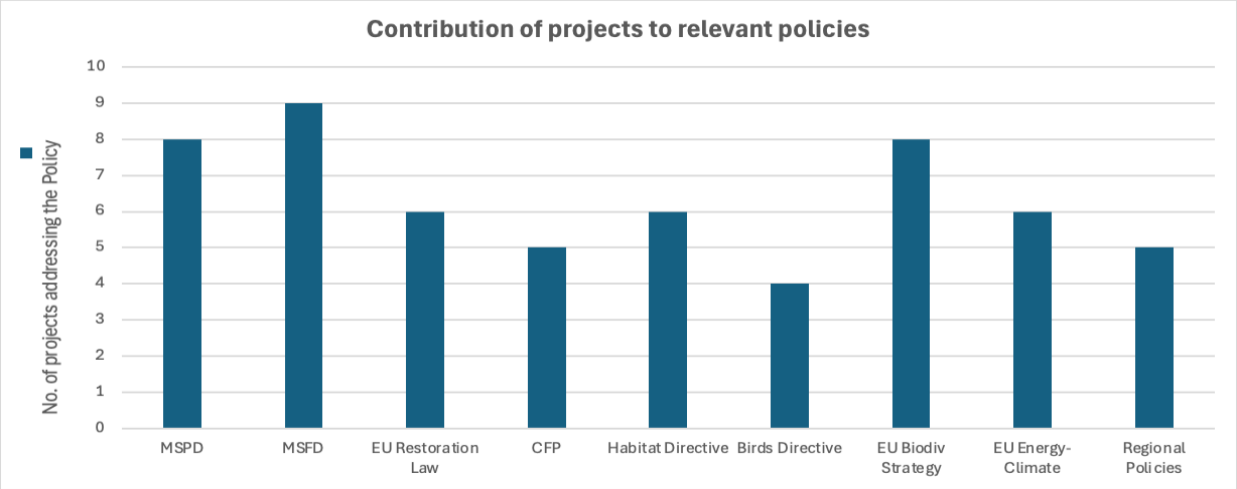
Part 2 - Specific contributions and synergies from projects and initiatives in support of current policies



Part 3 - Project level gaps

Key topics/issues missing from current projects on integrating biodiversity into MSP	
Attribution challenge	MSP approaches vary widely across countries; biodiversity (BD) knowledge remains fragmented.
Spatial data gaps	Lack of comprehensive maps of human impacts, activities, and marine protection effectiveness.
Operationalization needs	Stronger implementation of MSP at the national level, linking planning to activities, impacts, and biodiversity status
Incorporation of ecosystem features	Ecosystem and biodiversity features (e.g., spawning areas) must be included in planning alongside maritime user needs.
Clarify protection goals	Greater emphasis on defining protected areas and focusing on biodiversity outcomes.
Key topics future projects should focus on	
Bridging knowledge gaps	Link fragmented knowledge across marine users, governance, and scales, with a social-ecological systems focus.
Climate change integration	Address the impact of climate change, adaptive management and challenges with international cooperation.
Guidelines and demonstration	Develop and implement guidelines (MSP, EcAp) , integrating EIA; engage stakeholders through site-specific projects.
Data integration	Fill gaps in data on human impacts and biodiversity features.
Operationalization needs	Improve networks of MPAs, Blue Corridors, and MSFD objectives within MSP frameworks.
Gaps in EU and Regional Seas Policy Frameworks	
Variations in practice	MSP's flexibility leads to inconsistent implementation, risking biodiversity goals.
Lack of binding targets	No mandatory targets for environmental protection in MSP.
Complex regional frameworks	Inconsistent monitoring, assessment, and policy integration across regions and sectors.
Coordination challenges	Need stronger linkages between MSP, MSFD, and Biodiversity Strategy, and better integration of MPA designation.
Data gaps	Insufficient detailed maps for biodiversity features like spawning areas and seagrasses, restoration areas.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

The breakout sessions focused on the two main topics of the survey:

- Specific contributions and synergies from projects and initiatives in support of current policies.
- Discussion on the policy recommendations gathered from previous Think Tank meetings and MSP4BIO WP6 (feasibility and importance ranking).

Through these 2 main themes, participants analysed the results of the survey and were asked to provide inputs and suggestions from their respective projects for addressing the recommendations and improving policy alignment.

1. Specific contributions and synergies from projects and initiatives in support of current policies

Participants discussed about specific contributions that the tools and outcomes produced by each project are providing in support of current MSP and biodiversity related policies, with a specific focus on:

- MSPD
- MSFD
- Habitat Directive
- Birds Directive
- EU Biodiversity Strategy
- EU Restoration Law
- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
- Regional Governance Policies
- EU Energy and Climate

Other relevant policies were added by the participants, such as: 0 pollution strategy, European Green Deal (EGD), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, Water Framework Directive (WFD), OSPAR Convention, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Aarhus Convention, SEA Directive, BBNJ, EU Strategy for Sustainable Blue Economy, Landscape Convention and Circular Economy Action Plan.

