



Regions to Boost
National Maritime
Spatial Planning



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REGINA-MSP

Communication brief

Ocean literacy and MSP



REGINA-MSP communication brief series

REGINA-MSP is a two-year project (2023-2024) that aims to greater integrate the regional and sub-regional needs, perspectives and stakeholders into the development and implementation of national Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). The project highlights potential challenges to this integration and opportunities to reduce them, building on a general analysis at the European level and an in-depth analysis in eight case study regions in five European countries (France, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain).

A specific task of REGINA-MSP (task T4.1) was dedicated to the topic of ocean literacy regional plan, since knowledge of fundamental concepts related to the ocean (and MSP more specifically) and the ability to communicate about it in a meaningful way is essential for Regions and local collectivities to get more involved in the national MSP processes.

This communication brief summarizes the main outcomes of REGINA-MSP for the topic of ocean literacy and Regions, based on various activities carried out as part of the task T4.1 (e.g., bibliographical systematic reviews, workshops with regional authority representatives). A deliverable on ocean literacy part of the project has also been published (D4.1, available at <https://www.regina-msp.eu/deliverables>). This brief is part of a serie of communication briefs produced part of REGINA-MSP, focusing on various topics related to MSP and on each case study region and country part of the project.



Culture refers also to economic activities and traditions that influence our society and the impact on the environment. This is sometime overlooked. In Sardinia, during the methodology testing, sea-based cuisine and local fairs were taken into consideration.

Ocean Literacy: for MSP proposal for a definition

Ocean Literacy is usually defined as ‘the understanding of human impact on the Ocean and its impact on our lives and wellbeing’. In last years, the scope of Ocean literacy has become much broader, and it aims to connect in people’s lives and support and encourage citizens and stakeholders to act in a positive way for our Ocean. Modern Ocean literacy initiatives provide a way to advance sustainable practices, develop policies, promote responsible citizenship and encourage young people to be involved in the future. An MSP-oriented Ocean Literacy requires, therefore, the understanding of how the maritime activities interact and exist, sometimes impacting in the environment. An MSP-OL literate person should understand the societal and environmental implication of maritime activities and the socio-cultural-economic human relationship with the sea. A set of OL principles related to MSP, inspired by UNESCO’ OL principles are hereby proposed to guide the scope of this activity.

Proposed principles of Ocean Literacy for MSP

1. All life on earth, including humans depends on the Ocean.
2. The Ocean and humans are inextricably linked: humans have strong economic and emotional relationships with the ocean.
3. Human activities have an impact on the environment.
4. There is only one ocean, ocean governance is a human asset that should ease the management of mobile resources.
5. Maritime Spatial Planning can help reduce impacts and ensures the coexistence between human activities and the protection and maintain of ecosystem services.
6. Maritime Spatial Planning should ensure that future generations have access to marine resources and are aware of long-term management.
7. Maritime Spatial Planning is a safe framework for maritime stakeholders from all sectors and levels of governance to express their views.

How can Ocean Literacy support MSP?

The work on Ocean Literacy (OL) performed within REGINA was driven by a research question: How can Ocean Literacy support Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) at a regional level (NUTS2)? While studies have highlighted the role of Ocean Literacy in supporting MSP, direct linkage experiences remain limited.

The research wished to define a regional strategy to network existing assets under the Ocean Literacy umbrella and align them, when relevant, with the objectives of MSP. This strategy is intended to be designed and implemented by regional institutions.

Strategy background

Contributions of Ocean Literacy to MSP Processes

Overall, Ocean Literacy can enhance MSP processes by:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of MSP processes at subnational, regional, and local levels for stakeholders and citizens, clarifying their roles.
- Enhancing awareness and understanding of ecosystem-based management, including knowledge and data exchange.
- Improving awareness and knowledge about scientific research and socioeconomics in marine and ecological fields.
- Deepening knowledge of maritime activities and cultures, fostering an emotional connection with the sea.

By considering Ocean Literacy as a framework encompassing multidisciplinary elements (geography, planning, statistics, and economic policy) and multi-scalar dimensions, particularly regarding governance levels, we can significantly enhance territorial cohesion.

