



Regions to Boost
National Maritime
Spatial Planning



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REGINA-MSP

Communication brief

France communication brief

Empowering regional and local authorities to achieve MSP



REGINA-MSP communication brief series

The REGINA-MSP project 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, i.e., France, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain.

Based on various activities carried out within REGINA-MSP and further described in this communication brief (e.g., workshops, bibliographical analyses), a set of policy needs and recommendations has been identified at different levels (European, national, regional). This communication brief summarizes the main policy recommendations for the national level in the case study of France. This brief is part of a series of communication briefs produced as part of REGINA-MSP, focusing on various topics related to MSP (such as ocean literacy or communities of practice) and on each case study region and country part of the project.

Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur and Pays de la Loire case studies

Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) and Pays de la Loire (PDLL) Regions were chosen to study Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) implementation in two different maritime façades (Mediterranean and Atlantic respectively). PACA is covered by the Façade Strategic Document (DSF) for the Mediterranean Sea while PDLL is covered by the DSF for North Atlantic and West Channel (NAMO). Both plans define the State’s orientations in terms of integrated maritime policy and preservation of the marine environment. They are elaborated by the Interregional Directions for the Sea who are responsible for engaging the sea and coastal stakeholders through the Façade Maritime Councils (CMF). At the region level, there is no dedicated legally binding marine spatial plan as marine areas are not under the jurisdiction of the Region. However, the sustainable development and equality of the territories scheme (SRADDET) elaborated by the Region plans the development of the regional territory, including coastal areas, thus having implications for some maritime activities.

Pays de la Loire (PDLL) Region is composed of two coastal departments (Loire-Atlantique and Vendée) and fifteen coastal inter-municipalities. maritime and coastal economy is diversified, covering a wide range of activities: fishing, marine renewable energies, maritime transport, shipbuilding, shellfish farming, etc. The offshore renewable energy sector benefits from a number of advantages for its development, such as the experience of building France’s first offshore wind farm. The Region has announced the development of a specific strategy for marine renewable energies, based on the Regional roadmap for energy transition (2017-2021). Adapting to the risks caused by coastal erosion and marine submersion is a major challenge for PDLL. The region was deeply affected by storm Xynthia in February 2010, which caused major damage to coastal

communities and areas. The Region elaborated in 2018 the “Regional Maritime Ambition” voluntary strategy which fuels the other regional strategies, notably specific roadmaps on coastline management and nautical activities.

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) Region’s land territory is divided administratively into six departments including three coastal departments (Bouches-du-Rhône, Var and Alpes-Maritimes) and 65 coastal municipalities grouped into 12 inter-municipalities, including three coastal metropolises (Marseille-Aix-Provence, Toulon Provence Méditerranée and Métropole Nice Côte d’Azur). It counts the national maritime port of Marseille and 135 fishing and leisure ports managed by infra regional authorities. The region is a famous touristic area with attractive beaches and numerous seaside resorts. It faces huge challenges in terms of coastal and marine biodiversity protection and restoration on one hand, and tourism and blue economy on the other hand. Main conflicts of uses are located in the coastal areas (within the 3 nautical miles). The PACA Region defined its Sea and coastal plan (2019) which details economic or protection actions for the coastal area and some actions regarding marine biodiversity (notably posidonia protection). At the local level, there are several existing tools dedicated to environmental protection at sea and on the coast, depending on the challenges and political priorities of each territory (shallow seabed restoration schemes, bay contracts for the protection of biodiversity and quality of water).

In both case studies, regional representatives are involved in the elaboration of the DSF through the Façade Maritime Council (CMF) applying to their respective façade, as provided in the law. Regions have competences to set rules for the development and adaptation of climate change of the coastal territories, blue economy development and blue corridor conservation. Still, they can be associated to specific working groups on the topics there are voluntarily involved in, as seen for PDLL regarding offshore renewable energy or PACA region which works closely with the DIRM Med responsible for MSP on posidonia and biodiversity conservation.

For both regions, the first cycle of the DSF elaboration revealed a missing link between the DSF façade level managed by the DIRM and the regional and local land planning documents (e.g., SRADDET, grouping of municipalities and local urban plans - i.e. SCoT and PLU respectively) managed by regional and local authorities. The latter do not mostly address marine issues as the sea has been historically managed by the State. The DSF strategic objectives are quite broad and thus leave room for manoeuvre in its application at an intermunicipal or municipal level in the absence of operationalisation principles.



Figure 1 - Localisation of Pays de la Loire (Atlantic coast) and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur case studies (Mediterranean coast).

Activities conducted in PDLL and PACA case studies within REGINA-MSP

Regional and sub regional plans and strategies' analyses

First, for each case study, more than 30 plans dedicated to MSP or including coastal or maritime planning or activities development were analysed, at sea basin, regional and infra regional levels [1].