Contributions of the projects to the listed policies based on participants responses:

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	MSP4BIO	BLUE CONNECT	eMSP NBSR	MPA 4 EUROPE	MEDIGREEN	CrossGov
MSPD						
Biodiversity Strategy						
EU Energy and Climate						
EGD						
BBNJ						
MSFD						
EU Strategy for SBE						
EU Restoration Law						
Birds Directive						
Habitats Directive						
CFP						
Regional conventions Frameworks						
WFD						

The breakout session focused on 3 main questions (See Annex IV for the responses of the participants during the discussions):

1. **What key topics/issues are missing from current projects focusing on the integration of biodiversity into MSP processes?**

The overall discussions allowed to identify main gaps on the current MSP-related initiatives and projects:

- **Development of climate change scenarios and long-term scenarios**
- **Restoration issues**
- **OECMs**
- **GES**
- **Better inclusion of specific sectors such as fishing and shipping**
- **Effective capitalization of the projects results**
- **Development of taylor-made recommendations for specific contexts**

2. **What should future projects include or focus on?**

The main topics identified as relevant to focus on during future projects include the following:

- **Deployment of results**
- **More implementation**

3. What are the main gaps in the current EU and Regional Seas policy frameworks?

The major gaps identified in the current EU and regional policy frameworks include the following:

- **Effective representation of all sectors:** Some sectors (e.g. small-scale fisheries, local communities) can be underrepresented in the processes and have limited involvement in MSP decision-making.
- **Need a better coordination of calls:** Fragmentation of funding and research calls can lead to missed synergies and opportunities.
- **Strong focus on regional frameworks**
- **Reconciliation between local and regional scales:** Existing gap between top-down regional policies and bottom-up local implementation and objectives.
- **Climate change-related issues:** Need for better integration of climate change-related issues, including adaptation and mitigation.
- **Public data access:** There is an existing lack of available, standardized and accessible data on marine topics (e.g. habitat distribution, ecosystem services, impacts).
- **More flexibility and operationality**
- **Contrasting of policy objectives**
- **Better integration**

2. Stakeholder feedback on the MSP4BIO policy solutions

The 3rd Think Tank meeting also asked stakeholders from EU-funded projects and MSP national authorities to critically review proposed policy solutions aimed at improving biodiversity mainstreaming in maritime spatial planning processes. A total of **23 stakeholders** participated in this session, offering constructive feedback grounded in practical experience, national contexts, and recent project findings.

Each policy solution was presented for reflection, followed by an open discussion. Stakeholders shared **valuable good practices**, **highlighted feasibility challenges**, and provided **refinements to increase clarity, effectiveness, and real-world applicability** of the solutions in EU member states. Across all solutions, recurring themes included the need for **clearer implementation mechanisms**, **stronger integration between policy frameworks (e.g., MSP and MSFD)**, and **genuine stakeholder inclusion**.

Key cross-cutting insights and most important stakeholder comments:

- **Clarity and implementation**: Many stakeholders stressed the importance of clear, actionable objectives and the need to link planning with concrete implementation mechanisms.

- **Inclusive and multi-level governance**:
  - Engage biodiversity authorities and MSP planners early and consistently.
  - Ensure representation from all governance levels and sectors, including communities and local actors.
  - Use mediators and steering committees to facilitate coordination.

- **Integration and alignment**:
  - Align MSP with MSFD action plans and conservation standards.
  - Connect monitoring systems across EU directives (MSFD, Habitats Directive, SEA).
- **Capacity building and human resources**:
  - Invest in training, especially at local levels and in under-resourced countries.
  - Promote peer learning from efficient practices in northern countries.
- **Financial mechanisms**:
  - Consider innovative tools such as **blue funds** and **biodiversity taxes**.
  - Ensure funding supports both data and implementation, including MSP evaluation and monitoring.
- **Use and development of decision support tools (DSTs)**:
  - Tools should be practical, user-driven, and able to influence political decisions.
  - End users should be involved from the beginning.
  - Examples like Tools4MSP and HELCOM were praised but need adaptation for other sea basins.
- **Evidence-based and adaptive planning**:
  - Move beyond only new data collection; prioritize use of existing data.
  - Support adaptive management through strategic compensation and biodiversity net gain principles.
- **Enforcement and monitoring**:
  - Surveillance and enforcement capacity are critical, including joint surveillance groups.
  - Legally binding elements must be matched with realistic monitoring systems.

MAIN CONCLUSION

The third MSP4BIO Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tank reaffirmed the importance of cross-project collaboration in addressing the complex challenge of integrating biodiversity into MSP.

Through the presentation of survey results and interactive breakout sessions, participants collectively reviewed the policy recommendations developed under WP6, identified strategic synergies, and reflected on both project-specific and systemic gaps. The survey provided valuable insight into how sister projects are contributing to the proposed policy solutions, revealing clear commonalities and areas of convergence. The breakout discussions further clarified how various initiatives align with key EU policies, with the EU Biodiversity Strategy emerging as a central reference across most projects.

Several key messages surfaced throughout the discussions, notably the need to better align biodiversity and MSP objectives across governance levels, enhance access to data and their application in decision-support tools, and foster inclusive, transparent, and adaptive planning frameworks. Participants emphasized the importance of moving beyond recommendations toward tangible implementation, ensuring that tools and approaches are co-developed with end users and embedded in real policy contexts. The lack of a long-term perspective—particularly in relation to climate change scenarios—was noted as a gap in some ongoing projects, along with the need for tailored, site-specific recommendations that can address local realities.

The meeting also brought to light significant challenges, including fragmented governance, uneven stakeholder engagement—particularly with respect to ensuring balanced representation of all economic sectors in planning processes—and disparities in capacity across regions. Stakeholders highlighted the potential of innovative financial mechanisms, such as blue funds and biodiversity taxes, as well as the value of practical and user-oriented decision-support tools (DSTs), which should be developed in close collaboration with planners and policy actors. Despite these challenges, the meeting reflected a strong, shared commitment within the community to collaborate more strategically and pragmatically, as well as a clear interest in having a comprehensive overview of the various tools and relevant outcomes produced by the sister projects.

The insights gained during this 3rd Science-Policy-Dialogue Think Tank will directly feed into the ongoing development of MSP4BIO's biodiversity-driven ecosystem-based management (EBM) approach.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months, we will continue to explore opportunities for collaboration among the various projects. The outcomes of this third Think Tank meeting will contribute to the ongoing MSP4BIO deliverables: D6.2 on policy solutions and D6.3 on the main findings from the Think Tanks.