Analyzing practices and literature allows us to conceptualize a common network designed to address land-sea imbalances (economic, social, environmental, and cultural) within the framework of Maritime Spatial Planning.

Objectives

The main objectives of the regional strategy were identified as part of the REGINA-MSP project work plan, inspired by the MSP Directive, which emphasizes stakeholder engagement.

Bottom-Up Approach in MSP

The methodology and derived strategy should create a knowledge base for effective engagement and information dissemination across all actor levels in MSP, from general public awareness to the training of administrative officers involved in MSP implementation. Proper implementation will result in stronger educational outputs, better information dissemination, and robust knowledge creation networks.



Adaptation of Existing Ocean Literacy Tools and Techniques








Adapt educational and information-sharing techniques to transfer knowledge according to governance needs, process structure, and stakeholder roles in the MSP framework, especially during implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and plan adaptation stages.

Tailored Solutions

Create opportunities for regions to discuss their MSP-related ocean literacy needs and identify suitable solutions, processes, and tools. This discussion should include sharing experiences from regions with prior knowledge.

Specific Objectives

Refined through a desk review of Ocean Literacy and communication materials, the specific objectives include:

-  Opening MSP discussions to non-experts (especially stakeholders and future stakeholders).
-  Integrating MSP into Marine and Maritime Sciences education.
-  Identifying regional opportunities and employing specific strategies for better results.
-  Ensuring equitable access to MSP-related information.
-  Connecting policies and education on marine topics concerning MSP.
-  Disseminating the seven Ocean Literacy-MSP principles and highlighting MSP's contributions to Sustainable Development Goals.
-  Creating dedicated content through research and dissemination networks.

Methodology definition

To define the strategy a methodology was developed around three main tools to self-evaluate the current state of the art and establish necessary actions:

A Guided questionnaire

A questionnaire to assess the assets present in the region, according to specific threads. The questionnaire can be compiled by regional officers.

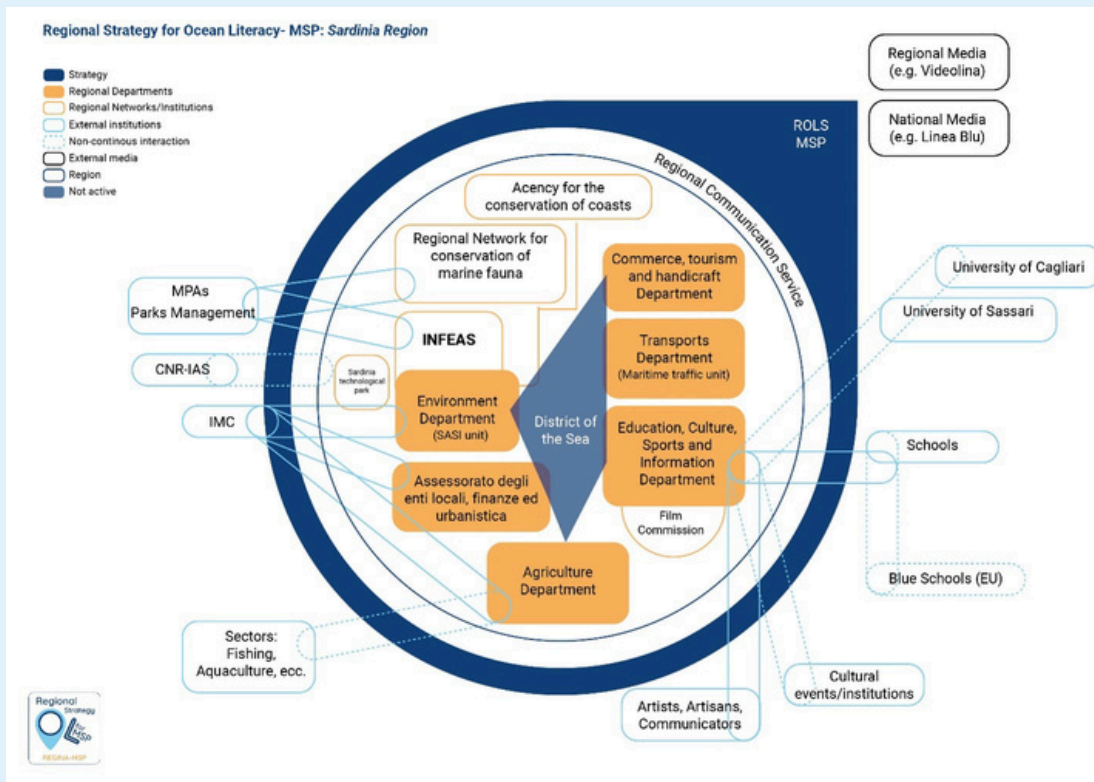
Mapping the offer: spatialization and questionnaires