For PDLL, the study of the plans shows the existence of regional and departmental documents dedicated to the integrated management of maritime and coastal issues (DSF, departmental strategies for the management of the public maritime domain, Ambition Maritime Régionale and the "Loire Atlantique terre maritime" and "Vendée ambition maritime" plans) which allows to give a common and shared vision for the sea and coast at regional and departmental level.

For PACA, there is a voluntary plan defined by the Region which allows to carry out specific actions but which is not necessarily coordinated with lower level documents. One out of the 3 coastal départements has a strategy for the sea which is not based on the region sea strategy. At the local level, the analysis highlighted a diversity of tools that are used to plan coastal and maritime activities or protect marine biodiversity which most often depend on political will. Only two out of the 11 SCoT on the territory include a sea chapter and can serve as good examples for including maritime issues in the planning at the intermunicipalities' level.

Interviews, workshops and trainings

Around forty interviews were conducted with coastal and maritime stakeholders of each case study respectively (the Interregional Directorate for the Mediterranean Sea responsible for elaborating the DSF, various Region's departments, local authorities, State services responsible for sea and land planning and public establishments). Then, three workshops organised by the Regina-MSP project on January and May 2024 for PACA and May 2024 for PDLL gathered State representatives responsible for sea planning and regional and local authorities responsible for land and coastal planning in order to exchange on gaps and opportunities for MSP implementation at regional and sub regional levels and collect feedbacks on the DSF [2]. Finally, two training sessions on MSP for intermunicipalities and municipalities were organised, in Bretagne Region on March 2024 and in PACA on October 2024 [3].

Synthesis of identified gaps

Both case studies' interviewed sub-regional stakeholders highlighted a MSP plan that was complex and little operational. Most of them knew little about the elaboration process and its structure. Another gap mentioned is that some of the DSF and SRADDET objectives for the sea and the coast rely on local authorities political will as there are defined at a macro scale. Then, the DSF governance at the façade level lack official relays at the sub regional level to look at the implementation of DSF objectives and actions. Both regions have a network of existing transversal committees (MPAs) or topic specific (ports, nautical, restoration, water) which are not or insufficiently involved in the DSF governance. Local authorities do not necessarily have coastal strategies and lack funds and resources to animate the topic to meet the challenges.

Proposals of policy recommendations for the national level to greater integrate regional and sub-regional needs, perspectives and stakeholders

The outcomes of activities carried out in the PACA and PDLL regions as part of REGINA-MSP enabled to identify needs and gaps in MSP with regard to the integration of regional and sub-regional needs and perspectives. Comparisons were made with the 6 other case studies of REGINA-MSP and could rely on the broader survey made at European level. From this multi-level approach, recommendations are proposed to reduce the gaps. They are addressed to the authorities at the national level and at the sea basin level.

Legal aspects

- **The MSP legal framework needs to define the role of Regions in the elaboration of the DSF and their implementation, in order to:**
 - **Determine their level of responsibility**, which could be:
 - Co-elaboration (as it is already in over-seas regions);
 - Co-responsibility of the strategic component of the DSF, particularly in territorial waters (e.g. in Italy, Regions are responsible for defining the strategic objectives in territorial waters);
 - Responsibility for specific parts of the action plan of the DSF related to their competencies.
 - **Give the Regions the role of associating stakeholders and gaining public participation** at regional and local levels.
- **The MSP legal framework needs to better reflect the multi-level nature of MSP** and assign clear expectations from the land-planning documents at regional and local level, as well as the interlinkages between them:
 - the **SRADDET** in territorial waters, notably for land sea-interactions, transport infrastructure, ecological coherence scheme;
 - the **Strategy for natural public maritime domain management**;
 - the **SCOT** in near shore waters, notably for coastal defence and adaptation to climate change, precise spatial planning of activities, habitat conservation measures and access to the sea.
- **The legislative text governing SCOT's action on the sea and coast** (Ordinance no. 2020/744 of June 17th, 2020 on the modernization of territorial coherence schemes):
 - Needs to be completed by a removal of existing text linked to the former regime and mentioning the framework of the "Sea valorisation of the sea master plan" (Schéma de mise en valeur de la mer - SMVM)
 - Demands some support to the intermunicipalities in charge, such as technical guides and pilot territories, which could test and demonstrate good practices, as well as contribution from local State services.