A final Think Tank meeting is planned for May 2025, with a primary focus on policy recommendations and a consolidated overview of the tools and results produced by the different projects.

The Science-Policy-Dialogue Think Tank meeting's final outcome will be the development of a joint policy brief, providing recommendations for enhancing biodiversity mainstreaming in maritime spatial planning processes, in collaboration with the participating projects.

Annex I - Agenda of the meeting

TIME	CONTENTS
15:00 - 15:10	Welcome and introduction to the Think Tank's objectives, Agenda of the meeting and summary of the main conclusions of the previous Think Tank events (Plenary session)
15:10 - 15:30	Presentation of the survey results (Plenary session)
15:30 - 16:30	Breakout sessions and facilitated discussion Facilitated breakout groups/tables will be created and work in parallel focusing on the following topics. **1. Policy recommendations** The breakout group will focus on the shortlisted policy recommendations that emerged from the previous Think Tanks and from MSP4BIO WP6. Participants will be asked to discuss and rank the policy recommendations in terms of feasibility and importance and to suggest how their specific projects and initiatives are contributing to them. Policy actors will participate in the ranking process and validate project contributions to improve policy alignment. **2. Specific contributions and synergies from projects and initiatives in support of current (gaps and) policies.** The group will focus on the specific contribution that the tools and solutions produced by each project/initiative is providing in support of existing MSP and biodiversity related policies, with a specific focus on: MSPD, MSFD, Habitat Directive, Restoration Law, CFP (and others). Presence of policy actors will strengthen discussion on the applicability of the tools in the policy making process and further guide the projects towards specific policy needs and challenges. During the session the results of the preparatory survey and the information collected in previous Think Tanks will be discussed. **3. Current gaps** The group will analyse the results of the survey sections dedicated to the current policy and thematic gaps. Participants will be asked to review the results and provide input/suggest potential improvements and solutions.
16:30 - 16:50	Discussion (Plenary)

16:50 - 17:00	Final remarks and conclusions (Plenary)

Annex II - List of participants

No	ORGANIZATION	PROJECT
1	CNR-CORILA	MSPGREEN
2	CCMS	MSPGREEN, MSP4BIO
3	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
4	NORDREGIO	EMSP
5	CNR-ISMAR	CrossGov, MSPGREEN
6	CNR-ISMAR	REGINA MSP
7	HELCOM	MSP4BIO
8	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
9	UAC	MSP4BIO
10	BIOAGORA/AWI	
11	CNR-ISMAR	MSP4BIO
12	DGAMPA	
13	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Türkiye)	
14	DMEC	
15	CEREMA	REGINA MSP
16	PAP/RAC	MSP4BIO
17	WWF Mediterranean	MSP4BIO
18	WWF Mediterranean	MSP4BIO
19	University of Gdańsk	MSP4BIO
20	SYKE	MSP4BIO, EMSP
21	Government Ireland	
22	CNR-ISMAR	
23	UAC	MSP4BIO
24	CNR	MSP4BIO
25	WWF EPO	MSP4BIO
26	UCA	MSP4BIO

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Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks

4th meeting (Online)
May 27th 2025

Summary report

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY DIALOGUE THINK TANKS

The main objective of the Science Policy Dialogue Think Tanks is to co-develop key recommendations in collaboration with linked projects and achieve validation through the engagement with policy actors. The MSP4BIO project in fact aims at collaborating with sister projects to jointly communicate scientific outputs to policy makers in a simple form and to scrutinise them against policy coherence criteria. Think Tank meetings have initially involved relevant experts and scientists and in a second stage they also included policy stakeholders at the EU and regional seas level.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE 4th THINK TANK MEETING

The specific objectives of the 4th and last Think Tank meeting were to:

- Validate the network analysis of the sister project's tools and outcomes – emerging from previous Think Tank meetings – with feedback from project representatives.
- Identify the key tools and outcomes that are most relevant for a better integration of biodiversity into MSP processes.
- Rank the main topic gaps in mainstreaming biodiversity into MSP.
- Draft joint policy recommendations among projects, contributing to MSP4BIO D6.4.

PARTICIPANTS

The 4th Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank involved the following stakeholders:

- MSP4BIO project partners
- Scientific representatives from sister projects and other relevant initiatives (CrossGov, MEDIGREEN, MSPGREEN, BlueConnect, BLUE4ALL, MPA Europe, MarinePlan, REMAP, NESBp)
- EU representatives

(See Annex II for full list of participants)

PRESENTATIONS AND INFORMATION SHARING

This project has received funding from the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

New projects MEDIGREEN and NESBp representatives have been invited to present the main goals and policy objectives. MSP4BIO partners presented the main results of WP6's joint policy recommendations and the clusterisation of project's tools and outcomes. The presentations have been collected and are accessible HERE.

Furthermore, within the previous Think Tank meetings, all participant projects and initiatives had the opportunity to provide information about the key contents of their projects in Table 1 below.

