

European coastal and marine information to support EU Integrated Maritime Policy and marine spatial planning

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The European Environment Agency (EEA), together with the EIONET, the regional seas Conventions and the European Commission, aims to streamline monitoring and reporting activities in order to support the production of policy-relevant assessments of marine environment quality with an emphasis on ecosystem-based management issues. EEA has initiated the following activities with a view to preparing the production of regular indicator-based assessments and the delivery of information services over the period 2008 to 2010 in support to new policies adopted by the European Union.

A new EU marine environmental law (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, MSFD) aims at applying an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. The EEA has supported the development of the monitoring and assessment components of the MSFD (e.g. clarification of data and information needs) via its work as co-chair of the European Monitoring and Assessment (EMMA) informal Working Group.

Within the framework of Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES), operational oceanography has been identified as a GMES fast track service (the Marine Core Service, MCS). The EEA provides regular indicator-based assessments of the state and trends of the European environment and participates in the MCS Implementation Group to define how the MCS can provide pan-European marine indicator and assessment products and to support the coordination of marine in-situ (non-satellite) monitoring. The EEA also participates in the group developing the European Marine Observation and Data Network (EMODNET).

The EEA is supporting the initiative by the European Commission for an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union³. The above-mentioned MSFD constitutes the environmental pillar of such a policy. The EEA, together with other EU bodies and national organisations has started identifying projects to this end (e.g. sea-bed mapping and marine habitats classification). The corresponding knowledge-based approach will be structured around and targeted at supporting maritime spatial planning, which is a fundamental tool for integrating the sustainable development of marine areas and coastal regions.

A similar development took place under the implementation of the EU ICZM Recommendation where Member states, European Commission and EEA identified core sets of indicators for sustainable development and ICZM effectiveness, which were tested by regional and national authorities. EEA is also involved in reporting on maritime transport, air emissions and oil spills. The identification and mapping of important biotopes, ecosystems and protected areas - under EU nature directives - is being gradually extended to coastal and marine areas with the view to create a coherent view of ecological networks.

Finally, reflecting on the ecosystem-based approach put forward by the Maritime policy and the Marine strategy directive, the Agency is engaged in transposing and adapting the analytical frameworks and methods used for land-based analysis to the marine/maritime space. The accumulated and validated experience on terrestrial ecosystems, through environmental accounting and spatial analysis techniques, serves as a robust basis for characterizing the marine/maritime space according its natural assets and the many and conflicting uses.

Via international cooperation and specific projects, the EEA shares the experience of these European activities to contribute to global monitoring and assessment activities, especially under GEOSS. The EEA co-chairs, for example, the UN expert group that aims to evaluate existing marine

3: COM(2007) 575 final <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2007:0575:FIN:EN:PDF>

assessments and to propose a framework for a regular reporting process on the state of the marine environment globally.