Governance

- **The national competent authority could improve the involvement of local authorities in the elaboration and implementation phase of the DSF by reviewing the relevant texts precisising the MSP elaboration process. Some of the many existing levers can be mentioned:**
 - Increase the representation of local authorities in the Facade Maritime Council (CMF) and find levers to ensure that local elected representatives who participate in the CMF share communication with the territories they represent;
 - Strengthen the level of involvement of sub-regional authorities in the development of sectoral projects (e.g. aquaculture, maritime shuttle development plans, offshore windfarms) by including them in the steering committees of projects;
 - Encourage regions to organise webinars and workshops with regional stakeholders to exchange on DSF related actions, to share experiences of territories leading MSP related actions and develop reference guides on existing tools available to local authorities to achieve MSP.
- **State Services (DIRM, DDTM) could study the possibility of precisising the guidelines of the DSF at a more local level through the Strategies for natural public maritime domain management** developed by the DDTM at departmental level, as DSF vocation maps remain broad and defined at a macro scale. In addition, the elaboration and revision of those Strategies could involve local authorities in order to strengthen the coordination of State and local strategies for the coastal areas. The description of the role and elaboration of those Strategies (currently detailed in the 2012 circular on the sustainable and integrated management of the natural public maritime domain) could then be precisised accordingly by competent national authority.
- **States Services should raise awareness among local authorities on their role in implementing the DSF and facilitate their appropriation of the documents, by:**
 - Seizing the opportunity of upcoming revisions of local planning documents to remind local authorities of the guidelines of the Façade strategic document (DSF);
 - Designing benefits that local authorities can derive from stepping up their investment in actions where they are designated in the action plan (easier access to funding, consolidation of applications for authorisation subject to appraisal by government departments, etc.);
 - Lauching a "DSF appropriation" working group with the DDTMs and pilot local authorities to test the appropriation of the documents by local authorities and to design practical sheets. It could also include an analysis of how to simplify the revision process of the DSF (e.g. by merging the strategic and operational parts);
 - Including indicators in the DSF of how regional and local strategies include MSP objectives and harmonizing DSF and SCoT targets on the coastal and maritime topics.
- **The national authority could share the best practices** identified at the sea basin level to the other sea basin (e.g. the restoration scheme STERE for the coastal area of the Mediterranean). One option would be to reactivate the Sea and Coastal exchange group that used to be led by the Cerema.

Resources

- **The national competent authority should enhance the role of the different State services in MSP at regional (DREAL) and sub-regional level (DDTM).** Then, they could quantify the resulting resource requirements, the tools and documents (notably DPMn strategies) to be used to strengthen the integration of the DSF objectives by local authorities.
- **The national competent authority could reflect on financial levers to fund the regional and local authorities, notably to encourage local authorities to hire coastal and sea officers who are lacking at the local scale:**
 - Dedicating a part of the national or regional envelope of the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) to fund maritime spatial planning capacities of local authorities;
 - Examining how to use the local development mechanisms of other European funds to strengthen the leadership capacities of regional and local authorities. The LEADER local development scheme is already in place in PDLL along the entire Loire coastline and could be a good relay for maritime and coastal issues for instance;
 - Relying further on existing contracts between the State and local authorities to establish a shared framework for action on maritime and coastal issues with a timetable and financial resources: Regional Conferences of Parties, Contracts for Success and Ecological Transition drawn up between the State and intermunicipalities, and the contracts drawn up between the Water Agency and the intermunicipalities in charge of local plans for water planning and management (SAGE);
 - Encouraging "coastal bonus" (bonification littorale) approaches in the financial agreements signed between the Regions and the group of municipalities. This could be done after having carried out an assessment of the potential leverage effect of such a subsidy, drawing on the experience of Regions such as PDLL;
 - Listing the sources of funding from the State and public agencies for local authorities on sea and coastal issues (e.g. in a guide);
- **The REGINA-MSP training for local authorities organised in Bretagne and PACA Regions could be replicated in other Regions;**

Data

- **The national competent authority should share plans for data collection with Regions to:**
 - Encourage regional inventories of blue economy data and marine ecological data;
 - Strengthen the role of regional platforms in sharing the data needed to draw up SCoTs (particularly on coastal erosion) and tools to raise awareness among elected representatives;
- **The national competent authority should emphasise the monitoring and evaluation of plans** to ensure alignment of national, regional and local priorities, and incite local authorities to transpose DSF indicators in their regional and local documents such as the SCoT.

References

- [1] E. Ramieri, M. Bocci (Eds.) et al, 2024. Regional analysis report: results of the analysis of strategies and plans available at the regional level. REGINA-MSP project, European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (<https://www.regina-msp.eu/actualites>)
- [2] Deliverable D.3.3 of REGINA-MSP will be available at <https://www.regina-msp.eu/actualites>
- [3] Deliverable D.4.2 of REGINA-MSP will be available at <https://www.regina-msp.eu/actualites>

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Disclaimer

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An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aonaid eagra Comarsaoidhe
Department of the Environment,
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