	KEY WORDS	POLICY FOCUS	SCALE	CASE STUDIES/ PILOT SITES	IN HOUSE EVENTS	EXPECTED RESULTS (Tools, Frameworks...)	POLICY COHERENCE	BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION
MSP4BIO	MSP MPAs Stakeholder Engagement	Achieving the Green Deal Integrating MPAs in MSP processes support implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy and CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Focus on biodiversity policy coherence	EU sea basins National, transboundary and regional level	2-4 case study per sea basin	-Think tanks -Community of Practice Meetings -Project meetings -Trainings	Data availability analysis Protection measures and strategies Climate change scenarios for test sites Improved ecological criteria list Improvement of DSTs and provision of an ecological toolkit Trade-off analysis using participatory mapping tool MSP screening and analysis Socio-economic and governance indicators Policy coherence analysis ESE framework (broad framework)	Policy barriers and levers will be identified. Policy solutions and recommendations will be produced. Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks will be utilized to discuss proposed solutions. Good practices will be identified based on the proposed and prioritized solutions.	MSP screening and analysis Improved ecological criteria list Protection measures and strategies Policy coherence analysis for mainstreaming biodiversity in MSP processes Trade-off analysis using ecosystem services and participatory mapping tool
MPA Europe	MPA Network Europe Blue carbon Biodiversity Smart (adaptive) MSP	MSPs to consider MPAs within a changing climate context European Green Deal Biodiversity Strategy and post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework	EU Stakeholder engagement per sea basin (national and regional authorities - decision makers))	One case study per sea Basin • 3 case studies to be agreed with stakeholders • no pilots	In person workshop: policy brief on project outcomes and case study development. (Discussion with the stakeholders will lead to a policy brief + recommendations)	Marine ecosystem classifications for surface and near seabed waters Atlas of maps of marine biodiversity richness and blue carbon stores, scored by significance, under different climate scenarios		Provides new marine ecosystem, species and blue carbon seabed data for informing MSP decision-making
eMSP NBSR	MSP Sustainability Energy Biodiversity	Support coherence among MSP plans Cross Learning Green deal and impact of climate change	North Sea and Baltic Sea	Each learning strand has either 1 or 2 study cases. (Learning strands: Ocean Governance, MSP data, Monitoring & Evaluation, Ecosystem Approach, Sustainable Blue Economy)	-Community of Practice events per LS -Project meetings -Final conference -High level conference (TBD)	Recommendation on: • EBA • integrated ocean governance • sustainable blue economy • coordination between MSP and nature conservation • MSP data • climate-smart MSP	Practical insights on policy coherence (not a research project)	coordination between MSP and nature conservation and EBA are the relevant ones
REGINA-MSP	Stakeholder engagement	innovations in the role of Regions in MSP contribution of MSP to the European Green Deal progress in MSP at regional and local levels positive interaction between MSP and the European Cohesion Policy	Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea Basins and EU Broadly	Murcia Galicia Sardinia Pays de la Loire Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur Crete North Aegean Sea County Mayo CPMR Members	-Training of MSP Authorities -Ocean Literacy Workshop -Communities of practice meetings -Case studies workshops with regional/local stakeholders			
BLUE4ALL (www.blue4all.eu)	MPA networks Resilient and Efficient MPAs Blueprint platform	Restore EU oceans and waters	EU	25 sites across Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North-East Atlantic regions	-policy analysis -questionaires -tests	Recommendations for MPA practitioners on implementation and management of MPAs, for achieving their environmental, social and economic objectives. Guidance for aligning bottom-up expectations with top-down regulatory expectations. A Blueprint platform for MPA practitioners to have access to this guidance, recommendations and tools to achieve their objectives.	Alignment of bottom-up societal expectations about the kind of ecosystem services an MPA should provide with top-down regulatory expectations. Facilitation of MPA implementation and management.	Tools, guidance and recommendations to achieve efficient biodiversity conservation in MPAs, alongside achieving socio-economic benefits (in a sustainable way).

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REMAP	MSP Monitoring & Review Data Tools Models Data sharing	provide EU Member States with innovative technical framework for the support of the European MSP process Policy Briefs + co-development of tools with stakeholders	EU	Local - Galicia (Spain) Cross Border - Western Mediterranean Sea basin - Baltic	Beta-test of tools Galicia (Spain), Venice (Italy) and Helsinki Final Conference October 2025 Helsinki			
PLASMAR+	Progress of MSP CIA development EIA Supporting methods Ecosystem Services	Macaronesia regional collaboration developing tools, products and methodologies for operative MSP	Sea-basin scale, the European Macaronesia	Azores Madeira Canary Islands	• End of project Conference • Capacity Buildings • Stakeholder's engagement initiatives			
Shetland marine plan	Marine Development Framework	sustainable development	Local scale - Shetland		Workshops			
MSPGREEN	MSP EGD	Role of MSP plans as enablers of EGD Role of other policies (e.g. fisheries, nature conservation)	National level (analysis, actions) EU level (recommendations) EU sea basins (link with Sustainable Blue Economy)		Workshops	Operative tool: EGD-MSP nomenclature to support identification of EGD related topics and elements relevant for marine/maritime context. Possible use: MSP implementation, monitoring, revision. Examples of good EGD practices available in MSP plans (and trasferrable to other countries) Reccommendations on how to how to use MSP in fostering the achievement of the EGD goals.		Need to stregthen the link between MSP and MPA designation
MarinePlan (marineplan.eu)	EB-MSP conservation EBSA Stakeholder engagement	integrate marine conservation into MSP processes in European Seas	EU	Azores Celtic Sea Western Baltic Sea Western Mediterranean Campania (Italy) Greek Aegean Bay of Biscay	• high level steakholder workshops (EU level) • planning site Stakeholder workshops • project meetings (Barcelona, Azores, etc.) • end of project conference	eb-MSP framework Analysis of existing policies and insitutuions on eb-MSP Analysis of EBSA metrics Synthesis of eb-MSP scenarios and identification of key action points	Developement of an decision support system to evaluate eb-MSP status and support implementation	Give guidance on EBSA, systematic conservation planning and integrated planning and expanign MPA networks
CrossGov Project	Policy Coherence Cross-compliance biodiversity climate change zero pollution	Role of policy coherence to facilitate cross-compliance (i.e. the delivery of multiple EGD objectives simultanously Biodiversity related policies, sectoral policies, cross-cutting policies and their implementation	EU level Regional seas level (North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea) National and subnational level (case studies)	Finnish Archipelago Oslofjord (Norway) Dutch North Sea (Netherlands, Germany French Med (France) Adriatic sea (Italy) North Sea, Baltic Sea, Med Sea	Policy assessments: • policy design • policy implementation (case studies) Roundtable, spring 2024 Methodologies finetuning Third consortium meeting 2024 Roadmaps for policy makers	-Methodology to analyse policy coherence comprehensively -Methodology to analyse SPS interfaces and their impact on policy coherence -Assessments on the existing barriers and opportunities for policy coherence in design Assessment on how planning practices related to marine strategies (MSFD), programs of measures (WFD) and marine plans (MSPD) can be better aligned. -Assessments on how biodiversity can be more coherently integrated across sectors		