The exercise of spatially mapping the offer allows for directing the strategy towards geographical balance. A set of shorter questionnaires are designed to trigger a more precise evaluation of the offer in terms of education and dissemination.

Guided Index

Is a framework to be populated based on previous exercises and regional specificities (socio-economics, geography, etc.), with content descriptions provided.

The methodology considered the seven oceans' perspectives identified by UNESCO's OL Toolkit, combined into four main opportunity threads, namely: Regulations, Education, Culture, Research. Examples of Ocean Literacy assets may be: Schools, parks and MPAs offering dissemination activities, museums, university and research centers, local media, etc. In a broader concept even businesses can offer moments or tools to promote ecosystem-based approaches at sea.



Once the questionnaire completed it is possible to propose a structure to define the management and interactions of stakeholders and regional bodies. In figure the case of the Sardinia Region.

The questionnaire is built around a YES-NO cascading structure (e.g. "Does your Region presents Blue Schools? YES: which ones? /NO: Consider promoting applications).

Mode of employment: the methodology can be implemented by answering the guided questionnaire and performing the mapping-the-offer exercise, then the strategy paragraphs should be compiled with all the "YES" answers and related information. In a second phase, resources-wise, it can be considered to fill some of the gaps identified by the "NO" by inserting them as actions to be supported over a longer period of time.

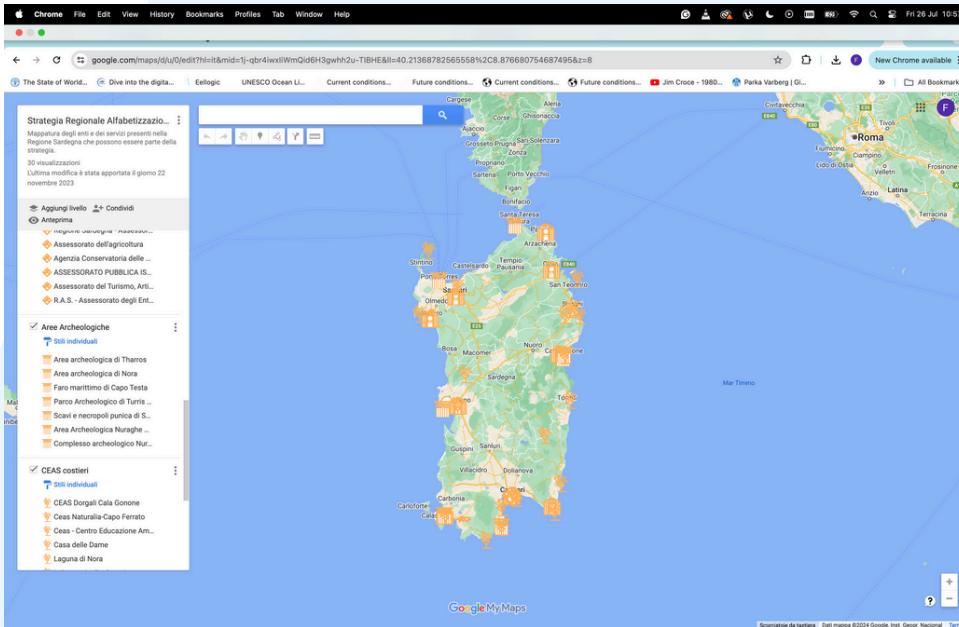
Target User: Targeted user of the methodology are regional policy makers and decision takers. The methodology is developed to allow Regional and local institutions, supported by scientists, planners, ocean literacy experts, environmental communicators, educators, etc. to develop a Regional Ocean Literacy strategy to enable Maritime Spatial Planning implementation.

