

Maritime spatial planning in the EU – The case of France.

OPRF, 22/10/09

The EU Integrated Maritime Policy Blue Paper identifies the need for cross-cutting tools to underpin its policy, such as: maritime spatial planning (MSP), integrated surveillance, and the building of a marine knowledge base.

The Commission adopted the “Roadmap on Maritime Spatial Planning: Achieving Common Principles in the EU” in 2008. It sets out 10 key principles and seeks to discuss the development of a common approach among Member States encouraging the implementation of MSP at national and EU level. In parallel with discussions organised during 2009, the Commission launched two preparatory actions in the Baltic Sea as part of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and the North Sea/North East Atlantic, aiming at developing cross-border cooperation aspects of MSP, as well as a study on the potential of maritime spatial planning in the Mediterranean Sea and the economic benefits of MSP.

As an EU Member State, France is practically working at developing maritime spatial planning within the coastal zone in continuity with existing land-use management plans, through its marine protected areas strategy lead by the newly founded Marine Protected Area Agency, and marine energies as a new maritime industry sector at national and regional level. In regard to marine protected areas, the goal is to set up a network of MPAs which will contribute to the national policy for the protection and management of marine biodiversity in areas under French jurisdiction. Under the future national maritime strategy, there will be three levels of governance where maritime spatial planning may be used: national in metropolitan and overseas territories, within inter-regional and sometimes transnational maritime basins, and at local level in heavily used and particularly conflicting areas.

MSP follows the ecosystem-based approach and views coasts and seas as constituent parts of an integrated system, both in terms of ecology and socio-economic factors. Through intensive stakeholder involvement and the use of Geographic Information System (GIS), it therefore links with the terrestrial spatial planning and extends the principles of ICM to the open sea.