PRESENTATIONS

MEDIGREEN project - Cristina Cervera Nuñez (IEO-CSIC)

The MEDIGREEN project is a transnational initiative involving nine full partners, including Mediterranean EU Member States and non-EU countries such as Algeria and Tunisia. The project builds upon the prior work carried out under the MSPGREEN project, adapting its methodologies to the Mediterranean context, focusing on how the objectives contained in the European Green Deal are articulated by MSP with regard to key sectoral policies.

Objectives and Scope

MEDIGREEN focuses on four key sectors: Aquaculture, Fisheries, Nature protection and Offshore Renewable Energies.

The project aims to assess how MSP can support sustainability goals, specifically those outlined in the European Green Deal (EGD), and to identify pathways for integrating EGD principles into maritime planning in the Mediterranean region.

Methodology and Expected Outcomes

- **State of play analysis**: Evaluating how MSP plans currently integrate EGD components with regard to the key project's sectors.

- **Development of an assessment framework**: Measuring MSP effectiveness in implementing EGD objectives.
- **Regional technical studies**: Conducting four sector-specific analyses at the sea basin level, including desk analysis and expert consultation, and including the Mediterranean MSP Community of Practice (CoP) for the development of four position papers.
- **Stakeholder engagement**: Establishing dialogues with policy actors and practitioners.
- **Policy recommendations**: Synthesizing insights into practical guidance for MSP processes.
- **Exchange and transfer knowledge:** Facilitating knowledge transfer through publications, workshops and interactions whithin the sea basin and other sea basins.

Another feature of MEDIGREEN is its emphasis on communication strategies, including multilingual translations and cross-cultural adaptations of MSP concepts. This ensures that sustainability objectives are effectively understood and adopted across different governance structures and actors in the Mediterranean.

NESBp project - Kemal Pinarbasi (HELCOM)

The NESBp (Northern European Sea Basin Project) builds on eMSP and BSR groundwork, and focuses on fostering cross-border collaboration in MSP implementation, linking the North Sea Basin with the Baltic Sea region. The project aims to ensure coherence between maritime policies and spatial planning efforts, supporting both regional governance frameworks and ecosystem-based management strategies.

Key Areas of Focus

- **Ocean Governance**: Strengthening coordination mechanisms at different governance levels.
- **Energy Transition & Biodiversity in MSP**: Developing methodologies for an ecosystem-based approach to offshore renewable energy expansion.
- **Multi-Use Marine Areas**: Exploring how maritime spatial planning can facilitate co-location of activities.
- **Knowledge Transfer & Data Sharing**: Establishing a framework for basin-scale data harmonization.

Given the complexities of multi-use marine planning, NESBp will identify solutions for addressing cumulative impacts, a major challenge in MSP. The project will also introduce mechanisms for mitigation measures and restoration, responding to growing concerns about biodiversity loss in heavily utilized sea basins.
Notably, NESBp supports and is closely aligned with existing initiatives:

- The Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSPI)
- HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group

Through these partnerships, NESBp will enhance knowledge exchange between North Sea and Baltic MSP practitioners, ensuring synergies in governance approaches while enabling regionally tailored solutions.

MSP4BIO Joint Policy Recommendations - Kemal Pinarbasi (HELCOM)

As part of the MSP4BIO project, the Joint Policy recommendations represent an effort to consolidate policy solutions from multiple MSP-related projects into a single, impactful policy brief synthesizing key findings. The goal is to provide clear guidance and **streamline recommendations** for policymakers, ensuring that biodiversity considerations are effectively integrated into MSP processes.This initiative would enhance collaboration among projects to avoid duplication and maximize its impact. The recommendations have been categorized into four main areas:

- **Institutional Solutions:** Establish or strengthen coordination frameworks focused on marine biodiversity, ensuring regular inter-jurisdictional collaboration and integrating biodiversity into existing maritime groups through mandatory assessments. Revise MPA objectives to be specific, measurable, and ecologically relevant, with input from MSP authorities.
- **Organizational Solutions:** establishing dedicated coordination frameworks and strengthening policy coherence by integrating marine conservation strategies within MSP, and ensuring continuous stakeholder engagement
- **Technical Solutions:** developing comprehensive guidelines for biodiversity protection in MSP processes, implementing mandatory assessments and reporting mechanisms and strengthening MSP role in achieving GES through capacity-building initiatives.
- **Resource-Related Solutions:** allocating maritime-related tax revenue to fund biodiversity projects, increasing investment in biodiversity research and monitoring and developing accessible DST for planners and policymakers.

This initiative represents a **collaborative effort** to ensure that biodiversity remains a central focus in MSP decision-making, reinforcing the importance of **science-based policy solutions** for sustainable ocean management.

Tools and outcomes clustering and classification - Eider Graner (WWF Mediterranean)

Based on previous Think Tank outputs and individual meetings with sister projects representatives, a mapping of the project's main tools and outcomes was mapped through a Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach. This framework maps the relationships between different tools and outcomes developed across MSP-related projects. The clustering process involved:

- **Classifying tools by function**: operative tools, data-driven tools and outcomes and policy-driven tools and outcomes;
- **Categorizing tools by topic**:
    - Governance, policy and regional experiences
    - MSP data integration

  - Conservation and ecosystem-based management
  - Socioeconomic aspects and stakeholder engagement
  - Capacity-building
  - Blue Economy aspects
- **Mapping interconnections**: Identifying synergies between tools from different projects. The importance of the links between tools and outcomes was based on the assignment of weight for these relations: bigger weight being attributed to tools and outcomes sharing the same topic.