Integration and policy coherence: The Regional Strategy of Ocean Literacy on MSP can withstand as a single document but, if preferable for the Regional legislator, it can also be integrated as a dedicated chapter in broader strategies/plans for blue economy or marine protection at Regional level. For instance, in the sections dedicated to communication and engagement of local stakeholders.



KEY MESSAGE

The key message of this methodology is to build on the existing. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Most European regions have already in place educational and dissemination assets. They may not be aware of them being Ocean Literacy. The need is, therefore, to identify and capitalize resources, networking and having common objectives. Specificities are a resource; each region can define specific objectives and approaches.



Mapping of actors can reveal geographical disparities as well as networking opportunities. Mapping tool does not have to be complex or expensive. In the Sardinia testing Google Maps was employed with satisfactory results.

Barriers/limits

Human and Financial Resources

Testing revealed limitations in human and financial resources for strategy implementation. Nevertheless, regional support facilitated the development of a draft strategy, highlighting the need for dedicated resources and collaboration.

Coordination Complexity

Aligning various regional units with different objectives requires careful coordination and balanced financial management. Centralized communication services may also limit maritime topics' visibility.

Overlooked aspects

Cultural aspects may be overlooked in strategies, by not recognizing their direct impacts on economies and the environment, for instance, food-related habits. It is important to have clear objectives and take into account the socio-environmental relationship with an holistic approach.

Testing in the Sardinia region revealed existing frameworks that can be reinforced to host OL-MSP topics. Although coordination complexities and resource limitations exist, the potential for creating effective and impactful strategies is significant. Collaboration with regional departments and stakeholders will be crucial for success.

Please find the full methodology at: www.regina-msp.eu.

Policy recommendations

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), guided by the MSP Directive, aims to ensure equitable, sustainable, and collaborative use of maritime spaces. Regional institutions play a vital role in co-designing management and regulatory tools, addressing local needs, and engaging stakeholders effectively.

Regional Needs and MSP

Local needs include cultural conservation, environmental protection, and equitable economic support for coastal societies. Effective communication of available management tools and stakeholder engagement processes is essential for informed participation.

Communication Strategy

Creating dedicated communication strategies and adapting methods to target audiences is crucial for successful MSP implementation. An informed population will engage more readily in consultation processes, strengthening institutional relationships with the private sector.

Ocean Literacy as a Tool

Ocean Literacy can educate current and future economic actors on ecological transition and resource management, making complex marine protection and MSP topics accessible to the public. The proposed strategy aims to integrate Regulation, Education, Culture, and Research, involving regional schools, museums, research centers, and economic actors.

Optimization

Leverage local universities, schools, research centers, NGOs, and cultural institutions to create synergies and maximize resources.

Specificities

Incorporate regional cultural heritage and specificities, such as underwater archaeological sites, to enhance the strategy's relevance and impact.

Time

Ensure the strategy is regularly active, with increased intensity during MSP plan revisions.

International Resources

Utilize valuable international practices and networks, such as the Network of European Blue Schools, for additional support and resources. Follows a selected list of initiatives:

- MSP Global
- European Marine Science Education Association
- EU4OCEAN
- Ocean Conservation Trust
- Network of European Blue Schools
- UNESCO Ocean Literacy Portal
- The European Marine Board
- European Global Ocean Observing System
- New Blue Curriculum
- Training for Architects and Urban Planners
- Ocean Literacy Trainings
- Sea Change Project

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Disclaimer

This communication brief has been developed as part of the REGINA-MSP project. Its content is based on the activities carried within the framework of the project and does not necessarily represent the views of the authors' organizations and nations.



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