

Summary of the Interim Report of the ESPON Applied Research project on European Seas and territorial development Opportunities and risks (ESaTDOR)

Apart from the project on the territorial impact of EU Fisheries Policy in the ESPON 2006 programme, this is the first time that ESPON has focused a research project on space off the land area. This suggests that the project team are correct in saying that a new era of European engagement with its seas is before us. There has been a growing call for an integrated approach to marine spatial planning (MSP) throughout the territories of the EU. The report argues that maritime policy has an important and integral role to play in cohesion policy.

The report says that European Seas are being recognised as an important focus for the achievement of some important goals. Firstly, rapid and large-scale deployment of offshore wind energy is anticipated, especially in the shallower northern seas, to be followed in the longer term by other marine renewables. Secondly, marine grid systems will be developed to enable more efficient electricity transmission across regions. Thirdly, the potential for carbon storage under the seabed (in exhausted gas and oil fields and in deep saline aquifers) is being explored.

The ESaTDOR project seeks to:

- Map the different types of sea use across Europe with the objective of creating a typology (or typologies) of different types of coastal/sea regions drawing upon existing ESPON terrestrial typologies as appropriate;
- Identify various development opportunities (and constraints) for different types of sea/coastal region;
- Explore best practice examples of terrestrial-marine and maritime governance to provide advice and guidance on how these critical assets can be efficiently, effectively and democratically managed; and
- Make policy recommendations and identify further areas for applied policy research designed to maximize the opportunities of and minimize the human impacts on the critical marine assets of Europe.

The team's working hypothesis is:

That the marine environment is a critical yet undervalued component of the EU's, national regional and local territorial space. Its associated risks and opportunities need to be better understood and more effectively managed in an integrated manner to ensure that these significant marine assets and resources can better contribute to broader European strategic goals.

Data Challenges

The Interim Report captures the exploratory tone of the work. In particular there are challenges discussed in the report in delineating the sea areas, accessing the necessary data and developing a typology. The result is that this project is likely to be more qualitative than the conventional ESPON Applied Research projects. Two key challenges are particularly identified. The first relates to data and mapping and the appropriate balance to be struck between an illustrative and in depth approach. The second related issue concerns the relative balance between quantitative and qualitative outputs.

The report proposes that the key data ambitions for the project should be connected to mapping the importance of traditional maritime sectors, coastal and sea-related recreation and tourism and fisheries (fishing, fish processing, and aquaculture) in terms of value added and employment. However, a key aim should also be to investigate the existence and development of industrial clusters.

Case Study of the Solway Firth

The report sets out an approach to undertaking case studies. Two UK ones are proposed – of the Solway Partnership and of the Council of the Isles. A significant feature of the Interim Report is a substantial, though mainly descriptive, case study of the Solway Firth, which is used as a pilot for the way that other case studies might be done.

Scenarios

Scenarios are planned for the final report.

Lead Partner: University of Liverpool

Other partners: Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research, Warnemünde, Germany; Harokopion University of Athens, Greece; National Technical University of Athens, Greece; University of Thessaly, Greece; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands; Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Oslo, Norway; Constanta Maritime University, Romania; University of Malaga, Spain; MCRIT, Barcelona, Spain; University of Valencia, Spain.

Future Reports: Draft Final Report – 1 September 2012; Final Report – 16 January 2013

Contact: Michaela Gensheimer (michaela.gensheimer@espon.eu)