Key insights from the clustering exercise: Strong clusters emerged, such as MSP data-sharing platforms, governance frameworks and conservation-related outcomes, as well as cross-cutting connections between policy guidance tools and EBM frameworks, highlighting integrated approaches. This exercise showed that stakeholders can leverage the visualized mapping to identify the most relevant tools for specific maritime planning challenges. Overall, the analysis showed that MSP tools are **highly interconnected**, and that **combining multiple methodologies** can enhance maritime planning efficiency and policy impact.

INTERACTIVE SESSION

An overview of the full MIRO exercise is available HERE.

1. Tools and Outcomes clustering and classification

The first MIRO exercise focused on validating and expanding the classification map used for the project's tools and outcomes. The goal was to ensure completeness, identify synergies, and flag missing components.

Participants were invited to review the classification of their projects' main tools and outcomes, ensuring accuracy and completeness. They were encouraged to identify any missing elements and suggest additional tools and outcomes that could be included, aligning them with the predefined categories for better organization and coherence.

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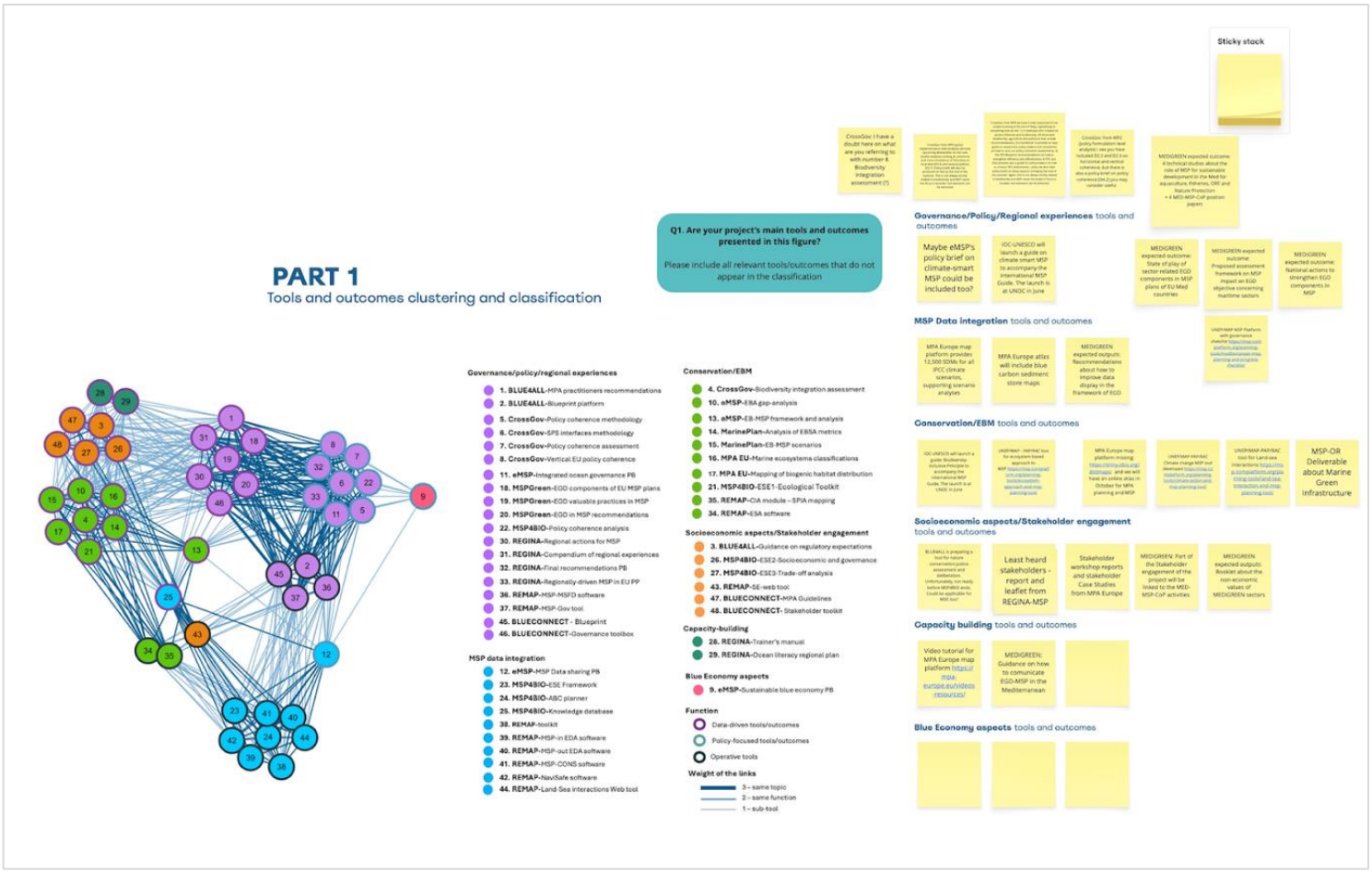


Several new tools and outcomes were identified by project representatives for inclusion in the graph, bringing the total to 26 outcomes. A significant portion of these suggested tools and outcomes are **expected deliverables** that are still in development. These will be considered in the revised mapping and included in the final MSP4BIO **Deliverable 6.3 on Think Tank results**.

Participants also emphasized the challenge of consolidating all this information in a way that remains meaningful. To maintain clarity, it was preferable to limit the graph to the most relevant or already available tools rather than include every possible element. Participants reinforced the importance of accessibility - suggesting that the visualization should be interactive for broader dissemination to stakeholders. The need to recognize emerging initiatives was also highlighted.

2. Policy recommendations for a Joint Policy Brief

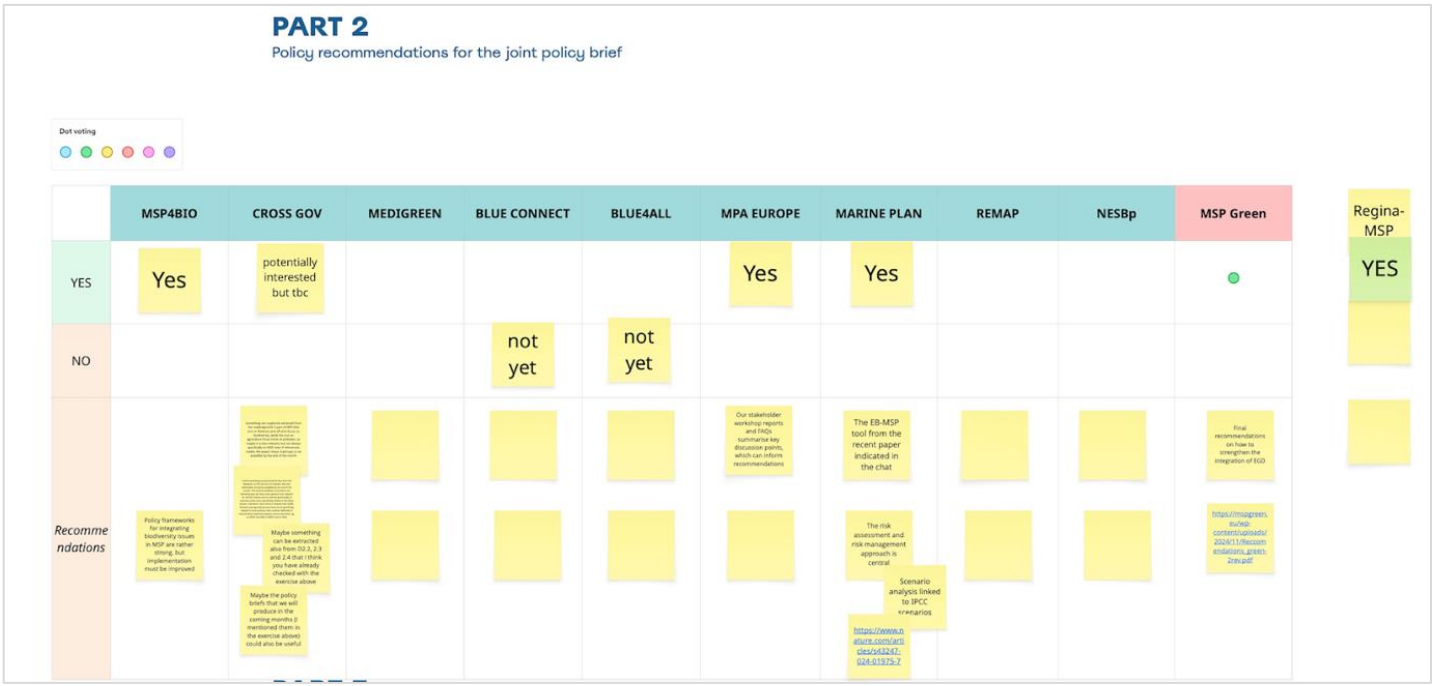
The second MIRO exercise focused MSP4BIO's policy recommendations and its alignment with MSP projects to **produce a joint Policy Brief**.

Participants were asked to position themselves regarding the structure of the Joint Policy Brief presented earlier in the session, to express their projects interest in being part of this joint policy brief or not. They also indicated wheather they had relevant recommendations to contribute and listed specific policy recommendations, linking them to common themes. Participants also suggested how existing EU frameworks - such as the EU Nature Restoration Law - could complement MSP biodiversity policies.

Key Insights and feedback:

- Several projects, including MSP Green, Marine Plan, and MPA Europe, confirmed their interest in contributing to the policy brief.
- Some participants suggested including recommendations related to OECMs to reflect evolving conservation priorities.
- The importance of stakeholder inclusion was highlighted, ensuring that recommendations incorporate participatory governance.

This initiative represents a collaborative effort to ensure that biodiversity remains a central focus in MSP decision-making, reinforcing the importance of science-based policy solutions for sustainable ocean management.



3. Prioritization of key topics/issues focusing on biodiversity integration missing from current projects

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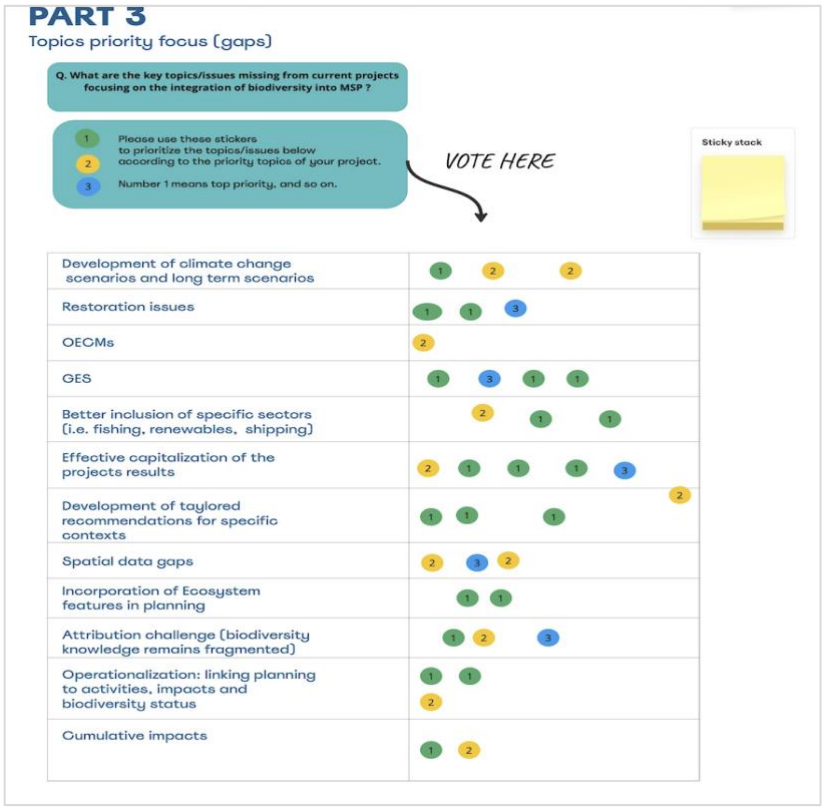
The last MIRO exercise aimed to prioritize the main missing topics and issues from current MSP related projects. These issues were identified in previous Think Tank meetings and focused on the integration of biodiversity into MSP processes.
Participants used a dot voting system to rank which gaps they considered most urgent for future MSP projects, and were asked to add missing priorities that were not previously identified. The highest-ranked priority areas included:

- Developing tailored recommendations for specific contexts.
- Strengthening MSP's Role in Achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) – Ensuring MSP integrates directly into MSFD objectives.
- Restoration issues
- Effective capitalization of projects results
- Incorporation of ecosystem features in planning processes

Participants noted that shipping impacts on MSP remain underrepresented in many current projects, and that basin-scale collaboration is still a missing priority, particularly between the Mediterranean, North Sea and Baltic regions. The need for harmonized MSP data integration was also highlighted, ensuring standardized monitoring across different governance levels.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS

This final Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank reinforced the crucial role of collaboration and knowledge exchange across MSP-related projects and initiatives. One of the key takeaways was the significant progress on the Joint Policy Brief Initiative, which received strong support from project representatives. By consolidating guidance for policymakers and stakeholders, this joint policy document will enhance the alignment of MSP initiatives with current EU conservation and sustainability goals.

Bringing together contributions from various MSP-related projects adds substantial value, ensuring that essential needs and recommendations for improved MSP practices and biodiversity integration are effectively highlighted.

Additionally, the clustering and classification of project tools and outcomes provided valuable insights into the diverse approaches developed across different projects. The analysis demonstrated that many tools and outcomes are interconnected and cross-cutting across multiple topics, reinforcing the need for a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Participant feedback underscored the dynamic and evolving nature of MSP research, with numerous ongoing developments that should be incorporated into future iterations of this mapping. The exercise can serve as a practical resource for MSP stakeholders and planners, helping them identify the most relevant tools to support informed decision-making across different topics.

The prioritization of topic gaps will also guide upcoming research and policy discussions, shaping future funding calls and project directions. By ensuring that biodiversity remains a central focus in MSP initiatives, stakeholders can better integrate conservation principles into planning frameworks.

Looking ahead, the outputs from this final Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank will directly inform discussions at the MSP4BIO final event in Venice, scheduled for July 2nd–4th. The outputs will also contribute to the development of the Joint Policy Brief initiative, strengthening collaboration among the various projects and consolidating shared recommendations based on the outcomes of existing initiatives. Finally, the results of this meeting will inform the final deliverable of MSP4BIO's WP6, which focuses on the outcomes and analyses of the Science-Policy Dialogue Think Tanks. Fostering collaboration among sister projects is essential to align efforts with EU policies and ensure that all critical topics are effectively addressed in future MSP strategies.

NEXT STEPS

- The clustering and classification framework will be adjusted to reflect the inputs of projects representatives
- The Joint Policy Brief will be drafted and shared among interested projects
- The outputs from this last Science Policy Dialogue Think Tank will be integrated in MSP4BIO's Deliverable 6.3 and showcased during the project's final event in Venice

Annex I – Agenda of the meeting

TIME	CONTENTS	SPEAKER
11:00 – 11:10	Introduction to the Think Tank's objectives + Agenda	MSP4BIO Partners

11:10 – 11:25	Presentations from new projects with a specific focus on the respective policy components and different tools and outcomes expected	MEDIGREEN NESBp
11:25 - 11:35	Presentation of the Joint Policy Recommendations	MSP4BIO WP6
11:35 – 11:45	Presentation of the tools and outcomes clustering and classification	MSP4BIO WP6
11:45 – 12:15	Interactive session + facilitated discussion on the following topics (with MIRO Board) addressing the following questions: • Are your project's main tools and outcomes presented in this figure? Please include all relevant tools/outcomes that do not appear in the classification • Identification of project policy recommendations under our categories (institutional, organizational, technical, resources). • Topics (gaps) priority focus: please vote accordingly to the priority topics of your project	All Participants
12:15 – 12:25	Discussion and questio	
12:25 – 12:30	Final remarks and conclusio	MSP4BIO Partners

Annex II – List of participants

No	**ORGANIZATION**	**PROJECT**
1	IEO-CSIC	MEDIGREEN
2	HELCOM	NESBp
3	CLIMAZUL	MPA Europe
4	IEO-CSIC	MEDIGREEN
5		
6	CNR-ISMAR	CrossGov and MEDIGREEN
7	WWF EPO	MSP4BIO
8	S.Pro	MSP4BIO
9	CCMS	MSP4BIO and BlueConnect

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10	PAP/RAC	MSP4BIO
11	IECS - Hull University	MarinePlan
12	IEO-CSIC	MEDIGREEN
13	SYKE	MSP4BIO, eMSP
14	SYKE	MSP4BIO, eMSP
15	WWF Mediterranean	MSP4BIO
16	HELCOM	MSP4BIO
17	WWF Mediterranean	MSP4BIO